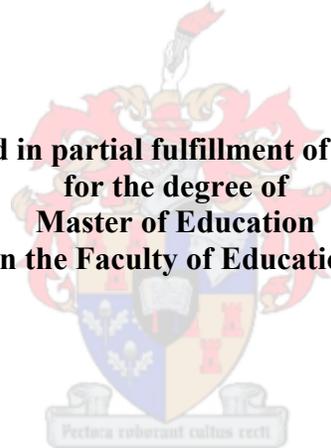


**EXPLORING THE TENSION BETWEEN THE DISCOURSES OF
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY**

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**Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Education
in the Faculty of Education**



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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

South Africa needs to ensure equal *opportunity* for all to higher education, and given that it also needs to correct the drastic imbalances brought about by apartheid, affirmative action is seen as a strategy to pursue both goals. Affirmative action is comprised of programs and policies that grant favorable treatment on the basis of race or gender to government-defined “disadvantaged” individuals. However, affirmative action is not without its own challenges and difficulties. The main question that this thesis addresses is “what are the tensions between applying affirmative action policies in South African higher education institutions and the demands of a knowledge economy within a globalised world?” I argue that though universities need to be more demographically representative and broaden access to previously disadvantaged individuals by adjusting entry requirements, they cannot compromise on their quality of graduates by adjusting their exit criteria in line with racial representivity. That would undermine the very worth of higher education as a social good, the dignity of the individual graduate, as well as the economic growth of the country.

Accusations that affirmative action is merely “reverse discrimination” are refuted by an appeal to Rawls’s Principle of Difference which holds that policies of inequality can be socially just. Drawing on Charles Taylor and Wally Morrow, I posit that within a democracy, affirmative action should be seen as a shared rather than a convergent good for broadening access to quality education. But whereas broadening formal access seems like a legitimate and necessary step to address the inherited inequities, the broadening of epistemological access would undermine the very aims of quality education. Furthermore, I argue that formal access should be driven by the politics of difference, but that epistemological access that ensures educational success should be driven by the politics of equal dignity.

In order to see how some of these concepts and policies of affirmative action play out in an actual institution, I look at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Here the main debates relating to its affirmative action policy are whether demographic representivity is the only outcome for evaluating the success of affirmative action, and whether “disadvantaged” individuals should be selected on criteria other than race. It also considers whether its affirmative action policies could

compromise its functioning and ability to supply quality qualifications to the required number of disadvantaged individuals.

There is no easy and simple answer to whether affirmative action in fact promotes equal opportunity to higher education and equips all South African graduates with the necessary skills for a knowledge economy. It would be therefore important to do further research on what non-race based affirmative action policies might entail while keeping in mind the shifts in the global economy and the need for academic rigor. Furthermore, more longitudinal research needs to be done on the complex consequences of affirmative action, on both an individual level with issues of identity and career mobility, and on a broader socio-economic level with issues of economic growth and social welfare.

Keywords: affirmative action, previously disadvantaged, apartheid, access, knowledge economy, globalisation, social goods, UCT

OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrika moet hom beywer tot die daarstelling van gelyke geleenthede vir almal tot hoërondewys, en gegewe dat daar 'n behoefte is om drastiese ongelykhede van apartheid reg te stel, word regstellende aksie gesien as a strategie om beide doelstellings na te streef. Regstellende aksie bestaan uit programme en beleide wat daarop gemik is om begunstigde behandeling te dien aan “voorheen benadeelde” individue, soos deur die staat gedefineer, op grond van ras en geslag. Maar regstellende aksie is nie sonder sy eie uitdagings en swaaihede nie. Die hoofvraag wat hierdie tesis adresseer, is: “Watter gespanne hede is daar tussen die uitvoering van regstellende aksie beleide in Suid-Afrikaanse Hoërondewys instellings en die eise van 'n kennis-ekonomie binne 'n geglobaliseerde wêreld?” Ek argumenteer dat, ofskoon daar 'n behoefte is vir universiteite om meer demografies verteenwoordigend te wees en hul toegang tot voorheen benadeelde individue te verbreed deur toelatingsvereistes te wysig, kan hulle nie kompromieer op hul gehalte van gegradueerdes deur uitgangskriteria in lyn met ras verteenwoordiging nie. Dit sal juis die waarde van hoërondewys as 'n sosiale goedheid, die waardigheid van die individule gegradueerde asook die ekonomiese groei van die land ondermyn.

Aantygings dat regstellende aksie bloot “wedergekeerde diskriminasie” is, word weerlê deur 'n verwysing na Rawls se Beginsel van Verskil wat stel dat beleide van ongelykhede maatskaplike regverdiging kan hê. Gegrand op Charles Taylor en Wally Morrow, postuleer ek dat, binne 'n demokrasie, regstellende aksie beskou moet word as 'n gedeelte eerder as 'n konvergente goedheid om gehalte onderwys verder toeganklik te maak. Maar waar verbrede formele toegang gesien kan word as 'n wettige en nodige stap om geërfde ongelykhede aan te spreek, sal die verbreding van epistemologiese toegang juis die doelstellings van gehalte onderwys ondermyn. Verder voer ek aan dat formele toegang aangedryf moet word deur die politiek van verskil, maar dat epistemologiese toegang wat opvoedkundige sukses verseker, aangedryf moet word deur die politiek van gelyke waardigheid.

Ten einde te sien hoe van hierdie konsepte en beleide van regstellende aksie hulself uitspeel in eintlike inrigtings van onderwys, kyk ek na die Universiteit Kaapstad (UK). Hier draai die debat aangaande regstellende aksie beleid om of die demografiese verteenwoordiging die enigste

uitkoms is ter evaluering van die sukses van regstellende aksie, en of “benadeelde” individue geselekteer moet word op grond van kriteria anders as ras. Dit (UK) oorweeg ook of sy regstellende beleide sy funksionering en vermoë om gehalte kwalifikasies aan die verlangde getal benadeelde individue kompromiteer.

Daar is geen eenvoudige en maklike antwoord betreffende regstellende aksie en of dit gelyke geleentheid tot hoëronderrys promoveer en alle Suid-Afrikaanse gegradueerders toerus met die nodige bevoegdheid vir ’n kennis-ekonomie nie. Dit sal derhalwe belangrik wees om verdere navorsing te doen oor wat nie-rasgebaseerde regstellende aksie kan behels terwyl in gedagte gehou word die skuiwe in die globale ekonomie en die behoefte aan akademiese kwaliteit. Verder moet veel meer longitudinale navorsing gedoen word oor die ingewikkelde gevolge van regstellende aksie op beide die individuele vlak met kwessies van identiteit en beroepsmobiliteit en op breër sosio-ekonomiese vlak met kwessies van ekonomiese groei en maatskaplike welsyn.

Kern woorde:

Regstellende aksie; voorheen benadeelde; apartheid; toegang; kennis-ekonomie; globalisasie; sosiale goedere; UK

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Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....I

ABSTRACT.....II

OPSOMMING.....IV

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....VI

CHAPTER ONE.....1

AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RATIONALE, NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH.....1

1.1 Introduction.....1

1.2 Rationale for the study.....2

1.3 Literature overview.....4

1.4 Main research question.....14

1.5 Aims of the research.....15

1.6 Research methodology.....16

1.7 Chapter outline.....16

CHAPTER 2

AT THE INTERSECTION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE.....19

2.1 The “Contemporary” and “Aristotelian” views of transforming education.....19

2.2 Convergent and shared goods.....22

2.3 Formal and epistemological access.....24

2.4 The politics of difference and the politics of equal dignity.....28

2.5 Affirmative action in South Africa.....34

2.6 Conclusion.....38

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND HOW IT SHAPES DEBATES ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION.....41

3.1	What is the knowledge economy?.....	41
3.2	Features and demands of a globalized world.....	44
3.3	Implications of the knowledge economy and globalisation for South African graduates.....	45
3.4	Conclusion.....	54

CHAPTER 4

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES.....56

4.1	National policies – Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.....	56
4.2	Overview of the higher education context in the apartheid era from 1959 to 1994.....	58
4.3	The higher education landscape post-apartheid.....	62
4.4	UCT as an example of a formerly white institution and its application of affirmative action.....	68

CHAPTER 5

TENSIONS BETWEEN THE POLICIES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, THE DEMANDS OF A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.....	80
5.1 Introduction.....	80
5.2 Affirmative action: Temporary or here to stay?.....	81
5.3 Three apexes of the affirmative action triangle: Equality, representivity and redress.....	82
5.4 Affirmative action in a knowledge economy: Redress for inequality in education or yield to labour market needs?.....	84
5.5 Higher education institutions dependent on high school preparation.....	87
5.6 Aspects/issues that need further research.....	89
5.7 Conclusion.....	92
List of references	95

CHAPTER 1

THE RATIONALE, NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH.

1.1 Introduction.

The dominant view at the beginning of the twenty first century is that we have entered a global knowledge economy, driven by the application of new technologies and collapsing barriers to international trade and investment, accelerating the evolutionary path from a low to high skills economy (Brown and Lauder, 2006:25). The idea of a global knowledge based economy was around even in the twentieth century as we read Bell writing in 1973, quoted by Brown and Lauder (2006:25), where he argued that the growing importance of knowledge work, reflected in the historical shift from blue-collar to white-collar work, would significantly raise the demand for suitably educated workers. The growing power and global shift towards knowledge economies makes it imperative that the impact of globalisation on government policies around the world should not be overlooked. These are economic imperatives that enforce their own rules and regulations. Global financial institutions and multinational corporations with their economic imperatives are steadily replacing the state in its role in various fields of politics, commerce and education (Stromquist, 2005:26). In a competitive global market, education is seen as an investment in human resource development to build thriving knowledge economies. Education has, however, also become a commodity acquired by those privileged with the means to attain the required quality and the appropriate market desired qualification. This creates a tension between the imperatives of a knowledge economy and the transformational desires of affirmative action.

Affirmative action policies are primarily drawn up, managed and controlled in terms of quantified targets to ensure the education and the resultant employment of the required number of previously disadvantaged individuals. Educational institutions are implementing policies to ensure demographic representivity for continued government funding and support. But, these policies *in themselves* do not guarantee the achievement of the desired reflection of the nation's

demographics in student enrolment numbers, let alone bring about a change in the throughput of black students from tertiary education institutions.

Parallel to the above development towards a globalised world and knowledge economy, the World Bank has shifted its focus from project loans to policy loans, a step aimed at restructuring local economies and integrating them into the global economy. This leads to local state practices, including education, becoming increasingly harmonised with global capitalism (Stromquist, 2005:26).

1.2 Rationale for the study.

The global labour market has made almost every nation's survival depend on how it handles its knowledge economy. Brown and Lauder (2006:25) write about it being an "age of human capital", where the prosperity of individuals and nations rests on the skills, knowledge and enterprise of all rather than the elite few that drove industrial capitalism in the twentieth century. This view is reflected in the central role of education in national economic and social policy. Not only is education seen to hold the key to a competitive economy, but it is also seen to be the foundation of social justice and social cohesion. Globally, governments are realising the true potential of a suitably educated population. The application of the required knowledge could generate wealth independent of the extent of capital assets that a nation possesses.

This is an era of porous borders and widespread competition for high skill, high salaried jobs. Therefore, it would be detrimental for South Africans to maintain policies biased towards one section of the population only, hoping that this alone will assist in the transformation of the country and bring about social justice. A knowledge economy paradigm makes it a necessity that the educational standards and qualifications of all citizens be raised to levels acceptable to international employers and compatible with generating goods and services that are globally competitive. Therefore it is imperative that all South African citizens irrespective of race, gender, creed or class should be afforded equal opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and become adequately skilled. However, South Africa has inherited massive structural inequalities that need to be addressed in order to work towards a society that has meaningful equal opportunity for all.

The steps in South Africa's slow progress towards a society that is socially just, and the origin and transformation of affirmative action need to be studied. This will bring into focus the tension between the South African ideal of equality and its shortcomings in realising that ideal. As Carl Cohen notes, “universal equality of outcomes by race supposes the universal possession of skills and attainments by race in equal degree” (Cohen & Sterba, 2003:17). The proportion of black¹ applicants able to compete successfully for the limited number of places in higher education institutions remains small. There are other reasons, but perhaps mainly due to earlier educational deficiencies caused by apartheid, that the racial balance of students in higher education institutions still remains to be achieved.

South Africa is still in the process of achieving equity in higher education, but the challenges remain large. There aren't sufficient numbers of black students enrolling for tertiary education especially in the fields where maths and science are a prerequisite. Coupled to this, the continued skewing of the economy towards a small high skill sector has the effect of reinforcing the old racial and gender segmentation of the labour market, with African access to the higher skilled segments of the economy remaining significantly poorer than white access (Akoojee & McGrath, 2004:29). This translates into a smaller number of Africans employable in the white-collar sector. Africans continue to be mainly employed as blue-collar workers as was the case pre-1994. According to the HSRC, the results of employment equity reports, submitted by employers in 2003-2007, show that over two third of top and senior management remained white with small improvements among Africans. In the professions and middle management, reports show that the employment of whites grew from 49.2 – 56.9%, while African employment declined from 50 – 41.3 % (Vass, 2010:7).

Affirmative action is one amongst other increasingly target driven policies which were primarily drawn up to ensure the education and the resultant employment of the required number of previously disadvantaged individuals. Educational institutions are employing affirmative action policies to achieve the desired reflection of the nation's demographics in student enrolment numbers. This may ensure continued financial support from the government, but I am wondering

¹ I will be using the collective term “black” to include “African”, “Asian/Indian” and “Coloured”.

whether these policies of racial quotas are really able and appropriate to bring about a change in the number of black students completing their tertiary education? There are already indications that throughput is a highly problematic issue.

1.3 Literature overview

Affirmative action in general can be interpreted as a structure which encourages racial-preferences and gender-preferences for the *correct* representation of races and genders. Under this definition, affirmative action is comprised of programs and policies that grant favorable treatment on the basis of race or gender to government-defined “disadvantaged” individuals. Affirmative action has had many different immediate goals. Specifically, affirmative action programs can be designed (Global Rights, 2005:14) in stages, to:

- eradicate present prejudice
- remedy past discrimination
- make level opportunities between groups
- promote diversity

Among other things, affirmative action may take the form of:

- special admissions standards in educational institutions for certain people
- allowing preferences for members of specific groups
- establishing quotas for members of these groups

These interpretations focus on the discriminatory, albeit justified, function of affirmative action as a strategy aimed at promoting equal opportunities and eventual proper demographic representivity. However, the crucial challenge lies in how one moves from a system of deeply entrenched discrimination to a non-discriminatory society. And how does one “correct and compensate for past and present discrimination” and ensure “equal opportunity for all” without some appeal to favouring those who were not favoured in the past?

Rationale for affirmative action

The South African parliament passed the Bantu Education Act in 1953, ensuring that the education of blacks, and especially of Africans, received was poor in quality and designed to keep them out of the modern sector of the economy—thus ensuring a steady supply of cheap labor, particularly for the agricultural, mining, and domestic service sectors (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:42). Although apartheid came to a formal end with South Africa's first truly democratic elections in 1994, its negative effects persist in all aspects of South African society, including education. Fiske and Ladd quote economist Francis Wilson who observed the following in a recent essay on the legacy of apartheid:

The destructive impact of the “Bantu Education” system wrought damage that will take decades if not generations to repair. The old pre-apartheid education system, despite its many faults, had the potential for ensuring a decent education for all South Africans during the second half of the 20th century. But the mean-spiritedness which underlay the philosophy of “Bantu education”; the inadequacy of the funds made available throughout most of the apartheid years; and the crippling effect of job-reservation and the color-bar on the acquisition of skills and experience by the majority of workers could almost have been designed to prevent them from being adequately prepared for the challenges of globalization in the 21st century (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:52).

Fiske and Ladd (2004:52) add that this legacy lay behind the challenges that South Africa faced in designing an education system that would meet the needs of its new democracy in an increasingly global economic environment. According to them, four aspects of the apartheid legacy are particularly relevant for education: residential segregation and persistent poverty among blacks, inadequate resources and low-quality instruction for black children, low levels of educational attainment among black adults and low student achievement, and the absence of an adequate “culture of learning.” Fiske and Ladd analyse three outcomes measures—progress through school, course taking, and performance on Senior Certificate examinations—to show, not surprisingly, that South Africa still faces huge challenges in its efforts to provide black students with an adequate education (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:189). Even with the best of policies it would have been difficult to undo the legacy of apartheid in such a short period of time.

In South Africa, Weber (2008:10) quotes Motala and Pampallis as being critical of “the expectation that educational interventions alone (through policy reform) can resolve the legacy of hundreds of years of colonial and racist rule ... since it attributes to educational policy powers of intervention which lie outside its range of possibilities”. Also, stressing the importance of globalisation, Weber (2008:10) points out that the post-apartheid state represents a variety of conflicting interests and groups. He contends that a “new de-racialised middle class” which has emerged in education has benefited most, even though this may not have been the policy goals or intentions. Furthermore, according to Weber the critical question one needs to ask is whether the problem of policies expressing redress lies in their implementation, or whether the policies themselves are flawed (2008:10).

In a document on South African higher education the Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2004) asks very pertinent questions. As one example: if policy goals and challenges are formulated as both global competitiveness and redistributive national reconstruction and development, how is higher education as a whole to orient itself towards both these imperatives? What does this mean for individual higher education institutions? Are all to be oriented towards both poles or is there to be functional differentiation and specialisation? Should these choices be left to higher education institutions themselves or must government steer choices? As another example, the document points out that the pursuit of social equity and redress on the one hand and quality on the other creates political and social dilemmas, and raises the question of trade-offs between principles, goals and strategies (2004:239). The document further states that for the foreseeable future, government and higher education institutions (HEIs) are likely to be impelled to pursue simultaneously goals and strategies that stand in severe tension with one another, and will need to negotiate and renegotiate the implications of doing so (2004:239). It strongly argues that the Ministry of Education’s commitments to increasing enrolments, to a higher participation rate, and to access, equity and quality in higher education, will be handicapped if the state budget devoted to higher education is not adequate to achieve these goals (2004:243). In chapter 4, I will look at how some of these tensions are played out in the specific context of the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Affirmative action and the notion of “disadvantaged”

Marié McGregor (2005:3) defines affirmative action as an instrument to achieve equality and is directed at those groups of people who have suffered past social, economic, political or educational disadvantages. In South Africa the disadvantaged group is identified by gender and colour, though broader political and development aims could also be taken into account. Affirmative action policies are supposed to mainly protect and accelerate the progress of the black majority population as well as of all women. However, the list of “disadvantaged groups” is often under pressure by lobby groups to expand to include disability and sexual orientation. While in most countries affirmative action benefits the minority population, it is to the advantage of the majority in South Africa.

Affirmative action can also be defined as laws, programmes or activities designed to redress past imbalances and to ameliorate the conditions of individuals and groups who have been disadvantaged on the grounds of race, colour, gender or disability. The South African population is often classified into four demographic groups: “African”, “Coloured”, “Indian/Asian” and “White”. The first three groups are sometimes jointly referred to as “Black”. What we need to consider carefully is that modern scientific theory now acknowledges that globalization, immigration and intermarriage over centuries have almost effaced the once very clear racial boundaries, so that it has become most difficult, if not impossible, to categorise races in exact, distinct groups (McGregor, 2005:8). However, given the inherited structures of inequality deeply rooted in racial classifications, most social scientists and policy makers still use the population group tags when addressing South Africa’s challenges.

The field of education is one sector where affirmative action policies are being implemented on a large scale. The world has witnessed a massive educational expansion due to increasingly complex economies demanding a better-educated workforce. This has resulted in nation-states being increasingly expected to take over the duty of educating citizens. However, whether educational expansion is sufficient to reduce educational inequalities or whether explicit affirmative action is needed is a problem faced by many national governments, with limited empirical evidence to guide future policies. If educational expansions as well as generally

egalitarian education policies fail to diminish educational disadvantages for marginalized groups, what alternatives are available for policy intervention? Affirmative action, or positive discrimination, has been seen as one avenue for directly reducing educational disadvantage (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008:246).

Although it is usually not possible to directly assess the consequences of affirmative action, India provides an interesting study because affirmative action policies have been implemented since it gained independence, for nearly half a century, with the benefits restricted to some clearly defined disadvantaged groups but not others (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008:246). In India, affirmative action in admissions to higher education institutions was initially limited to lower cutoff scores for disadvantaged candidates but was later transformed into specific quotas reserved for disadvantaged candidates. In addition to these educational quotas, the government also instituted a variety of programmes to help defray the cost of education. One programme, funded by the central government, provides four years of remedial tutoring to select secondary school students to prepare them for gaining entrance into higher education institutions (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008:252).

In theory, these various policies should lead to increases in educational attainment amongst disadvantaged groups. However, Desai and Kulkarni have shown that antipathy towards these policies mitigate this potentially positive effect (2008:253), and while affirmative action was being implemented, the resentment against it was growing. Groups that were not designated to benefit from affirmative action expressed their resentment by arguing that while compensatory discrimination measures were implemented to redress the inequities suffered by the disadvantaged groups, the individuals taking advantage of these benefits belonged to a rich "creamy layer" and were never subject to the severe discrimination faced by their poorer brethren. In turn, disadvantaged individuals charge that affirmative action policies are poorly implemented and have had very little actual benefit. In addition, professors at higher education institutions complain about the problems of teaching ill-equipped disadvantaged students who have gained access due to affirmative action policies (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008: 253). While the misuse of the affirmative action programs by upper-income "disadvantaged" groups remains an issue in the Indian discourse on affirmative action, its echoes are also found in the similar

discourses worldwide. In the United States, attempts are being made to focus on class rather than race as an axis of affirmative action in granting access to higher education and in Brazil, attempts are made to reserve special quotas for Afro-Brazilians within programmes that focus on the poor (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008: 254). In chapter 4, I will also look at how in South Africa, in particular at UCT, the debate about focusing on class as opposed to race *per se* is also considered.

Benatar (2010:264) points out the absurdity of assigning individuals to particular race categories, there being no legislation or regulations in South Africa make it clear how people are to be assigned and noting that even though South Africans are free to classify themselves, the understanding is that they will classify themselves according to the criteria of the apartheid government. This would defeat the idea of any policy that aims to favour some people on the basis of their race as there is no viable mechanism of assigning people to a race. Thus any race-based affirmative action policy is fraught with contradictions, but those in favour of racial preference appeal to people's emotions and prejudices to attack critics of race-based affirmative action by implying that the critics are racist (Benatar, 2010:266). Benatar posits that if proponents of race-based affirmative action consider their arguments to be appropriate, they should be willing to have those arguments rationally evaluated. But according to Benatar, when those arguments are evaluated, they are invariably found wanting (Benatar, 2010:267).

Like Benatar, Erasmus (2010) asks whether we need apartheid race categories for the purposes of redress. He suggests that indicators be devised that capture what lives behind these categories to ensure redress while undermining both apartheid's use of race and its objective to fix these categories permanently. According to Erasmus, both apartheid race categories and socio-economic class are "blunt categories, which mask the nuances of everyday life. Jettisoning the categories in favour of either class or 'merit' alone is not the solution. It would set back the few gains made toward redress" (2010:247). He argues that policy makers need to consider multiple factors that enable and hinder access, completion of study and success. Many of these factors are race based, while some have an overlap of race and class. Working these and other criteria into affirmative action based admissions policies means that "UCT will complicate class, while recognizing the unearned disadvantages and privileges that race continues to stand for"

(Erasmus, 2010:249). Erasmus lists a few potential benefits of developing new indicators for disadvantage:

- Apartheid race categories will no longer be administratively reinforced.
- Arguments against racial redress by those who are against classification *only* will have to be more rigorous.
- The pressure to specify exactly when equity programmes should be terminated can be eliminated as the indicators would be aimed at contesting race and class inequality.
- Disadvantaged students will benefit from these indicators irrespective of race.

It is possible that these potentially positive outcomes would facilitate more productive deliberations about inequality in South Africa (Erasmus, 2010:250). Erasmus quoting Martin Hall observes that inequalities that hinder both access to and success in higher education are “*a mix of race and class*”..... that “we must work with what we have” which “requires that we continue to use race as a proxy for disadvantage when considering applications for admission” because, “considered overall, race is still the most suitable proxy for disadvantage in South Africa” (2010:251). According to Erasmus this view advocates the use of apartheid race categories in this manner as a *temporary* measure, until such time that we have more sophisticated tools that take into account their historical and contemporary “mix” or articulation with class.

Favish and Hendry note that in a report presented to UCT’s Senate in October 2006, it was suggested “that as South African society continues to normalize, the use of race as a proxy for disadvantage will become increasingly inappropriate [and that therefore] the admissions policies must be continually improved and reviewed” (Favish & Hendry, 2010:269). Favish and Hendry opine that offering access to students with little chance of succeeding is not responsible, and that higher education institutions should be aware that “providing conditions conducive to the success of the full range of the student intake is an important complement to admissions policy” (2010:279). Furthermore they state that in relation to redress, “equity of outcomes” is generally understood to mean that “the profile of the graduating class closely resembles that of the intake” (Favish & Hendry, 2010:279). According to Favish and Hendry, whilst more African students are graduating as a proportion of the total number of African students enrolled at UCT, the gap

between African and white students remains large, indicating that the goal of equity of outcomes has not yet been achieved, which suggests that there is not an empirical basis for arguing that race should no longer be a factor in admissions (Favish & Hendry, 2010:281).

According to Soudien (2010:222), UCT acknowledges the importance of moving beyond the “stigmatizing and reductive modalities of a race-based approach” to considering disadvantage and becoming a non-racial university. But he wonders how such a position could be developed without ignoring the lasting legacies of racial discrimination. He adds that the socio-economic environment is undergoing a change and advantage and disadvantage are beginning to take expression in a wide range of forms, therefore it is questionable whether race as an indicator does the job most effectively for determining disadvantage. Thus, he argues, “class” can be a more meaningful indicator of the disadvantage experienced by individuals. An unambiguous and functional set of procedures, which are just and fair, and sufficiently sensitive to the complexities of disadvantage, are needed to guide UCT in deciding, after taking into consideration academic merit, how its officers should administer its application procedures.

Van Wyk (2010) puts forward two points of view towards affirmative action: many South Africans appear to believe passionately either that affirmative action is fair because it rights past wrongs and because discrimination still exists, or that affirmative action is unfair because it violates basic principles of non-discrimination (van Wyk, 2010:361). In democratic South Africa, references to race have been maintained for official purposes, and van Wyk believes it can serve to improve the lives of those who have been politically oppressed and economically exploited, more so because we cannot conjure up to a raceless society. Moreover, eliminating race as a consideration may deprive people of looking critically at themselves (van Wyk, 2010:364).

Waghid (2010:373) argues that a university’s admission policy that favours the racially disadvantaged is in itself discriminatory. Admitting students to university on the grounds of race would expose them to different forms of discrimination, especially if the exposure to language and cultural norms with which they are perhaps unfamiliar, impact on their academic performances. Waghid contends that during apartheid, some students were admitted to university

whilst others were discriminated against due to race. It continues today as universities try to remedy the past by discriminating against certain students on the basis of race. He believes that these exclusionary procedures of affirmative action remain immoral and do not help universities to advocate “truths” as the use of race seems to be a decisive criterion for intake (Waghid, 2010:375). In chapter 4, I will look at how UCT considers the criterion of race as one of a set of criteria for admission.

Soudien (2010) agrees that since UCT is committed to non-racialism, it is nevertheless difficult to have a policy in place which does not refer to race. According to Soudien (2010:223), bringing together a policy, which will acknowledge racism and the complex range of social and personal disadvantages which an individual may be experiencing as well as obtaining information to be able to identify and determine disadvantage, is a time-consuming exercise and thus not immediately practicable. Soudien (2010:224) mentions that universities are expected to play a two-fold role: firstly, the university is seen as an instrument for realizing the most important policies and ideals of the society in which it exists and secondly, that since it arises out of an international commitment to knowledge production, this framework provides it with its legitimacy. He argues that neither of these expectations takes into consideration the complexities of affirmative action and its subsequent challenges of racism. According to Soudien, “the first subsumes the university entirely within the dominant politics of the day...while the second extrapolates the university from the society in which it finds itself” (Soudien, 2010:224).

The problem arises when the university is seen as instrumental in bringing about reform according to the requirements of the dominant social order. Soudien (2010:234) begs to differ, and argues that the university has a greater role to play than just *looking* like the broader society in which it is located; it is also a place of deep self-reflection and critical assessment, and the public good interest it serves does not necessarily resonate with the public good envisioned by political power. This resonates with van Wyk’s call that any study of affirmative action would greatly benefit from questions that probe into the complexity behind an individual’s attitudes towards affirmative action. He advocates that through self-reflection, research and debate we can reveal misunderstandings, and we should listen to both informed and/or uninformed opinions (van Wyk, 2010:365). Soudien adds that the challenge lies not in populating the university with

the correct ratio of racial categories, but rather in making the university an open-ended gift to humanity. Soudien cautions that the university should not be perceived as a “white” gift and until “the instantiation of transcendence as an essential white ontology is uncovered and made apparent to itself, the university.... is simply a cultural machine for exclusion” (Soudien, 2010:236).

Benatar (2010:260) states that though both opponents and proponents of affirmative action in South Africa may agree on the need for redress, they tend to disagree on how this should be done, the contentious issue being whether favouring people on the basis of their race is the right way to rectify injustice. He adds that although the discrimination against blacks was the reason why very few blacks have attained the levels required for success at university, he cautions against rectifying that injustice by means of university admissions. Of course, he argues, university admission policies can help rectify past injustices, but only in those cases where the applicants have not been so badly disadvantaged as to have no reasonable chance of succeeding if admitted. He contends that admitting those who are so uneducated, so severely disadvantaged, that they could never succeed at university, even with appropriate support structures, would in fact compound injustice by setting them up for failure. He suggests that to prevent new generations from suffering such injustice, intervention measures need to be put in place at the primary and high school level. In chapter 2, I will look at some of the conceptual underpinnings of such an argument by appealing to the notions of formal and epistemological access.

Benatar (2010:261) maintains that it is disadvantage rather than race that is relevant when making admission decisions at universities. He adds that if appropriate measures of “moderate disadvantage” were used, then all the applicants who are admitted, and who would not otherwise have been admitted, will be moderately disadvantaged and, given the history and demographics of South Africa, the overwhelming majority will be black, but a few might be white. Benatar argues that if the policy is to favour blacks *per se*, then only a few moderately disadvantaged blacks would be admitted, while the remaining places will go to blacks who are not disadvantaged (economically well-off and well-educated), bearing in mind that the number of places in a university is limited.

Benatar (2010:262) suggests that university admission policy could consider the length of time an applicant spent at a school so as to not disadvantage students who may have moved to a less disadvantaged school for their final years of schooling, coupled with requiring lower scores from students who come from disadvantaged schools. Also parental occupation, income and educational qualifications could be criteria to be taken into account for determining disadvantage.

1.4 Main research question.

In the global knowledge economy, it becomes the primary task of tertiary institutions to enhance economic development by promoting talent and innovation. These institutions need to produce highly skilled and knowledgeable citizens who have the ability to lead and participate in a multi-faceted global environment. It is imperative that universities increase the numbers of highly educated and skilled individuals who are adept at facing the challenges of an increasingly diverse and well qualified global community. It becomes a national imperative to build, encourage and sustain a knowledge economy based on individual merit which will translate into the greater public good. Given that South Africa needs to ensure equal *opportunity* for all to higher education, and given that it also needs to correct the drastic imbalances brought about by apartheid, affirmative action is seen as a strategy to pursue both goals. However, affirmative action is not without its own challenges and difficulties. We need to consider questions like the following:

- Is it likely that affirmative action may in fact be encouraging inequality?
- Even though redress for past inequity is important, should it be achieved at the expense of merit?
- What is the role of societal insufficiencies, structural unfairness, economic disparities and historical circumstances in creating and sustaining inequality?
- Is there a hierarchy of disadvantage amongst disadvantaged groups? Are some more disadvantaged than others and hence deserving of more intensive affirmative action?
- And who is to bear the cost of affirmative action?

There are many complex facets to affirmative action, but in my limited study I am going to concentrate on the following main question:

Does the process of applying affirmative action policies for the intake of students into higher education institutions create tensions between the demands of a knowledge economy and the achieving of equality?

In order to answer this question, I shall also be looking at the following issues and sub-questions:

- (a) What are the considerations of demographic representivity as a desired outcome of affirmative action? How does the fluctuation of population numbers impact on the time frame of affirmative action?
- (b) What is the policy background and the legislative framework of affirmative action in higher education?
- (c) And what are student performances and throughput?

For the purposes of my investigation, I selected the University of Cape Town (UCT) as an example of a formerly white institution and its application of affirmative action.

1.5 Aims of the research.

Multinational corporations are profit-driven and have the financial clout to override a government's welfare agenda and to seek for employees elsewhere. In these circumstances, will there be a continuation of race-based affirmative action as the criteria for enrolling students in South Africa's HEIs or will the market-based requirements of a knowledge economy and globalisation manage to convince the government that state interference in higher education policies could impede economic progress? In this study I will look at the circumstances unfolding both in South Africa and internationally.

My aim is to see how policy makers and admission committees in higher education institutions interpret and implement affirmative action requirements and processes. I will also look at some alternative interpretations of the criterion for selection in affirmative action. In particular, I will

analyse affirmative action in terms of formal and epistemological access, shared and convergent goods, and the politics of equal dignity and the politics of difference.

The thesis focuses specifically on one affirmative action program in South Africa which is designed to redress the inequities of the past and better the living conditions of the blacks in this country. I argue that access to high-quality education is an important factor to achieve redress; I discuss South African educational reform and progress toward creating a knowledge economy and I examine the opportunities and constraints faced by the affirmative action programme in meeting its stated objectives. To achieve my aims I have given an overview of some of the key debates in academic texts, have analysed some of the key concepts that have steered affirmative action, and have drawn on existing policies and available statistics to give context to the issues.

1.6 Theoretical framework.

There is a tension, which is difficult to resolve, in trying to achieve overall coherence in a thesis consisting of relatively independent chapters. The thesis contains two main narratives. One is to probe how a globalized world and the knowledge economy would have an effect on higher education. The second thread of the narrative involves regarding equity and redress in the South African higher education landscape. Here the aim is to look at the motivation for affirmative action policy, to explore how certain aspects of the racial identities continue to affect higher education, and to conceptualise and propose a concept for re-interpreting affirmative action. I had reason to conclude that the present situation in higher education is not underpinned by redress alone but also by the knowledge economy paradigm brought about by globalisation.

1.7 Chapter outline.

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

The first chapter gives an overview of the proposed study identifies certain key aspects of affirmative action as a strategy to overcome social inequities and inequalities, and how it is being interpreted and implemented in higher education in South Africa. I discuss some of the difficulties that authors writing about affirmative action raise, as well as the arguments against

affirmative action. This chapter also introduces the research questions and the aims of the research.

Chapter 2 is an exploration of education in general, and of affirmative action in particular, from two different ideological bases: the Aristotelian and contemporary view as ways of restructuring education to overcome social inequalities. I link these positions to notions of shared and convergent goods. In order to gain traction in the slippery and complex discussion of affirmative action as broadening access to disadvantaged individuals, I draw on Morrow's conceptual distinction between formal and epistemological access and argue that these have two different roles to play in affirmative action policies. If the two roles are conflated, affirmative action runs the risk of undermining its own aims. Finally, I draw on Taylor's discussion of two social orders: that driven by the politics of difference and that driven by the politics of equal dignity. Both are pertinent in interpreting affirmative action, but I argue that given South Africa's fledgling democracy, the politics of equal dignity are a more appropriate framework for driving quality higher education.

Chapter 3 suggests that affirmative action policies can have unintended consequences; they do not exist in isolation but involve complex interactions among government, society and market forces and, above all, through a wide range of global responses. The chapter looks at the concept of a knowledge economy and how it relates to the demands of globalisation. I also focus on what is expected of South African graduates in this era of globalisation and knowledge economies. I discuss government policies needing to focus on upgrading human capital through encouraging access to a range of skills, and investigate the call for economic growth.

Chapter 4 looks at the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, the guidelines it lays down for admissions to higher education institutions, and the allocation of funds for public higher education institutions by the government. It also presents a brief summary of higher education in the apartheid era discussing the designation of higher education institutions as being exclusive for different races. The apartheid government maintained that the university was created by an action of the state and as such it could be terminated by an action of the state. Thus it was legitimate to restrict institutions to serve the interests of one and only one race group. The higher

education situation post-apartheid had to address this racial fragmentation with many of the higher education institutions being reorganized and merged. I discuss the subsequent enrolment rates in higher education institutions once the apartheid-based barriers were lifted. In order to see how these various considerations about affirmative action are instantiated in a specific context, I investigate UCT as an example of a formerly white institution and its interpretation and application of affirmative action policies. It accepts that apartheid-era legacies remain in the education achievements of disadvantaged students and aims for a student body that reflects the demographics of the South African population.

Given the criticisms of current affirmative action policies and applications, chapter 5 suggests that South Africa could develop different strategies regarding affirmative action and the demands of the knowledge economy. I also look at how outcomes like equality, representivity and redress could impact on affirmative action and, given these outcomes, whether it is possible to have a time frame for affirmative action. The importance of high school preparation regarding entrance to higher education institutions is also discussed. In conclusion, I highlight some aspects for further research.

CHAPTER 2

AT THE INTERSECTION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE.

In this chapter, I am going to discuss some key concepts in terms of which I will investigate affirmative action. I will argue that ideally, education is a shared good that affords both formal and epistemological access. Affirmative action should broaden formal access but guard against conflating formal access with epistemological access and lowering the standards of epistemological engagement. Moreover affirmative action in striving for quality higher education in South Africa should be driven primarily by the politics of equal dignity and not by the politics of difference which could push affirmative action into another racially divided form of education.

2.1 The “contemporary” and “Aristotelian” views of transforming education

Wally Morrow, writing in 1989, notes at the beginning of his essay “Educating for the future” that it was an era of uncertainty and extreme repression in which he was attempting to outline the future of education (Morrow, 1989:170). He postulates two views which he calls the “Aristotelian” and the “contemporary” view in terms of which schooling, society and politics, can be conceived and planned. However, as he notes, there is a conflict between these two views, a conflict that will have to be resolved for the future of education in South Africa. Indeed, now in 2012, the manifestations of the conflicting views are evident.

The contemporary view is based on two main concepts: the rational planning of society and thus of schooling, and a social engineering view of education, i.e. to have clarity about desired outcomes and then using schools to bring the vision to fruition. Morrow cautions us that it is essential to have an understanding of ideology and a relevant definition of an ideal society before we start using schools as tools of social engineering. We need to realize the potential strength of the schooling system to bring about the required change in society and politics. Morrow

mentions that some schooling policies in Europe would fall under the contemporary view. The underlying ideology of these policies could be seen as a “way of overcoming the problems of inequality in the broader society” (Morrow, 1989:171). He adds that such a “massive break” view advocated by the contemporary view is motivated by the argument that schooling in general maintains the status quo of inequality, and therefore to change it, it may have to be suspended, so that society can be restructured enough to restart schooling on a new footing.

For the contemporary view of education, there are some general problems as well as some problems specific to South Africa. The general problem with effecting change, based on the contemporary view, is that schools are by nature complex and conservative; they tend to resist change. There is also resistance to investing resources in a new system, the superiority of which people are not convinced about. And lastly, education bureaucracy with its entrenched lines of reporting and authority is resistant to change. However there are also problems specific to the South African context; Morrow emphasises the fact that racist identity played a big role in aggravating the problem of domination in society and thus schooling. Adding to this was the different interpretation of policy by different role players (Morrow, 1989:172). More than two decades ago, Morrow forecast the possibility of reverse racism and the paradigm of unqualified entitlement that may corrupt the future of young black South Africans. He also cautions that “*the majority*” tends to be dominant, leading to an assertion of power and possible refusal to engage in discursive deliberation.

Writing about leadership and management during the apartheid phase of South Africa, Morrow notes the struggle between those who are in positions of power and those who are on the lowest strata of society, for the “protected pastures of security and comfort” (Morrow, 1989:173). He says that since society invariably is competitive and has a hierarchical order, it is virtually impossible for any organization to function effectively without a leader. These leaders, by virtue of being on top, have greater social mobility and relative affluence. These comforts and privileges are also envied by those who have just managed to gain a shaky foothold in the hierarchy of the system, posing a potential threat to those in power. The response from those in power is to subjugate potential challengers. He notes that the mechanism of apartheid has created a psyche of inferiority and victimization in the majority of South Africans and also created a

superiority complex amongst the mindset of the whites. These self images tend to endure and pose a hurdle that the social engineer of the contemporary views needs to overcome.

Morrow argues that society in apartheid South Africa degenerated to such depths that moral discourse lost its meaning. When this happens, decisions tend to be made on the basis of monetary gain. In such a scenario it becomes increasingly difficult for a person with a social conscience to express his or her views without those views being seen as primarily subjective, views that are limited to his or her own interests or the small group that he or she belongs to. As Morrow succinctly puts it, “our personal moral convictions gain no public voice, and they are increasingly driven into the private corners of our lives” (Morrow, 1989:174). In summary the contemporary view may form the rational and ideological base from which to challenge existing social inequalities, but given the South African context with its tensions and entrenched divisions of power along racial lines, it is an unlikely platform from which to drive stable change in South African education.

In contrast to the contemporary view, Morrow postulates the Aristotelian view, which opposes the idea of the “correct solution” to social problems, and the notion that we require clear visionaries to organize society. The Aristotelian view holds that human capacities are created and sustained in ongoing political discussion. Engagement in society moulds self-identities. This view finds resonance with the notion that social evolution takes place continuously, society is being constructed and reconstructed within the lives of the people that populate it and in this dynamic context schools could become locations of transformation. Instead of schools being mere “instruments” to bring about a particular vision of society, society itself is constituted and formed within schools. Morrow emphasises the Aristotelian belief that man is a political animal and as such man’s identity lies in his being part of the political collective. Freedom from bondage is only possible if man accepts his responsibility, “embodies various concepts in his relationship with others” (Morrow, 1989:175), and participates in discussions and moral discourses regarding social and political issues. He rues the fact that it was not possible in the apartheid dominated South Africa to start such a discussion due to the systemic and systematic suppression and repression of the politically active by the government. He wishes South Africa would, in future, allow constitutive discussions to take place without let or hindrance.

2.2 Convergent and shared goods

If we conceive of education as a good, then we need to examine how this good is conceived by the contemporary and Aristotelian views. The contemporary view sees society made up of various groups whose divergent interests have certain points of convergence. The interests are mainly subjective, held by individuals or by particular lobby groups. These interests are seen to be in competition with each other, and the astute politician manages to satisfy most of these common interests in a political decision. These politicians compete for the power to distribute the common goods and resources of the society (Morrow, 1989:176). Such political decisions are based upon some technical, clinical and moral principles, principles that are seen as not located in some collective historical situation, but rather in the interests of the politically most influential or those who have the most potential to drive political decisions.

In contrast, the Aristotelian view regards individual autonomy as the product of community participation, a community built on a foundation of shared understandings. Contrasting with the “convergent goods” principle of the contemporary view, the Aristotelian view speaks about “shared goods” that are “articulations of principles which give unity and direction to the life of the community” (Morrow, 1989:177). Shared goods are developed through open and free community discussions. Apartheid era politics in South Africa denied the freedom to communities to speak about common goods that all could appreciate. Moreover, apartheid with its strict segregationist policies actively prevented a shared space in which open discussion of social goods and moral deliberations could take place.

In summary, convergent goods do not require some communal recognition, while shared goods need to be communally appreciated. In other words, convergent goods address directly the interests of individuals, whereas shared goods address both directly and indirectly the interests of all in society. For example, as a shared good, I would support that my taxes are used to fund public schooling even though I may not have any children. I would perceive an investment in schooling to be to *everyone's* benefit; it would strengthen the very society of which I am a member.

Apartheid education has created an educational problem in South Africa, a problem that entails providing schooling for the excluded masses. Morrow states that though this is a problem, it is not an *educational* problem per se, because based on the Aristotelian view, it is imperative to deconstruct the visions of the dominant whites (at the time Morrow wrote this essay) about what they are and what they are entitled to. It would therefore be a fallacy to base an educational problem on a question like, “We’ve got it [white education], now how can we share it with others?” (Morrow, 1989:178). Such a position assumes that white education is the ideal and it is then a (technical) matter for the social engineers to decide how to distribute it to others who want to possess that good as well. According to the Aristotelian view, sharing such a “good” would in fact be detrimental to society because the very foundations of such a system have not been part of a communal debate.

A shared good is that good when part of what makes it good is shared; it is sought after and cherished in common. “Shared goods are essentially of a community; their common appreciation is constitutive of them” (Taylor, 1985:96). Higher education is a highly prized good because those who have access to this good will most likely have access to better-paid jobs, a better understanding of their situation and generally a better quality of life. Not only is higher education beneficial to those who gain access to it, it also extends a common benefit to society because the longer term sustainability of a democratic society depends on an educated citizenry (Morrow, 2007:18). Therefore it is essential that this good is both commonly appreciated and fairly distributed so that past inequalities are redressed. This would require an increased access to this good for the previously excluded sections of the South African population. Thus it becomes a valid subject to be considered for the application of affirmative action. Morrow holds that to describe higher education as a good is to imply that it is an aspect, along with other things such as health and justice which we might consider as goods, of our shared understanding of the proper sort of life for human beings (Morrow, 2007:40). It would be essential for all South Africans to consider education to be a shared good because “A society strong in its capacity for common action would be one with important shared goods. But to the extent that this was so, the process of common decision would have to be understood differently. It could not just be a matter of how and whose individual demands are fed through to the process of decision, but would also have to be understood at least partly as the process of formulating a common

understanding of what was required by the shared goals and values” (Taylor, 1985:100). This would imply that the application of affirmative action in the educational system would necessarily have to be seen as a shared good within a social system in a democratic climate; the participants would have to develop a shared interest in this good, and would have to participate in debates, ongoing assessments and evolutionary evaluation of the policies that would govern the distribution of this shared good.

On the other hand, convergent goods depend upon the notions of subjective interests which are pre-given, pre-existing interests of particular groups. They are political rather than social because convergent goods are invariably a summation of demands, a calculated and technical solution of finding that outcome which would accommodate most interests. These interests are usually the interests of the most vociferous and the most influential. As the interests are subjective, convergent goods tend to remain static and generate the culture of entitlement. If affirmative action is to be considered merely a convergent good, then it is likely to become distorted; it will not depend on collective recognition and acceptance, it would exist whether or not it was commonly sought after. While affirmative action as a shared good would bind the community together, and would be part of the collective self-understanding that makes up a community, as a convergent good, affirmative action would give the State a legitimate monopoly of both politics and resistance and thus deny the conditions for the challenging of domination and manipulation.

2.3 Formal and epistemological access

Morrow states that “the distortions and injustices of Apartheid education have thrown our concepts of educational success and failure into disarray” (Morrow, 2009:69). He adds that the opposition to the history of exclusion has caused many students to demand access to institutions of learning, whether or not they fulfill the criteria required to gain such access. Although, as I have noted above, such demand is seen as fair in the context of inherited exclusion based on race, we need to qualify this demand if we are to avoid undermining the very foundations of our educational system. Morrow distinguishes between two kinds of access: formal and epistemological access. Formal access refers to gaining a place in a higher education institution. It entails registering as a student at a university, being accepted into a programme, fulfilling the

admission criteria, arranging for finances, having proximity to universities, etc. Formal access focuses on enrollment numbers and the regulatory aspects governing access. However, having formal access or having a place in an institution of learning does not necessarily give one epistemological access. Epistemological access is access to knowledge. It focuses on the subject-specific knowledge and skills that give one meaningful intellectual access to a particular discipline. *Episteme* is the Greek word for knowledge and epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge; it studies grounds and modes of knowledge acquisition; it raises the question, “how do we know what we know?” Though teaching is the practice of enabling epistemological access (Morrow, 2007:2), it cannot be supplied to a learner like some kind of marketable product. This is because epistemological access is dependent both upon an individual’s efforts in becoming a successful participant in an academic practice as well as meaningful teaching that enables such epistemological participation (Morrow, 2009:78). He rues the fact that “educational access” is a term common to both notions of access, the one concerned with formal access to institutions as well as epistemological access to knowledge.

Not only does the undifferentiated notion of access lead to conceptual obfuscation, but when it is linked to the notion of entitlement, then serious conceptual muddles ensue. The call for broadening access is coupled with the attempt to redress inherited imbalances and exclusions. However, as Morrow notes, “entitlement to access can easily slide over into entitlement to succeed” (Morrow, 2009:71). This is the key to Morrow’s critique of a general, unqualified call to broaden access: whereas broadening formal access seems like a legitimate and necessary step to address the inherited inequities, the broadening of epistemological access is equivalent to the demand to be entitled to success. This latter broadening of access would undermine the very aims of quality education.

As Morrow notes, the culture of entitlement that arises out of a conviction to redress imbalances in South African society tends to shift the blame of a student failing on to the system. There are historical precedents where this is a justified charge: he says that it wasn’t students who failed Bantu Education (education for blacks in South Africa during apartheid), but Bantu Education that failed students. However, I also agree with Morrow that if one were to believe that one is entitled due to certain reasons to gain access to institutions of learning then one may also believe

that those same reasons are valid for one to be entitled to success notwithstanding one's lack of efforts in achieving that success. Furthermore, he cautions that to rectify the injustice of the past, students could possibly be afforded formal access if the institution has the resources and the capacity, but if entitlement proponents were to challenge the concept of educational achievement by delegitimising it and being skeptical about its purpose, entitlement becomes meaningless, because this would be entitlement to something that does not have value. Educational achievement necessarily requires certain activities, in which some combination of effort and skill is required, and the more adept one is at the task undertaken, the greater would be one's achievement. In summary, there is a set of different reasons for broadening formal access from the set of reasons that govern educational success through epistemological access.

“Judgements of achievement are (in principle) necessarily interpersonal judgements, and are open to disagreement and discussion” (Morrow, 2009:72). In other words, judgements of achievement could be contested because, it could be argued, they are based on inappropriate criteria or the wrong interpretation and application of those criteria. Also, achievement depends upon the agent putting in the required effort. Agents could be collective or individual depending upon the activity undertaken. But it would be lunacy to complain that to let only one person win the Comrades Marathon or top the matric examinations is being unjust to the thousands of other contenders. This corrupt version of egalitarian zeal could be seen as a legacy of the call of “pass one, pass all”. Morrow holds a position of educational achievement based on actual accomplishments. And since by definition there can only be one first place, accomplishments are typically ranked. Since only one person would achieve the distinction of being in the top position, it should encourage others to try harder, creating a healthy competition within the learning community. This would then result in raising the levels of achievement possible in any particular activity.

If educational achievements are challenged by the culture of entitlement and made valueless by undermining or excluding them altogether, then access to education becomes a futile exercise, but if educational achievements are given the recognition they deserve then the concomitant social and financial benefits follow. Given our social context, we regard these benefits as deserving and fitting for those who have demonstrated accomplishments. Of course, this public

recognition and the related benefits could entice people to resort to various forms of corruption to achieve recognition without engaging properly in the appropriate activity (Morrow, 2009:74). There are cases of institutions that deliberately fudge the distinction between formal access and epistemological access or, put differently, between gaining entry into the institution and getting a degree. In these cases formal access to education achievement is purchased at a price, as Morrow informs us; some commercial organizations sell “university degrees” for monetary considerations. But this is a corruption of epistemological access. He warns us that an increase in these corrupt practices would cast a shadow on the value of academic achievements in general.

Within the concept of “achievement”, Morrow makes a further distinction: a distinction between educational achievement and academic achievement, even though “academic achievement is a beacon around which our conceptions of educational achievement circle” (Morrow, 2009:76). Whereas educational achievement is judged based upon the level of participation achieved by the learner; academic achievement is judged based upon how *well* someone has engaged in an academic practice. To participate in academic practice, the student needs to be involved in systematic learning, and to search over a period of time for methodically expressed forms of knowledge and facts. Since academic practice requires one to search for knowledge, Morrow terms this as “epistemological access” and makes the key argument that mere formal access to a university does not guarantee epistemological access (Morrow, 2009:77).

However, he adds that though there may be many factors that might facilitate epistemological access to a student, these factors cannot *guarantee* that access: it rests upon the student to put in the necessary effort to learn. The student is the agent in his or her own epistemological access to an extent, and needs to acknowledge the authority of the academic practice he or she wants to participate in. The student needs to be aware of his or her position vis a vis the practice in question. Epistemological access will not be achieved by students who see themselves as being victims of exploitation rather than as new entrants to the academic practice (Morrow, 2009:79).

Of course, acknowledgement of the authority of academic practice does not mean that students are passive subjects. To maximize epistemological access, they need to be active participants. Teachers need to understand that it is their responsibility to be critical about their students and

make them face the rigors and challenges of systematic learning. If the teachers do not fulfill this, they are failing to respect their learners' efforts to achieve epistemological access. But students too need to be aware that if they refuse to play their part in achieving their own epistemological access, there is not much a teacher can do. They create hurdles in what the teacher could have done to get them epistemological access through academic participation and achievement. Therefore, the image, created by the culture of entitlement, of the student as the exploited party and the teacher as the agent of domination, generates the idea that if a student fails it is the fault of the system. This would seriously undermine the co-operative nature of teaching, distorting the teacher-student relationship and thus depriving epistemological access to the student (Morrow, 2009:81).

Morrow also warns us that the two forms of access - formal and epistemological - can clash with each other (Morrow, 2007: 19); the more we satisfy the former, the less we can satisfy the latter. Affording formal access to a large number of students would be to the detriment of their epistemological access as large numbers would most likely impact on the quality of teaching achieved.

2.4 The politics of difference and the politics of equal dignity.

Wally Morrow, drawing on the works of Charles Taylor, distinguishes between two social orders: that driven by the politics of difference and that driven by the politics of equal dignity. The politics of equal dignity is the form of politics which has as its central theme an unbiased treatment of all persons; it emphasises the similarities between all human beings and encourages their participation in deliberations without any form of discrimination (Morrow, 2007:7). He elaborates further that politics of equal dignity sees identity in terms of the rational autonomy of individuals which is its basis for interpreting the principle of non-discrimination. The politics of equal dignity addresses collective human needs, such as right to a good or satisfactory life and capacity to construct one's own identity, to be acknowledged. It claims to be culturally neutral and racially non-discriminatory and supposedly provides a platform for people of all cultures to co-exist in a space where differences are ignored.

In contrast, the politic of difference puts forward the argument that individual identities are products and reflections of collective identities and to fail to recognize collective differences in public and educational policy is a form of oppression as it undermines the vulnerable individual identities of members of traditionally disadvantaged groups. This results in creating impediments in providing a nurturing environment in which those identities can develop and flourish (Morrow, 2007:166). Morrow argues further that South Africa being “the rainbow nation” exhibits social diversity in the starkest possible terms; therefore it may seem that it ought to favour the politics of difference (Morrow, 2007:167).

Given South Africa's history and cultural diversity, it would seem that multicultural education would be an appropriate framework. Morrow, however, cautions us that we need to distinguish between two possible kinds of multicultural education: one driven by the politics of difference and the other by the politics of equal dignity. Morrow clarifies that though he supports multicultural education in South Africa, he has good reasons to oppose the politics of difference in South Africa, especially in educational institutions, because the politics of difference could reinforce traditional divisions and give rise to a form of multicultural education similar to apartheid education with its emphasis on difference in which social groups are seen as self-contained, given and 'naturally' separate (Morrow, 2007:179).

On the other hand, multicultural education driven by the politics of equal dignity encourages the development of a shared identity across cultural lines and could help foster a shared identity across the divisions of South Africa's history. Here social groups are seen as historical, not national, units engaged in evolving social processes and relations that constantly shape identities. Such a form of multicultural education encourages the development of a shared identity across cultural boundaries (Morrow, 2007:175). Multicultural education implies a form of education that accommodates a variety of cultures in a mutually respectful environment in common institutions, and multiculturalism is opposed to segregation and stands for the idea that politics and institutions should generously accommodate culturally diverse groups while avoiding any bias in favour of any particular group. (Morrow, 2007:170).

Morrow notes that the countries in the north have access to a high degree of social and personal security, substantial affluence and political stability as well as a framework of political institutions and traditions which have been nurtured and developed over centuries (Morrow, 2007:154). He believes that because of their long history of stability and a deeply entrenched “moral” assumption of the politics of equal dignity, the north can afford to entertain divisions created by the politics of difference. Morrow contends that much of the history of schooling in such societies in the north was based on the preceding implementation of the ideals of the politics of equal dignity (Morrow, 2007:155). These societies seen in the northern nations generally have traditions and procedures for peaceful conflict resolution, a thriving practice of public deliberations regarding common interests, low levels of poverty and destitution and an environment of social peace and civil order (Morrow, 2007:177). These well-established, stable conditions make it possible to pursue the politics of difference because the tensions and contestations that the politics of difference characteristically give rise to, can be accommodated within a stable context of law and order.

In contrast, South Africa has only just emerged from an oppressive, violent racially divided past. Bearing in mind that the politics of difference seen in the northern countries had its roots in the politics of equal dignity which can be played out within an environment of security and stability, it would be unwise to foster a politics of difference in South Africa in the present fluid situation (Morrow, 2007:178).

Morrow notes that the politics of difference requires a bias in favour of specific groups, justifying this bias due to these groups having been discriminated against in the past and suffering the consequences of that discrimination even at present. In the South African context, it means that blacks who were deprived of the quality of education imparted to the other race groups during apartheid should be advantaged and now that apartheid officially is no more; there needs to be a difference in the allocation of resources so that the least advantaged may benefit the most. While the politics of equal dignity sees our shared humanity as the basis for our identity, the politics of difference sees identity fundamentally in terms of group affiliation. It is also seen that the politics of difference has emerged in societies where the members already shared a sense of belonging to a common political community and have a sense of a shared identity. What I

mean here is that there needs to be a firm bedrock of the politics of equal dignity upon which the framework for a politics of difference can be built.

Would it be advisable to base access to tertiary education in South Africa on the politics of equal dignity or on the politics of difference? Morrow postulates that only within an environment of a vibrant and robust politics of equal dignity can the politics of difference emerge and thrive. He notes that while debates about multicultural education do not seem much in evidence in countries like Somalia and Rwanda and other countries that attract the attention of Amnesty International, these debates flourish against a backdrop of social stability as experienced in Western Europe, North America and Australia (Morrow, 2007: 154). This position needs to be carefully looked at from a South African point of reference. Therefore, I would argue against affirmative action *driven entirely* by a politics of difference in South Africa, since in South Africa there is only a fragile, emerging shared common basis and stable political order which can accommodate politics of difference. It is still too similar to the injustices of apartheid with its entrenched divisions of groups and pushing a policy of affirmative action driven purely by the politics of difference would be seen as a form of reverse discrimination. I concur with Morrow that it would be unwise to establish a system based entirely on politics of difference in our society which does not yet have a strong tradition of politics of equal dignity as it may just destroy whatever semblance of social integration has been achieved thus far in South Africa. I base my argument upon the fact that politics of difference is essentially confrontational, yet flourishing on an established political order and shared identity. It emphasises differences so that injustices may be removed in a politically just environment. It has no grand narrative; every group has its own evolving narrative. But it is this very emphasis on differences that can be accommodated in a generally stable social framework that could also lead to chaos and national disintegration, giving rise to racial or tribal conflict in a society that does not yet have such a socially stable framework with entrenched law and order.

A contentious issue in the politics of difference and the politics of equal dignity could be the question of identity. What if identities are based on what is conferred by a structure of power rather than what individuals discover by themselves as their own? For example, the identity of being inferior was conferred upon the blacks of South Africa by the apartheid government. The

individuals had an identity of being black but superimposed on that was the overarching identity of being second class citizens that was conferred upon them by the government in power. I would thus illustrate conferred identity, looking at it through the lens of the politics of difference, as the apartheid given identity which was dependent upon group identity. The apartheid government reinforced an essentialist of “racially naturally” distinct, given, homogenous groups. Therefore, identity was entrenched as a distinct racial identity. On the other hand, the politics of equal dignity would speak about identity from a platform of equity and see it in terms of the rational autonomy of individuals as members of groups in social relationships (Morrow, 2007:183).

Another difficulty with the policies for access to education in South Africa is the propensity of members belonging to certain groups for demanding special treatment by virtue of belonging to that group. This demand could be based upon that group being classified as disadvantaged. Thus discrimination is encouraged in favour of certain groups, seemingly a type of reverse discrimination which is claimed as necessary to undo past inequalities caused by the foregoing favouring of other certain groups. This “reverse discrimination” is what is sometimes termed as affirmative action in South Africa and the reservation system in India. The reservation system in India is used to address the discriminatory effects of the caste system, in which groups were seen hierarchically according to their traditional cultural membership in society. Although the caste system has long been officially abolished, its effects persist and, as such, affirmative action is critical for equalizing opportunity for members of all groups. The Indian Constitution guarantees equality for all citizens by making clear that “the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India” (Global Rights 2005:21). At the same time, it explicitly allows for affirmative action programmes, providing that “nothing...shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.”

I argue that affirmative action based purely on a politics of difference would not be a feasible option for South Africa for a number of reasons. First, affirmative action policies have an assumed temporary nature. It is justified as a corrective measure, a way of intervening to

equalize a skewed inheritance of inequality. However, the crucial question remains of when is there equality for all? When is it justified to stop applying affirmative action policies? The answer to this is far from clear. Second, it assumes that groups are stable and homogenous. Soon after the abolition of apartheid, it makes sense to talk about the previously (i.e. recent) disadvantaged. But, do the previously disadvantaged remain currently disadvantaged and thus entitled to affirmative action correctives? Third, the apartheid system had a strict racial classification. At times, arbitrary and based on unjustified criteria. After 1994, the boundaries between racial classification and segregation became far more permeable. Fourth, as I discussed earlier, an affirmative action policy based purely on the politics of difference is a potential source of social tension and division, a condition that is difficult to accommodate in a fledgling democracy that has not had an entrenched history of social stability.

In contrast, under the politics of equal dignity all people should have the same powers, rights and privileges and are allowed to participate in discourses of reason because all have the same basic needs and aspirations (Morrow, 2007:182). I realise that these stated aims of the politics of equal dignity have not been realised and may not be realised in the foreseeable future but I cherish the idea for the mere fact that it is stated and could serve as a guide to achievement of social harmony. Whereas the politics of difference are underpinned by the principle of competing groups, the politics of equal dignity are underpinned by the principle of interacting groups.

However, this does not mean that an education system should have no discrimination. Discrimination pertaining to formal access requires justified advantage for members of previously disadvantaged groups with the aim of facilitating the social processes among groups in order to eventually be able to move away from the category of previously disadvantaged. Regarding discrimination pertaining to epistemological access based on politics of equal dignity, the view is that unless there is discrimination on the basis of progress and learning, there can be no education. It is imperative in education that there is discrimination between learners on the basis of their learning achievement, a scale of achievement of improvements in learning, as in its absence the process of education could be jeopardised (Morrow 2007:193). If it were not so, it would resemble a country with various currencies in circulation which would need a constant monitoring of volatile exchange rates, a situation described by Morrow (2007:191). I concur with

Morrow's statement that for "transforming education, we should remain wary of the various versions of the politics of difference and adhere firmly to the politics of equal dignity, while recognizing that it is not opposed to discrimination per se but only to unjustifiable discrimination" (Morrow 2007:8).

2.5 Affirmative action in South Africa

According to Global Rights which is a human rights advocacy group that partners with local activists to challenge injustice and amplify new voices within the global discourse, the South African Constitution guarantees equality among persons, and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth". At the same time, it explicitly permits affirmative action. According to Chapter 2, Section 9(2) of the South African Constitution, "To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken" (Global Rights, 2005:23). Affirmative action is thus not seen as an exception to the requirement of equality, but a means by which equality may be brought about. In my discussion in the conclusion of this chapter on social justice, I will elaborate on when such discrimination is morally justified.

Two South African laws, in particular, support the use of affirmative action. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 recognizes the constitutional requirement of equality and notes that "this implies the advancement, by special legal and other measures, of historically disadvantaged individuals, communities and social groups who were dispossessed of their land and resources, deprived of their human dignity and who continue to endure the consequences" (2000:2). It is interesting to note that the language used to refer to groups is not in "naturally determined" groups, i.e. race, but rather in terms of social and economic groups. This points to a position in keeping with the politics of equal dignity.

In South Africa, as in many other countries, the introduction of affirmative action programmes has been confronted by a number of potential problems and dangers. These include:

- The danger of “tokenism” and the criticism that affirmative action is merely a numbers game;
- The danger of reverse discrimination and the possible alienation of non-target groups;
- The danger of prioritising affirmative action at the expense of other transformation goals, especially efficiency and effectiveness;
- Possible tension and conflict between affirmative action and other constitutionally or legally guaranteed citizen’s rights and principles such as equity and non-discrimination.

I will discuss the implementation of affirmative action in a particular South African university in chapter 4; I want to highlight here some general concerns about affirmative action.

According to statistics from UCT's Faculty Report 2011 regarding Matric A level aggregate equivalents of South African first-time entering undergraduates according to race, we see that the total for South African African students stands at 34% for 2011 compared with the total for South African white students at 49% and South African Indian students at 59%. Given that all South African universities apply affirmative action policies with regards to formal access, these figures give credence to the charge that there is inadequate epistemological preparation of many black matriculants to qualify for enrollment in higher education. By excluding them, then the whole system of entrenched privileges continues – success breeds success. Now, one could argue that the way in which to make university education accessible to all deserving matriculants, the state should invest most heavily in primary education to lay the foundation for a rigorous academic grounding. As Jonathan Jansen opines, “The debate about access and opportunity should, therefore, be located in this stagnant pool of thwarted potential called dysfunctional public schools, not at the gates of universities such as UCT” (Jansen, 2011). Yes, but then also the challenge is how do you make quality primary education available to those living in impoverished rural areas where the necessary input of the family in primary education is already compromised through poverty and lack of resources? In addition, if affirmative action is not applied to broaden access to universities, it will take another 15 years before “adequate” matriculants gain entry to higher education. South Africa cannot afford, economically, socially and morally, to wait until then. So, universities must address both formal and epistemological access.

An important factor often overlooked in the affirmative action debate is that it depends upon a person's willingness to self-identify. He or she must identify himself or herself as a member of a particular disadvantaged group to receive the assistance offered. South Africa is still working with racial categories in the implementation of affirmative action policies. This is the very reason why some wealthy/advantaged black matriculants get into higher education despite weak results.

Here I would like to bring in what Adam writes regarding affirmative action in South Africa,

Critics maintain that affirmative action policies only benefit a small segment within the target group they are intended to aid, ...those least in need of affirmative policies, yet best able to claim benefits, would seem most likely to secure them... it would be absurd to extend benefits to high achievers because to insist that they need preferential treatment simply because they are part of a disadvantaged group is to devalue their talents...even the successful few may feel degraded and inferiorised if their success is attributed to supportive policies rather than their own achievement, as several black US authors have stressed. (Adam, 1997:247)

Below is an extract from an unpublished paper by Shobhna Sonpar (2003:1) which highlights the negative effects of affirmative action if applied uncritically, especially the stigmatization associated with it by looking at the difficulties of the beneficiaries of affirmative action policies in India:

After admission (the disadvantaged face) one continuous struggle to cope with a language of instruction in which they were not fluent, feeling lost, intimidated and alien in an urban globalized environment; not being able to approach teachers and others for assistance because of anxieties and cultural norms that inhibited them from approaching authority...They experienced a double sense of stigma. They sensed their being academically outcast, inferior and not being entitled to these highly coveted seats... feeling of academic stigma resonated with the stigma of caste (colour) that was inevitably a part of their consciousness. (Sonpar, 2003: 1).

Sonpar's extract is a perfect illustration of what happens when affirmative action policies only broaden formal access and not epistemological access. Students are taken into university and left

to fend on their own. There seems little evidence from Sonpar's account that there were any academic support structures in place – e.g. language development, academic orientation, pedagogical processes – in order to help these students engage meaningfully. No wonder they fail and drop out. Morrow notes that formal access to higher education is a pre-requisite for acquiring high-level skills in a modernizing society. He adds that learning how to cope responsibly with the pressure for greater access to higher education can be one of the major contributions to the future of higher education in South Africa (Morrow, 2007:18). But this will not happen as long as South Africans continue to resist thinking systematically about epistemological access. The teacher's job is to give learners access to knowledge, but if the “deprived” students manifest a new form of dependency and use that label to provide a universal excuse for any shortcomings, it will encourage the stance that academic work requires no serious effort. It fosters the belief that academic work has artificially been “made difficult” by those who are trying to prevent others from attaining the privileges of the “educated” (Morrow, 2007:143).

South Africa has diverse groups: these can be identified in terms of culture, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, language, etc. Whereas in other countries the groupings can change significantly depending on the category of group identification, in South Africa the two main categories – race/culture and socio-economic status – largely overlap. However, one would hope that this conjunction of black / low socio-economic status and white/ high socio-economic status will be challenged and changed through concerted social, economic and educational interventions, of which affirmative action is one example. But once the boundaries between race and socio-economic status blur, on what identity will affirmative action rest?

Moses and Saenz's (2008:291) quote Gutmann and Thompson that public discussion of social policy issues is a necessary good, and social policies such as affirmative action almost always involve some form of public disagreement: this is inevitable in a pluralist democracy. Ideally, both the interests of the disadvantaged groups and those of the individuals harmed by such preferential measures must be taken into account. The competing interests must be harmonised as far as possible, as the negation of either of the interests would lead to injustice. It is for this reason that I argue for both a politics of equal dignity, rather than only a politics of difference. I would like to add that the South African Constitution provides for steps to be taken to remedy

the disadvantage suffered by persons and categories of groups in society disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and the individual also has the right to be protected from the harm inflicted by the state action (Rabe, 2001:396).

2.6 Conclusion

As a shared good, affirmative action would encourage a moral communal debate about how broader access to higher education would benefit the whole community. If we consider affirmative action as a converging good, then we are focusing on “dividing the benefits” of higher education and conferring them on those who have been previously excluded from higher education based on racial categories. It would be a technical solution usually based on racial quotas and, without a focus on broadening epistemological access as well, would generate a culture of entitlement. Such a sense of entitlement threatens to undermine the foundation of educational achievement and is therefore, I argue not an appropriate way to frame affirmative action policies in South Africa. However, affirmative action should also be seen as a policy affording individuals, who have been previously disadvantaged, formal access to university. This should be enabled through awarding scholarships to those students who qualify but are unable to attend due to various reasons such as finance or being situated at a great distance from the university. I support that given the enduring problematic educational preparation of black students for higher education, that the entry requirement for these disadvantaged students should be adjusted in order to broaden formal access.

Education under the apartheid system generated and perpetuated cycles of epistemological deprivation, preventing many students from gaining access to the knowledge that one would expect to be imparted in formal schooling (Morrow, 2007:188). So, in addition to broadening formal access to previously disadvantaged group members, affirmative action policies should foster epistemological access by encouraging universities to give the necessary intellectual support to those students whose schooling has not prepared them adequately for higher education. But this epistemological access, as I have discussed, does not guarantee educational success. In order to maintain the integrity of the degree and qualification, the *exit* criteria would have to be the same for everyone, regardless of race or gender. So, although the *entry*

requirements should be lowered to make formal access available to those previously disadvantaged who would otherwise have been excluded and thus discriminating in favour of these racial or gender groups, the *exit* criteria are based on demonstrated educational achievement, a principle of discrimination based purely on academic success.

Of course, this places an enormous additional task on universities to provide support systems, catch-up programmes, intense teaching, additional tutoring and all the various strategies that can help those who enter with an educational disadvantage, to exit on the same standards as everyone else.

If the politics of difference were to guide affirmative action, then it would be advisable to be based on a shared history and be preceded by a communal discussion, thus benefiting and enriching the whole South African society. However, in the present situation South Africa has not had such a history of shared principles, social stability and entrenched law and order. Therefore, for South African affirmative action policies, the politics of equal dignity would be more appropriate. But, this is indeed a fine balancing act because if we were not to recognize difference then how would one classify who needs help through affirmative action? My argument thus is that *formal access* for the time being should be driven by the *politics of difference*, but that *epistemological access* that ensures educational success should be driven by the *politics of equal dignity*. That way, the charge of Adams and Sonpar is averted. Those who graduate know that their achievement is based solely on demonstrated intellectual success which warrants respect and justifies the accompanying benefits that accrue to the graduate. In addition, having a well qualified graduate benefits the whole of society, not just the individual.

In South Africa, there is no justification to reject outright the idea of affirmative action in education. We can appeal to Rawls's concept of justice, where inequality is permissible if it is seen to benefit the least advantaged. Rawls's Difference Principle states that "All social primary goods - liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect - are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured" (Rawls, 1971:303). In other words, we should read Rawls in conjunction with Mamphela Ramphele's suggestion that emphasis should be placed on "equality of

opportunity” (i.e. broadening formal access) and not “outcome”, with individuals being held accountable for their own performance or lack thereof (Adam, 1997:245).

So, the question is, how does South African society decide who is a bona fide “victim”? What criteria will be used to judge someone as such, and therefore entitled to affirmative action? Also, does the government have the resources to provide affirmative action benefits to “all” victims, given that in South Africa that is the majority of the population?

I am in favour of a robust affirmative action policy that distinguishes between the entry criteria based on justified group membership discrimination (the politics of difference) and exit criteria based on the demonstrated rational and intellectual competence of the student, regardless of group membership (the politics of equal dignity). Such an affirmative action policy tends to be driven first by equality of opportunity rather than achievement because affirmative action directly recognizes that structures have hindered certain groups from achieving their full potential. It would ideally be an affirmative action policy while addressing racial preference based on recognition of the inherent structures that have mitigated against the disadvantaged from achieving, would also be a policy where all who graduate are participants in the discourses of reason. For such an affirmative action policy to find root, we as a society should promote shared discussion and use the tenets of democracy to resolve conflicts by reasoned discussion.

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND HOW IT SHAPES DEBATES ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

In this chapter, I shall explore the interpretation of a knowledge economy and its imperatives for education policies in South Africa. I will be focusing on the higher education phase in South Africa and exploring the options the government will need to address if it aims to improve South Africa's standing as a participant in the knowledge economy in this era of globalization.

3.1 What is the knowledge economy?

According to Dimitriadis (2008: 127), the knowledge economy is an economy based on the management of knowledge, intellectual resources and cognitive skills instead of tangible products and commodities. The term has emerged from the debates which arise from the recognition that advanced economies derive a high proportion of their economic wealth from the creation, exploitation and distribution of knowledge and information. The importance of knowledge in economic activity has received much attention over the past 20 years from policy makers and management scholars. The economic significance of knowledge related to production techniques, resource availability and market conditions is not new. However, today, it is even being argued that knowledge has become the only resource that can create a continuous competitive advantage for a firm or a nation (Roberts, 2009:285). The knowledge economy is positioned in explicit contrast to the older industrial economy and linked to the view that we live in a globally interconnected, high-tech and information-rich society. Given the emphasis on knowledge, it is therefore apparent that the demands of the knowledge economy have a direct impact on education and schooling, the social institutions charged with transmitting knowledge.

Knowledge economy is also referred to as “information economy”, “information society”, “knowledgeable society”, “network society” and “post-industrial society”. Dale (2005:118) quotes Susan Robertson's description of knowledge economy as being made up of several

discourses linked by a common thread that emphasizes the importance of “knowledge” compared with “production”. Robertson offers three central insights on the meaning and implications of the knowledge economy discourses. First, she illustrates this by comparing the work done by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank and states that they have different views of the role of markets in bringing about the required changes. Second, she emphasises that notwithstanding these differences, or the relative imprecision of the concept, the knowledge economy discourse has powerful material effects as can be judged from the responses of the major international organizations, as they both develop and legitimate the discourse and use it to structure the agenda that their members follow. A valid example Robertson uses is the readiness of Ministries of Education around the world to respond to the OECD’s scenarios for future schooling. And third, Robertson adds that the knowledge economy would entail the transformation of the present education systems to bring about the shift from “education in institutions” to “learning anywhere, any time and just for me”. As Akooje and Mc Grath remind us, there is a real possibility that the global education market is superseding national regulatory mechanisms and it is likely that the move to a “borderless” education structure could potentially undermine the capacity of nation-states to respond to their national political and human resource agendas (Akoojee & Mc Grath, 2004:35).

Robertson’s description echoes that of Cusso and D’Amico (Dale, 2005:119) who state that the knowledge economy is more than a discourse open to multiple interpretations. They contend that the focus, purpose and possibilities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) educational statistics were changed as a result of demands from the OECD, European Union (EU) and World Bank. The apparent aim of this change was to shift the accent and foundation of UNESCO education statistics from one that enabled the monitoring of progress of nation-states towards achieving education as a human right to one where it became possible to create indicators on which all nation-states could be compared and against which their progress could be benchmarked. This resulted in greatly empowering the agencies introducing the statistical variables that would determine what the “proper” outcomes of education should be, and also giving these agencies the power to judge the nation-states’ progress towards the achievement of these normative targets. This created a set of new definitions of education to be established at a global level linked to the achievement of a global

knowledge economy, these definitions being distinct from and parallel with existing national definitions and assumptions, but often equally demanding and important. Powell and Snellman (2004:199) define the knowledge economy as “. . . production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technological and scientific advance as well as equally rapid obsolescence”. This obsolescence could be the outcome of the increasing pace at which technology and innovations are changing our lives. As new technology becomes available, skills need to be upgraded and knowledge workers need to be made conversant with the new innovations, expertise and tools at their disposal, thus lifelong learning becomes an imperative. Brinkley (2006:5) argues that the economy has always been driven by knowledge, leading to innovation and technical change and knowledge based institutions have helped store and share knowledge for centuries, so what we see today is essentially more of the same but operating on a bigger scale and at a faster pace.

The U.K white paper titled, *Our competitive future: building the knowledge- driven economy*, (cited in Peters, 2001: 7) defines knowledge economy as one in which the generation and the exploitation of knowledge has come to play the predominant part in the creation of wealth. It is not simply about pushing back the frontiers of knowledge; it is also about the more effective use and exploitation of all types of knowledge in all manners of activity.

The key components of a knowledge economy include a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources, combined with efforts to integrate improvements in every stage of the production process, from the Research and Development lab to the factory floor to the interface with customers. This supports my argument that since the main source of wealth in most modern economies has undergone a change from being one based on natural assets and industry-based assets to knowledge and information-based assets, preparing students to become economically productive means preparing them in the effective use, application and exploitation of knowledge in a context of constant innovation and global networks.

3.2 Features and demands of a globalized world

Nations are continuously competing with each other for commercial dominance and increasing revenues. This is causing knowledge economies to evolve from purely manufacturing, industrial or agrarian economies to more high-tech and service-oriented economies. Earlier neo-classical economics recognised only two factors of production: labour and capital, but now knowledge has become the third factor of production in leading economies. Bhattacharya and Sharma (2007:544) quoting Peter Drucker, note that “Knowledge is now no longer a private good but it is a social and economic resource and a traded commodity”. Becker (2002) identifies the present age as an “age of human capital”, where the prosperity of individuals and nations rests on the skills, knowledge and enterprise of all, rather than on the elite few that drive industrial capitalism as was mainly the case in the twenty first century. This view is reflected in the central role of education in national economic and social policy. Not only is education seen to hold the key to a competitive economy, but it is also seen to be the foundation of social justice and social cohesion.

Globalization encourages and enables people across the world to tap into markets beyond national borders more effectively. In his book *The World is Flat* (2005), Thomas Friedman used the metaphor of a Flat World to describe the transnational effects of globalization. According to Friedman, the world is presently in the era when many individuals are experiencing unprecedented empowerment through easy access to information. With such enormous information resources at their disposal, coupled with fewer barriers in cross-border movements, individuals have greater access to the global marketplace. In today’s world, it is obvious that any country that tries to preserve its own system, jobs, culture or traditions by insulating itself from the rest of the world does so to its own detriment. As Friedman suggests, the world has been “flattened” by technological forces, especially information and communication technologies (ICTs), making participation in global markets more open to anyone with appropriate skills.

There has been growing emphasis on the importance of higher education institutions for sustainable economic development, particularly because of their importance to the global knowledge economy. For the same reason, the appropriate management of the relationship

between the state and higher education institutions is vital for a strong and dynamic future for these institutions (St. George, 2006: 589). According to Riddell, shifting trade patterns manipulate the dynamic potential of the economy and thereby the demands made on education for structuring the workforce to satisfy those demands (Riddell, 1996: 1363). The outcome of such demands may possibly be that developing countries like South Africa get left behind in a global marketplace, if adequate attention is not paid to the “knowledge economy” in those countries.

Developing nations were encouraged by the World Bank to expand and develop their primary and secondary school systems in the early 1990s (World Bank, 1994) but in 2000 tertiary education institutions were recognised by the World Bank as important role players in creating new knowledge, generating a suitably qualified workforce and utilising global knowledge to drive knowledge-based economic growth and thereby reduce poverty. Tertiary education institutions are seen as structures that can impart the ethics, attitudes and education needed to inculcate good citizenship and thereby create communally unified, civil societies (World Bank, 2002). This is because higher education has a direct impact on human capital development, productivity, poverty reduction and social inclusion (Evoh, 2007:18).

3.3 Implications of the knowledge economy and globalisation for South African graduates

Globalization is a term used globally and consequently it has acquired multiple meanings. Stromquist (2005:7) narrows it down to two versions, one emphasizing the technological aspects, and another the economic and political aspects associated with it. She adds that the advances in technology have both facilitated and been affected by new economic strategies, thus promoting market-led decision making. Quoting Robinson, Stromquist defines globalization as “the near culmination of a centuries-long process of the spread of capitalist production around the world” (2005:9). Politically, globalisation has caused nations to move toward achieving mass higher education (defined as having an enrolment of 40 percent or more of the age 18-24 population). This is due to the fact that globalization has fostered considerable demand for higher education

throughout the world, as greater levels of remuneration accrue at higher levels of education (Stromquist, 2005:19). Regarding globalization, Roger Dale (1999: 1) writes that though there is an enormous amount of discussion about its nature and meaning, globalization takes many different forms. Though it does constitute a new and distinct form of relationship between nation states and the world economy, globalization has certainly not made nation-states either obsolete or irrelevant; they have retained their formal territorial sovereignty, but they have all, to some extent, lost some of their capacity to make national policy independently. Globalization, then, does create broadly similar patterns of challenge for states that shape their possible responses in similar ways. Thus, one of the defining characteristics of globalization is that it has affected both the content and form at least to some degree of the policy making procedures and outcomes of all states (Dale, 1999:2). From the South African viewpoint, we could perhaps take note of what Habermas cautions in Dale (1999:2) “while the world economy operates largely uncoupled from any political frame, national governments are restricted to fostering the modernization of their national economies. As a consequence, they have to adapt national welfare systems to what is called the capacity for international competition”.

Another theorist looking at the meaning of globalization, Douglas Kellner (2002:286), writes that some believe that globalization is a cover concept for global capitalism and imperialism, while others perceive it as a continuation of modernization, an avenue for progress, increased wealth due to fresh economic opportunities being generated, freedom, political democratization and happiness. Critics of globalization see it as harmful due to increased domination and control by the wealthier, developed nations over the poor developing nations thus causing an undermining of democracy and creating a cultural homogenization. Kellner adds that some imagine that globalization is inevitable and beyond human control and intervention, while others see it as a cause of new conflicts and new spaces for struggle (Kellner, 2002: 287). Given the limited scope of the minithesis, I cannot embark on an analysis of the various counter-arguments, but hold by the main premise that globalization, whether we like it or not, has a defining role in shaping a country’s priorities.

Joel Spring (2008:331) credits Theodore Levitt as coining the term *globalization* in 1985 to describe the changes in global economics affecting production, consumption and investment.

Spring adds that this term was quickly applied to political and cultural changes that had a common effect on large segments of the world's population. One of these common phenomena, according to Spring, was schooling as he quotes Dale and Robertson, “formal education is the most commonly found institution and most commonly shared experience of all in the contemporary world” (Spring, 2008:331). This resulted in the language of globalization quickly entering government and business led discussions about schools meeting the needs of the global economy. The link between globalization, education and the concept of a knowledge economy can be seen in a quote from the European Commission's document *Teaching and Learning: On Route to the Learning Society* as reported by Stoer and Magalhaes (2004:325), which describes three basic impulses for globalization: “These three impulses are the advent of the information society, of scientific and technical civilization and the globalization of the economy. All three contribute to the development of a learning society”.

I want to add the following quote, from Spring (2008:331) which highlights the importance of speedy computer based communication in creating a knowledge economy which seems to be an imperative of globalization. So, the information society, scientific and technical civilization, and the globalization of the economy are greatly facilitated by developments in information and communication technology. Spring mentions how Achieve, Inc., a US organization formed by the National Governors Association and CEOs of major corporations, defines the global economy:

The integration of the world economy through low-cost information and communication has an even more important implication than the dramatic expansion of both the volume of trade and what can be traded. Trade and technology are making all the nations of the world more alike. Together they can bring all the world's companies the same resources- the same scientific research, the same capital, the same parts and components, the same business services and the same skills.

Thus we see that information and communication technology is speeding the global flow of information and creating a library of world knowledges which influence school curricula throughout the world (Spring, 2008:332). Also technological innovations affect the process of education. As Stoer and Magalhaes (2004:325) write, this makes “the knowledge inherent to the teaching-learning process ... an extension of the demands of economic globalization ... and

functional to the new emerging needs of scientific and technological reconfiguration of the processes of production and distribution”. In a similar vein, the World Bank phrased it this way: “A knowledge-based economy relies primarily on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities and on the application of technology.... Equipping people to deal with these demands requires a new model of education and training” (World Bank, 2003:xvii). Globalization, the knowledge economy and education are intertwined and as David Guile succinctly puts it, “The conventional wisdom is that knowledge now constitutes the most important factor of production in the economies of advanced industrial societies; and as a corollary, the populations of these countries require greater access to knowledge as represented by qualifications” (Guile, 2006:355). For developing countries the discourses of globalization and the knowledge economy conjure a vision of economic growth and modernization if the required educational opportunities are made available.

In summary, changes in human capital and industrial development brought about by globalization, have created a knowledge economy where wealth is tied to knowledge workers and ultimately to educational systems (Spring, 2008:337). Grubb and Lazerson (2006:295) opine that the rhetoric of the knowledge economy has been accepted by an extraordinary range of policy makers, reformers, most educators, the business community, most students wanting to get ahead and the general public. According to Bhattacharya and Sharma (2007:544), we are living in a knowledge society, which devotes its intellectual and technological capital towards its own future development. They mention earlier neo-classical economics recognising only labour and capital as two factors of production. Knowledge, productivity, education, and intellectual capital were not regarded as resources but based on the work of economists such as Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Solow and others, Romer proposed his New-Growth theory, which considers technology as well as the knowledge on which it is based as a central part of the economic system. Knowledge has thus become the third factor of production in leading economies. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are considered as a facilitator of knowledge creation in leading economies and have percolated into educational systems worldwide and a technology integrated curriculum is proving to be an effective means to inculcate twenty-first century skills in education (Bhattacharya & Sharma, 2007:544). Dramatic changes in the knowledge levels of the students are being witnessed (Bhattacharya & Sharma, 2007:544) by harnessing the potential

of ICT, which can help them in raising their knowledge levels by learning problem-solving techniques, and developing analytical and critical thinking skills which have become of utmost importance in today's competitive environment. The world economy is undergoing a change due to globalization and the emerging techno-economic paradigm (Bhattacharya & Sharma, 2007:544). "Technology is likely to change and restructure education at all levels ranging from schools to universities to professional training and lifelong learning. Although the pace may differ all OECD economies are moving towards a knowledge based economy" (Brinkley 2006:4). In a world being progressively flattened by the ubiquitous connectivity of ICT (Friedman, 2005) one wonders where is South African education placing itself?

In 1994, the ANC-led national government in South Africa faced the task of restructuring segregated systems and patterns of education that it had inherited. The apartheid system of education stymied the development of human capital required for sustained social and economic development which could have been achieved through equity in education and training. This inequality in education resulted in lower productivity among the major groups in the country who received substandard education and thereby rendering them unprepared for employment in high salary and high-skilled sectors (Evoh, 2007:4). It has also proven to be an obstacle to economic competitiveness, productivity, innovation and technological adaptation, since only a modest proportion of the South African workforce can meaningfully be absorbed in the technology-driven economy of today (Sahlberg, 2005).

Thus what we witness is that inadequate human resource development in South Africa placed it in an unfavorable situation when it comes to participating in and adjusting to the changing global knowledge economy. Given that income growth in any economy depends on the real output per worker, it is reasonable to infer that investment in human capital defines the limits of income. As Goldin (2003:73) observes, "The 20th century became the human-capital century. No nation today — no matter how poor — can afford not to educate its youth at the secondary school level and beyond".

The post-1994 policies of opening up and reform, within a sound fiscal and macro-economic framework, have helped South Africa increasingly to enjoy the benefits of globalisation. The

economy is now open to foreign investment, which the government views as a means of driving growth, improving international competitiveness, and providing access to foreign markets (Gouws, 2006:3). Education policy in South Africa has witnessed changes and challenges from a national and international perspective, changes that have necessitated alterations in policy paradigms, most of which reflect the socio-political priorities of the government. There exists an interrelationship between the requirements of a knowledge-based economy, education planning, government involvement in human capital development and the involvement of the private sector in the provision and distribution of quality education in post-apartheid South Africa (Evoh, 2007:3).

As is true for most developing countries, South Africa can neither ignore nor isolate itself from the struggle to become an economically developed nation nor can it be seen as lagging in transforming into a knowledge economy. Thurow warns that the convergence in per capita GDPs that was seen a couple of decades ago has given way to divergence and countries like South Africa that are not participating as fully and effectively in the global knowledge economy will fall behind while other countries like China that actively support the knowledge economy paradigm will leap ahead (Thurow, 2000:26).

South Africa could do well by embracing the cutting edge of the internet age, if we agree with Giddens's (2000) argument in *The Second Globalisation Debate*, that the driving force of globalization and inter-alia the knowledge economy is the communications revolution, a revolution that is fundamentally altering the way in which the world population interacts and accesses knowledge. The increasing pace of technological change combined with the information technology revolution has led to a meteoric rise in knowledge accumulation, accessibility and the intensity with which knowledge is being utilized to better the economic states of nations. Initiative, openness to change, creativity and problem solving abilities are fast becoming essential skills in this era of fast paced globalization (Giddens, 2000). Globalisation and knowledge economy are dependent on each other and thrive on the technological advances in connectivity via communication, travel and the use of information systems.

Evoh (2007:12) quoting te Velde points out that quality education attracts manufacturing and foreign direct investment (FDI) which is an important source of private capital for developing countries, FDI promotes development within the country as well as promotes trade with other countries. Evoh cites the outcome of the UN conference on Finance for Development (FfD) “private international capital flows, particularly foreign direct investment, along with international financial stability, are vital complements to national and international development efforts” (Evoh, 2007:13) Therefore, he contends, it is imperative for policymakers to lay an appropriate education and training foundation in South Africa in order to establish a sustainable link between local economic resources, including its trade structure (outputs), with the demands of the global economy.

Accepting globalization and the principles of a knowledge economy without the necessary labor force to meet the demands of such an economic order will put South Africa in an economic quandary. Refocusing and transforming the education system in South Africa is a necessary means to the end of economic competitiveness in a global economy. This is because education has a direct impact on human capital development, productivity, poverty reduction and social inclusion (World Bank, 2005). Human capital development through appropriate education and training for all South African students will increase the competitive edge of the country in the global economy. This calls for the development of an integrated system of education and training that caters to all, provides ten-year compulsory schooling, is based on democratic school governance structures, incorporates early childhood educare, adult basic education and special education and affirms and promotes the country’s diverse cultures, the arts, sport and recreation and youth development (Zezeza, 2004:13).

The growth of the knowledge economy in OECD countries like England, is seen as part of the calculated reaction to the risk to jobs because of imports from low wage economies and also as a necessary response to low wage economies such as China and India investing heavily in knowledge creation and distribution. This investment is defined both as the share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) devoted to Research and Development (R&D) and increasing the numbers of homegrown graduates. The implication is that through these investments in knowledge, the lower wage economies such as China and India will capture a much larger share

of the “knowledge based” segments of the international production chain in the future unless the Western economies become even more competitive in these areas (Brinkley 2006: 7). Therefore, South African graduates are competing not only against Chinese and Indian graduates but also against those from OECD countries for high salaried jobs. They should be sufficiently prepared for the global competition.

In China, an official policy statement on employment prospects to 2020 states:

It is necessary to fully utilize various education resources, strengthen the improvement in human resources quality, direct major efforts to the promotion of quality-oriented education, stress cultivation of practical abilities, and make efforts in improving education quality, so as to train millions of high-caliber workers, thousands of special talents and a large number of outstanding innovative talents for the socialist modernization drive (Brown and Lauder, 2006:30).

Friedman (2005: 36) relates an anecdote wherein a Chinese communist official indicates that the growth of a knowledge economy in China has helped it transform from a nation of workers employed by foreign manufacturers into a nation of individuals who have their own manufacturing firms. This would indicate that for economic development, South Africa needs to vigorously embrace the knowledge economy and focus on providing the necessary infrastructure as well as an adequately educated workforce. But the question remains, “who will provide these services and who will pay for these”? The government stands to gain in terms of having an educated and productive work force and lower dependency of its citizens on unemployment benefits. Affording formal *as well as* epistemological access to education, particularly higher education to deserving students is therefore imperative. The South African government has begun to address this issue through subsidising education fees so that the financial burden is eased especially for economically challenged students, as well as by encouraging universities to adopt affirmative action policies to include students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. The government and private organisations could form partnerships for providing these services because it is a shared public good.

Recent economic growth in China and India demonstrates that increases in human, institutional and technological capabilities are the driving forces behind knowledge and innovation. These in

turn, fuel economic growth (Kozma, 2006). These interrelationships highlight the importance of an improved educational system that caters for human development goals and the needs of the present knowledge-based economy. But one needs to be aware of the fact that to go beyond the tasks of providing access, quality, and inclusion in tertiary education on the one hand, and the imperative of responding to the need of the changing economy in the knowledge-based era on the other, is the responsibility not solely of the government but of all stake-holders, particularly the private sector (Adam, 1997:235). While the government has to lead the regulation and organizing of learning materials necessary for the move from a labor-intensive to a knowledge-intensive economy, the private sector shares a responsibility in providing and distributing the vital technological innovations and funds needed to accomplish the task.

In June 1996, the new Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy was designed to ensure South Africa's competitiveness and insertion into the global economy. It drove the macroeconomic strategy guiding the economic transition in South Africa and was supported in industrial policy terms by an attempt to build manufacturing exports and to move up the value chain into higher capital- and knowledge-intensive sectors (Akoojee & McGrath, 2004:27). This change in the composition of the country's economy is a move towards a broader knowledge economy which would require an increase in demand for more skilled manpower, especially in technology and manufacturing sectors (Evoh, 2007:6). According to Evoh, the demand for unskilled labor declines while the demand for skilled labor increases, following the rise in the country's exports, a sector that employs more skilled labor and technology (Evoh, 2007:6).

South Africa could put into practice the World Bank proposal that the state may guide higher education to create a knowledge economy by utilising policy, regulatory and financial inputs to enable tertiary education institutions to adapt and respond continuously to market forces. This would entail the cooperation of public providers of tertiary education and private providers to afford education systems with the necessary flexibility to respond to changing job markets (World Bank, 2002: 86). Another important aspect that South Africa could perhaps consider is the suggestion by the World Bank that funding could be linked to university outputs, which would be based on graduate satisfaction or the benchmarking of universities against each other (World Bank, 2002: 92–93).

Of course there may be criticism of the view that universities should respond to market forces. I hold that there is something valuable in teaching philosophy, or ancient Greek poetry, or offering a degree in Fine Arts, without it being clear that there is a market-demand for these. My argument about universities responding to market needs is more modest: I want to argue that a university *should* respond to economic and market needs, but this is not *all* that it should do. It is a necessary but not sufficient goal for a university.

3.4 Conclusion

We can summarize the key features of knowledge economy as follows: The knowledge economy represents a discontinuity from the past, but it is not a “new” economy functioning to a new set of economic laws. The knowledge economy is present in all sectors of the economy, not just the knowledge intensive industries. The knowledge economy has a high and growing intensity of ICT usage by well-educated knowledge workers (Brinkley, 2006: 13).

In a knowledge-based economy, higher education is important in a nation’s ability to participate in the global economy. This is especially the case for nations in the developing world where any chance of competing in the new economy may hinge on the successful development of a strong higher education sector. The changing nature of the world economy is grounded in the production and management of knowledge as well as technological advances related to communications and electronic networking. Such a shift has significant implications for education and development, as Peters and Besley (2006:51) observe: “If transformations in knowledge production entail a rethinking of economic fundamentals, the shift to a knowledge economy also requires a profound rethinking of education as an emerging form of knowledge capitalism involving knowledge creation, acquisition, transmission, and organization”.

The knowledge economy and globalization are the engines driving modern markets. Countries that were until recently showing upward graphs of poverty and unemployment and were struggling with scarce natural resources are responding to the demands of the knowledge economy to become global economic participants. Therefore, one could argue that South Africa

would possibly witness faster as well as sustainable progress, if it were to fulfill the important requirement for a nation to create a thriving knowledge economy by putting into practice an education policy that truly embraces the “no child left behind” and “education open for all” paradigms, but one that never compromises on its quality of education.

Empirical research proves that an average year of attending secondary and higher levels of education, particularly for males aged 25 and above has a constructive relationship on economic growth (Barro, 2002). Therefore, I hold that economic growth could be achieved in any country with a growth in per capita income resulting from the required levels of education being achieved. Government policies will need to focus on upgrading human capital through encouraging access to a range of skills, and improving the knowledge distribution power of the economy through intensive efforts. This is because employment in the knowledge-based economy is characterised by increasing demand for more highly-skilled workers. The knowledge-intensive sectors of developed economies tend to be the most dynamic in terms of employment growth. Rapid changes in technology are making educated and skilled labour more valuable than unskilled labour.

In the next chapter, I will look at South Africa’s higher education policy and at how a particular tertiary education institution is responding to the demands of a globalized knowledge economy by implementing an affirmative action policy.

CHAPTER 4

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES

Part of the aims of this chapter is to show how the tension between affirmative action and higher education institutions has worked itself out in South Africa and what its effects were on the practice of South African higher education. I give an overview of higher education in the apartheid era and the changes that occurred post apartheid. In conclusion, I will be looking at UCT as an example of a formerly white institution and its application of affirmative action. In South Africa there is a tension between the higher education reform agenda developed and driven by the Ministry of Education, which emphasises national topics such as redress, democratisation and equity, and the global reform agenda falling under the responsibility of other ministries, such as Finance, and Trade and Industry, which promote issues such as efficiency, effectiveness, competition and responsiveness. Some educationalists hold that, as is the case in most other countries, in South Africa the national higher education agenda has been made subservient to the global reform agenda (Maasen & Cloete, 2004:12). Before I look at the tensions, I will first outline the official policies with regards to admissions to higher education institutions, especially with regards to access and social justice.

4.1 National policies – Higher Education Act 101 of 1997

According to the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 “higher education” means all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than grade 12 at high school or its equivalent in terms of the National Qualifications Framework as stipulated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act 58 of 1995), and includes tertiary education as contemplated in Schedule 4 of the Constitution (Higher Education Act 101 of 1997: 7).

This Act also defines a “higher education institution” as any formally registered institution that provides higher education on a full-time, part-time or distance basis (ibid: 8).

The Higher Education Act also lays down guidelines for admission to public higher education institutions (ibid: 28). It states:

- (1) Subject to this Act, the council of a public higher education institution, after consulting the senate of the public higher education institution, determines the admission policy of the public higher education institution.
- (2) The council must publish the admission policy and make it available on request.
- (3) The admission policy of a public higher education institution must provide appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities and may not unfairly discriminate in any way.
- (4) Subject to this Act, the council may, with the approval of the senate-
 - (a) determine entrance requirements in respect of particular higher education programmes;
 - (b) determine the number of students who may be admitted for a particular higher education programme and the manner of their selection;
 - (c) determine the minimum requirements for readmission to study at the public higher education institution concerned; and
 - (d) refuse readmission to a student who fails to satisfy such minimum requirements for readmission.

So, although each institution of higher education can determine its own admission policy, it must do so within the broad framework of redress and equity. Of course in point 3 what counts as “appropriate measures”, and how one determines “past inequalities” and how one defines “unfair discrimination” are themselves issues for complex debate.

Regarding the allocation of funds by the concerned Minister, the Act states (ibid: 28)

- (1) The Minister must, after consulting the CHE (Council for Higher Education) and with the concurrence of the Minister of Finance, determine the policy on the funding of public higher education, which must include appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities, and publish such policy by notice in the Gazette.
- (2) The Minister must, subject to the policy determined in terms of subsection (1), allocate public funds to public higher education on a fair and transparent basis.

- (3) The Minister may, subject to the policy determined in terms of subsection (1), impose-
- (a) any reasonable condition in respect of an allocation contemplated in subsection (2);
 - and
 - (b) different conditions in respect of different public higher education institutions, different instructional programmes or different allocations, if there is a reasonable basis for such differentiation.

(4) The policy referred to in subsection (1) may discriminate in a fair manner between students who are not citizens or permanent residents of the Republic and students who are citizens or permanent residents of the Republic.

[Sub-s. (4) added by s. 4 of Act 55 of 1999.]

Although this Act provides government funding for universities, it also creates the legal space for each registered University to determine its own policy for transformation, a policy which could be considered to be discriminatory based on fairness.

4.2 Overview of the higher education context in the apartheid era from 1959 to 1994

The introduction of the 1984 constitution in the Republic of South Africa, with its division between “general” and “own affairs”, affirmed the apartheid divisions in education in South Africa. By the beginning of 1985, a total of 19 higher education institutions had been designated as being for the exclusive use of whites, two as being for the exclusive use of Coloureds, two for the exclusive use of Indians, and six as being for the exclusive use of Africans (Bunting, 2004: 35). Under the apartheid government therefore, universities did not determine their own admissions policy. Historically white universities in South Africa could be divided into two distinct sub-groupings: those that had Afrikaans as the main medium of communication and instruction and those in which the main medium of communication and instruction was English. The key element distinguishing the two sub-groupings is that some of these universities supported the National Party government as well as its apartheid higher education policies, while others did not (Bunting, 2004: 39). The first sub-group comprised six universities, the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Pretoria, Potchefstroom University, the Rand Afrikaans University and the University of the Orange Free State, which used Afrikaans as the official

medium of communication and instruction and the University of Port Elizabeth which used both English and Afrikaans as the teaching medium. By 1994, many members of governing bodies and executives at these historically white Afrikaans-medium universities had serious concerns about their future viability as institutions, believing that a change in government, from the National Party to the African National Congress, would place at risk their share of government subsidy funds (Bunting, 2004: 42).

The second sub-group consisted of the four historically white English-medium universities: the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Natal, and Rhodes University. The universities in this group were generally referred to as the liberal universities due to their refusal to adopt the apartheid government's view that universities are simply creatures of the state (Bunting, 2004: 42). The government maintained that any public higher education institution in the RSA was essentially a legal entity, a "creature of the state". It was brought into existence by an action of the state, and its existence could be terminated by another action of the state. This made legitimate, the government believed, its decision to restrict institutions to serving the interests of one and only one race group (Bunting, 2004: 37). Often, these universities objected strongly to the policies and actions of the apartheid government, even though they continued accepting substantial subsidy funding from that government (Bunting, 2004: 42). These institutions were for whites only, nevertheless the government put in place the permit system which allowed a white institution to apply for government permission to enroll black students in programmes not offered by a black institution. However, the few black students enrolled by these institutions tended to be postgraduates who did not have to attend classes on campus (Bunting, 2004: 40). These universities faced the transition in 1994 with a great deal of confidence seeing the end of the apartheid government as a victory for the ideals for which they had fought throughout the 1980s. They also believed that the new government would recognise that they were allies in the struggle and as such were to be considered as national assets and would therefore permit them to continue pursuing their academic teaching and research agendas (Bunting, 2004: 44). Bunting cites Mamdani (2004:44) as commenting that the historically white English-medium universities were, in fact, never major agents for social and political change in South Africa, despite the anti-apartheid stance they had adopted. He maintains that these four institutions were islands of white social privilege due to their systems of governance and their

intellectual agendas and they displayed little sense of social accountability to the broader South African community during the years of apartheid oppression. Elaborating on this idea, Bunting cites Jakes Gerwel (Bunting, 2004:44) former Vice-chancellor of the University of the Western Cape who held the view that every South African university had a central ideology which described the context of its operations. The Afrikaans universities had always functioned within the operative context of Afrikaner nationalism embedded in a complex way into its various correlative institutions. The English-language universities operated within the context of Anglophile liberalism, primarily linking and responding to their institutional expressions as in the English schools, cultural organisations and, importantly, big business. The intellectual agendas of the four historically white English-medium universities were guided by their view that they were international institutions engaged in the same kinds of knowledge production as British or American universities (Bunting, 2004: 43).

Historically African, Indian, and Coloured universities

During the apartheid era, the South African Government limited the higher education of black South Africans to a narrow range of options conducive to a racially determined distribution of labour (Barnes, 2005:210). The Extension of the University Education Act of 1959 provided the legal structure for the establishment of higher education institutions (HEIs) as part of the Bantu self-government policy which resulted in 11 institutions operating in the self-governing territories by 1988. All African education was under the control of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of South Africa (OECD, 2008: 326). The first HEIs exclusively designated for Coloured and Indian citizens were formally established in the 1960s. With regard to education and culture, the 1984 Constitution made a distinction between *general* and *own* affairs. A central department was responsible for *general affairs*, whereas the term *specific affairs* defined those matters specific to the culture and values of different population groups. Accordingly, education was defined as *own affair* for all groups, except Africans, whose education was regarded as *general affair* under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Culture (OECD, 2008: 326).

The HEIs in the former bantustans (the universities of Venda, Transkei, North West and Fort Hare) were funded according to requests and budgets of their respective tribal authorities with the implied issues of corruption and lack of accountability. Similarly the Universities of the Western Cape (Coloured), Durban Westville (Indian), Zululand (African) and the North (African) were funded by their respective racial educational departments (Barnes, 2005:211). Developing under unequal funding practices, the HEIs were forced to function under highly suppressive internal and external governance and management measures which severely constrained intellectual freedom and institutional autonomy. This was manifested in these universities having poorly developed educational facilities and a below par administrative capacity (Barnes, 2005:210). These universities offered a limited range of academic programmes to students that largely came from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such students who generally had their university fees in arrears, enrolled in increasing numbers in the late 1980s without the corresponding increases in the number of teaching and administrative staff (EPU, 1997:53), thus placing ever-increasing pressure on the quality of educational delivery. Efforts by these institutions to conquer these multiple challenges from the 1980s onwards were generally unsuccessful, which resulted in heavy financial burdens due to non-payment of tuition fees, low student success and throughput rates, high undergraduate teaching loads, few research opportunities and an increase in the number of junior academics isolated from academic networks and working in an environment of disillusionment (Barnes, 2005:212).

By 1994, due to considerable resistance to the apartheid regime in the historically black (i.e. African, Indian, Coloured) and in some of the historically white institutions, the racial profile of student enrolments in some of the institutions had deviated drastically from the apartheid government's aims. The four historically white English-medium universities exploited the ministerial permit system as fully as they could: wherever possible, they interpreted applications from black students as being for programmes not offered by black institutions, and they specifically guided black applicants towards such programmes. The effect of these efforts was that by 1990, 28% and by 1993, 38% of the students registered at these four English-medium universities were either African or Coloured or Indian (Bunting, 2004:43). It was against this background in 1994, that South Africa's democratic government tried to reshape the higher

education system into one that met the goals of equity, democratisation, responsiveness and efficiency by implementing new higher education policies.

4.3 The higher education landscape post apartheid

In the first two years after 1994 there was a period of extraordinary changes in South African higher education that culminated in a report from the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) in 1996. The next phase converted the Commission's report into a White Paper (Department of Education, 1997) and a new Higher Education Act, promulgated in 1997. The White Paper for higher education transformation (Department of Education, 1997) embraced the notion of co-operative governance which sought to guide the system in three important ways:

_ *Planning* would be used to encourage institutions to outline a unique mission, enrolment targets and overall institutional plan.

_ *Financial incentives* would encourage institutions to address national, regional and local education, training needs and priorities.

_ *Reporting requirements* would be developed; using performance indicators dedicated to measure, in the spirit of greater institutional accountability, the extent to which the institutional plan and national priorities were being met. Thus, these performance indicators would be highly significant in shaping the allocation of future funding (Cloete, 2004: 55).

During 1997, the newly constituted higher education division within the new unified Department of Education started the implementation process of the Act and of the White Paper. While the phase from 1994 to 1999 was mainly about putting a new policy and legislative framework in place, the post-1999 phase was declared to be a period of implementation (Department of Education, 2000). However, in 2000 Kader Asmal, the second Education Minister to be appointed under the democratic dispensation, started a process of reassessing whether the system was putting South Africa on the desired path. A National Working Group on Higher Education was established by the Minister and presented its report in early 2002. It prefaced its recommendations for rationalisation by emphasising that: "A restructured higher education system should be socially just and equitable in its distribution of resources and opportunities, it should meet the requirements of long-term sustainability and it should enhance the productivity

of the system through effectively and efficiently meeting the teaching, skills development and research needs of the country” (OECD 2008:70). Thus the geographic and racial fragmentation, structural inefficiencies and duplication of services in South Africa’s higher education system have been steadily addressed since 1997, with the appearance of the White Paper on Higher Education. In 2004, many of the higher education institutions were reorganised and merged. This resulted in the number of institutions being reduced from 36 to 24 to establish universities of technology, comprehensive universities and two Institutes of Higher Education (Cloete et al, 2004:52).

By 1994 a low participation rate in higher education overall (17% of the population), low throughput levels and small graduate outputs resulted in a severe shortage of high-level skills in the country. Moreover, participation rates of South African students in higher education were highly skewed by race: nearly 12% for Africans, 13% for Coloureds, 51% for Indians, and 60% for whites (Council on Higher Education, 2007: 10). Pre-1994 white, male South Africans were over-represented throughout the education system and graduates were concentrated mainly in the humanities and under-represented in the fields of science, technology and commerce. The challenge for the new South Africa was to transform the higher education to one that would meet all three of the national goals of equity, efficiency and development (Kulati and Moja, 2004: 153). This transition of higher education in South Africa post-1994 coincided with a moment in world history broadly captured in the term “globalization”. As higher education attempted to comply with the demand for democratisation, it was subjected at the same time to global realities such as market competition, the commodifying of higher education products, and increased demands from the state for efficiency and effectiveness (Cloete et al, 2004:119).

Post-1994, policy makers were faced with the challenge to construct something that would nullify the ingrained inequities of the apartheid sponsored higher education policies and rectify the flawed distribution of human and physical resources as well as produce skilled graduates to manage the new economy, who would be suitably responsive to the social and economic needs of a developing and modern society. The new South Africa was a huge disappointment for historically black universities as the intended policy outcomes of institutional redress and an increase in capacity were not realised and, instead, student choice meant that many of these

institutions lost their traditional students to the historically advantaged institutions (Cloete et al, 2004:115). During 1995-2001 the flows of government funds to institutions were uneven. Primarily because of the changing patterns, government funding to the historically white Afrikaans medium universities increased in real terms over the period 1995 to 2001, and increased particularly sharply between 1999 and 2001. In terms of real rands, the government appropriations of the historically white Afrikaans-medium universities increased by R239-million (or 22%) between 1999 and 2001. Those of the historically white English medium universities increased in real rands by R54-million (or 7%) between 1999 and 2001. In marked contrast, the government appropriation total of the historically black universities fell in real rands by R102-million (or - 8%) between 1999 and 2001 of student enrolment within different groups of institutions (Bunting, 2004:89). Thus it turned out that the new South Africa benefited the historically Afrikaans -medium institutions and not the black institutions that were looking forward to better funding and higher enrolments. A possible reason for this unexpected increase in subsidy funding was that the students now had a choice. As a result, they tended to reject the “mediocre” institutions set up for them by apartheid and embraced the better option of the formerly “exclusive” institutions. The Afrikaans medium campuses in particular were able to make important entrepreneurial forays into what turned out to be a substantial market of education consumers belonging to the black community (Barnes, 2005:221)

The public higher education landscape in South Africa now in 2012 consists of 23 public institutions, including eleven universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology. Universities offer “a mix of programmes, including career-oriented degree and professional programmes, general formative programmes and research master’s and doctoral programmes” (Ministry of Education, 2001:49), universities of technology offer “vocational education both at degree and subdegree level” (Reddy, 2006: 36), while comprehensive universities offer a variety of programmes from research degrees to career-oriented diplomas (Ministry of Education, 2009:8).

Institutions are unevenly distributed across the country according to the level of economic activity in the given locations. Gauteng province, the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are well supplied with public institutions. Several institutions viz. North West University,

the University of Limpopo, Tshwane University of Technology, and the Vaal University of Technology, operate multiple campuses. Three institutions operate in Limpopo and two in each of the North West province and Free State. Two provinces, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape, have no universities of their own and thus have limited access to higher education institutions. In order to address this gap, two National Institutes for Higher Education have been set up. The National Institute for Higher Education, Northern Cape was launched in June 2003 and the National Institute of Higher Education, Mpumalanga in October 2006. These institutes are tasked with coordinating the provision of programmes in line with local needs, making use of the established higher education providers in neighbouring provinces.

Globally, one does not often come across official policies in higher education which have as their priority the redress of past inequities. In the US, where affirmative action had been put on the change agenda, it was based on individual advancement and there has since been a major withdrawal from this policy. The same trend emerged in South Africa, bringing about an improvement in individual access to historically advantaged higher education institutions, but there was little done to redress the systemic imbalances between historically disadvantaged and historically advantaged institutions (Cloete, 2004: 274) .

The gross enrolment rate in higher education measures enrolment in higher education institutions as a proportion of 20 to 24-year-olds in the population. In 2001, the National Policy for Higher Education (NPHE), which provided the implementation framework for transforming the higher education system, set a target participation rate in higher education of 20% over a 10-to-15 year-period (DoE, 2009:26). The government had to:

- Make higher education more accessible to a larger percentage of the 20-24 year old population.
- Make the actual student population more demographically representative.

As may be seen in Figure 1, the increase in the percentage of African students who enrolled in higher education changed the student profile at higher education institutions. Whereas in 1986, African students comprised only 27% of the share of higher education enrolment and white students 60%, by 2006 this situation had been reversed with African students comprising 61% of enrolment and white students 25% (DoE, 2009:27). This could have been partly due to

affirmative action policies being put into place to achieve the target participation rate in higher education as set out by the NPHE as much of this increase in higher education enrolment took place amongst African students.

Percentage head-count enrolment at public higher education institutions by race: 1986 to 2006

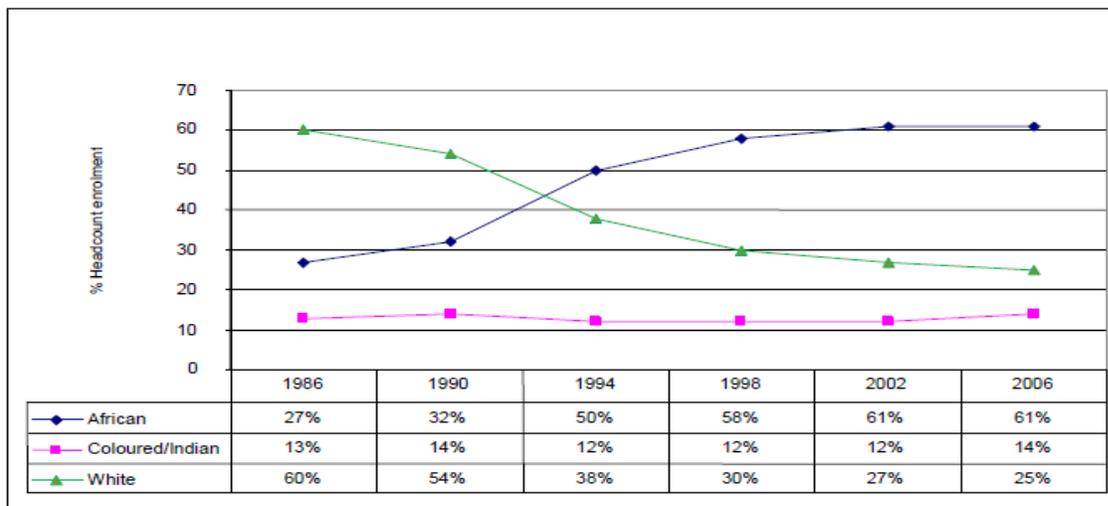


Figure 1. (DoE, 2009:27).

The major increase in the number of African students enrolling in higher education resulted in the participation rate of African students more than doubling between 1986 and 2006 (see Figure 2 below). However, this was from a very low base of only 5% of Africans participating in higher education in 1986. By 2006, the participation rate of Africans in higher education was still very low, standing at only 12%. The situation was very similar for Coloured students, with only 13% of the Coloured population participating in higher education, up from 9% in 1986. In contrast to the situation of Africans and Coloureds, who remained underrepresented in higher education institutions, the participation rate for whites held steady at around 60% since 1986, while the rates for Indians increased from 32% to 51% (DoE, 2009:27)

Gross enrolment rates in public higher education institutions by race (as a proportion of the population of 20-to-24-year-olds): 1986, 1995 and 2006

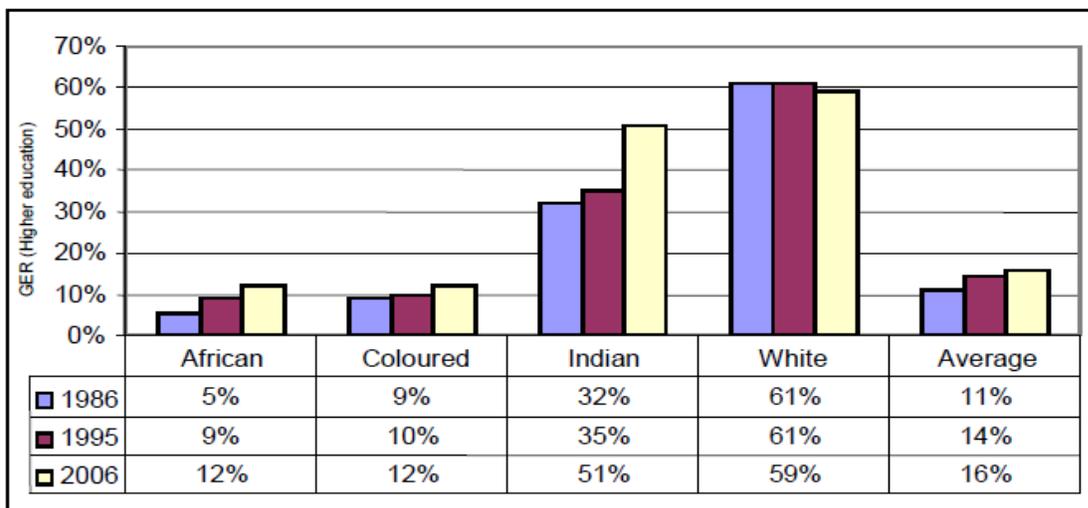


Figure 2 (DoE, 2009:28).

According to information from the Department of Education’s Macro Indicators Report (DoE, 2009:25), despite the new democratically-elected government's commitment to transform the higher education system by improving access for the previously disadvantaged sectors of the community, head-count enrolment increased by only 10% between 1994 and 2000 – an average annual increase of 1.6%, compared to an average annual increase of 7% during the period 1986 to 1994. The retention rate in some sub-sectors of the higher education system fell by up to 10% during the latter half of the 1990s, compared to the years in which rapid growth occurred. The Report states that part of the challenge faced by higher education institutions during this period, was the decline in the number of school leavers with a matriculation endorsement pass, which is the minimum requirement for entry into university. Another factor contributing to the slower pace of growth in head-count enrolment was the “significant fall” in the retention rate in higher education at the time. Therefore I argue that it is essential to provide epistemological access along with formal access to achieve the redress needed to counter the imbalances of the past.

4.4 UCT as an example of a formerly white institution and its application of affirmative action

It would need more investigation to claim that the increase in enrollment rates in higher education of black students was due to affirmative action. However, I will investigate the case of one institution and draw out the link between the University of Cape Town's (UCT) student body demographics and its affirmative action policies.

According to its undergraduate admissions policy and selection criteria for the 2011 academic year, UCT's admissions policy is framed within the values of the Constitution and the requirements of the Higher Education Act. This Act requires that its admissions policy "must provide appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities and may not unfairly discriminate in any way" (UCT, 2011: 2). UCT interprets these values and requirements as placing an obligation on it as a university to provide redress for students from the consequences of historical, racially-based discrimination in society and schools. UCT accepts this obligation in part because it acknowledges that the effects of apartheid-era discrimination remain structural fault lines in South African society (ibid:2). As a matter of policy, UCT aims for a student body which has both a significant number of international students and one where the local component of its student body increasingly reflects the demographics of the South African population (ibid:2). It paradoxically uses race as a measure for giving effect to the requirement for redress for previously disadvantaged South African applicants, as it remains "the best initial, broad-brush measure of past structural inequality and thus for effecting redress" (ibid:2). UCT recognizes the danger of perpetuating the use of race as a criterion for admissions decisions, and it knows that it must move away from this in time as is acknowledged in its admission policy.

UCT justifies using race as a proxy for disadvantage and as a measure for achieving redress and a diverse student body and states that its admissions policy is designed both to provide redress and to ensure a diverse student body. As it uses race as a marker to do this, it invites South African and permanent-resident applicants to classify themselves and to indicate whether or not they belong to a previously-disadvantaged, or designated group, and if so to categorise themselves as one of either black South African or Indian South African or Coloured South

African or Chinese South African. South Africans who choose not to categorise themselves in this way or who categorise themselves as a white South African will be administered in the open category, and UCT's redress measures will not apply to them. The UCT policy also invites South African citizens and South African permanent-resident applicants who do not belong to one of these groups, or who choose not to classify themselves in this way, to categorise themselves as white or other.

UCT motivates that this classification is also required by the Department of Higher Education and Training for statistical purposes and further states that its redress and diversity policies apply only to applicants who are both from a designated population group (Black African, Coloured, Indian or Chinese) and South African citizens or South African permanent residents. UCT expects South African citizens and South African permanent-resident applicants to categorise themselves in the same way an employer would have to do under the employment equity legislation.

UCT has set overall enrolment targets and equity targets per programme. These are defined as aspirational targets, not quotas. Aspirational targets mean what “is aspired to”...what the faculty/university wants to achieve regarding representivity at admissions. All faculties are expected to aim to admit specified minimum numbers of eligible South African African, Chinese, Coloured and Indian students in accordance with these equity targets (ibid: 3). It is important to note that these targets are aims and not formal quotas, and that only students who are eligible can be admitted. In order to ascertain eligibility, UCT uses the results of both the national school leaving exams as well as its own National Benchmark Test (NBT). UCT relies on selection instruments to calculate points for the Senior Certificate (SC) and National Senior Certificate (NSC). The following tables are used to calculate admissions points on the basis of achievements in NSC or SC examinations.

NSC RATING TABLE	
ACHIEVEMENT RATING	APS POINTS
7 at 90% or better	8
7 at 80% or better	7
6	6
5	5
4	4
3	3
2	0
1 below 30%	0

SC RATING TABLE		
SYMBOL	HG	SG
	APS POINTS	APS POINTS
A	8	6
B	7	5
C	6	4
D	5	3
E	4	2
F	3	1

Table 1.

Points are allocated per subject, and six scores (excluding Life Orientation, and including subjects as indicated in the requirement criteria of the different faculties) are added together to produce an Admissions Point Score (APS) per applicant (ibid:5).

There are two NBTs:

First, the Academic and Quantitative literacy test (AQL) consists of two components, namely, academic literacy and quantitative literacy. While one test is written, an applicant will be awarded separate scores for each component. Applicants to all faculties write the AQL. Second, the Mathematics test is based on the Mathematics Grade 12 syllabus and therefore is only offered from August each year. Applicants who wish to enter a programme with mathematics-based coursework are required to write the Mathematics Test. One score is awarded for the Mathematics Test.

I will look at the criteria and selection process of UCT's faculty of Health Sciences to get an indication of the race-based requirements to gain admission to this much sought after faculty.

First-time entering undergraduate applicants are assessed using two measures:

1. APS score (based on UCT points rating table) or other final school-leaving results (using a comparable rating table as guideline where possible.)
2. Results in the National Benchmark Tests (NBTs), reduced to a single score

The APS (derived from either the SC or NSC results) is weighted 70% of an overall total score, and score for the NBTs is weighted 30% of an overall score. I reproduce below the criteria and selection process of the faculty of Health Sciences for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) at UCT by means of tables summarising minimum achievement levels for consideration and likely scores required for admission for SC and NSC applicants. The following example relates to applicants who categorise themselves as “black” South African. UCT uses the term “black” specifically to designate what I have referred to as “African” students. UCT sets a target number of MBChB places which it hopes to give to qualified black South African applicants. This will be a proportion of the total 200 first year MBChB places. It sets this target because it aims for a diverse MBChB class, and in order to give redress to black South Africans. It then offers places to the best qualified of this category who meet its minimum requirements, up to the target number. Competition for the MBChB is tough and the cut-off point is high (and higher than its minimum). But because of the legacy which is the basis for the redress policy UCT has adopted, it expects that the cut-off for black South African applicants for the MBChB may well be lower than the cut-off in the other categories and in particular, in the cut-off for successful applicants in the open category.

Senior Certificate applicants

Programme and selection category	Subject requirements	Minimum APS points to be considered	Admission possible (minima acceptable)	Admission probable
MBChB				
Black	Mathematics	39	APS: 39	APS: 41
			NBT result: 12/30	NB T result: 15/30
Coloured	HG: E		APS: 39	APS: 42
	SG: D		NBT result: 12/30	NBT result: 16/30
Indian / Chinese	Physical Science		APS: 42	APS: 47
			NBT result: 18/30	NBT result: 24/30
White/Open	HG: E	APS: 42	APS: 47	
	SG: D	NBT result: 18/30	NBT result: 24/30	

National Senior Certificate Applicants

Programme and selection category	Subject requirements	Minimum level of performance and NSC point score to be considered	Admission possible (minima acceptable)	Admission probable
MBChB				
Black	Mathematics Plus	Level 4 for	APS: 36 NBT result: 12/30	APS: 36 NBT result: 15/30
Coloured	Physical Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths plus • Physical Science plus • English plus • NSC score of 36 	APS points: 36 NBT result: 12/30	APS: 40 NBT result: 16/30
Indian / Chinese			APS: 40 NBT result: 18/30	APS: 46 NBT result: 24/30
White/Open			APS: 42 NBT result: 18/30	APS: 47 NBT result: 24/3

Table 2: (University of Cape Town Undergraduate Admissions Policy and selection criteria for the 2011 academic year: 22)

Most applicants must write both the school leaving exam (Senior Certificate or National Senior Certificate) and the NBT, for which case a result out of 30 is calculated. For applicants to the Rehabilitation Sciences who have Mathematical Literacy rather than Mathematics, and who write only one test, a result out of 20 is calculated, but this result is also converted to a score out of 30 (given the weighting of NBT vs. SC/NSC results).

- If an applicant obtains the minimum SC/NSC score, he/she is usually required to obtain a higher NBT score than the minima mentioned in the “admission possible” column in Table 2.
- An NBT score of 30% or less for any single test result (10 out of 30 or 7 out of 20) is generally unacceptable.
- The listed scores for “possible” and “probable” admission offers are guidelines only.

Meeting these does not guarantee admission

Table 2 shows that the minimum requirements apply to all race groups but there are differential requirements based on racial categories for possible and probable admissions. UCT sets the minimum requirements for the qualification (e.g., for engineering qualifications it prescribes minimum achievement levels in Mathematics and Science) and the minimum admission APS below which it will not admit; these minima differ for regular and extended degree/academic

development programmes. These will be levels below which it believes that there is no reasonable chance of success. For each qualification or group of qualifications UCT sets target redress enrolment targets for each redress category, and where needed it sets limits for international enrolments for each qualification (UCT admissions policy 2012:3).

I attended an admission policy debate at the University of Cape Town on 2 September 2010 and reproduce here certain sections of the transcript of the proceedings as found on UCT's web homepage. Dr Max Price, the Vice-chancellor of UCT, argued that UCT needed a form of affirmative action that recognises disadvantage, makes allowance for redress in the admissions process and then adds intervention programmes, academic development, etc., to ensure that those people, although admitted with lower marks, ultimately have a good success rate.

He further stated that the university is trying to find the direct measures of disadvantage - such as looking at people's income, looking at what schools they went to, looking at what early school educational opportunities they had – and if it could find those and if it could measure them before people come to university at the time that they're applying, UCT might then be able to do away with race as the measure or the proxy for disadvantage.

He conceded that the university has to explicitly go out and find the best black students that are out there in order both to disrupt those stereotypes that otherwise would exist; and to make sure that they have lots of black students at UCT who are among the best students and who get through without any academic development. He also mentioned another possible model for admission, which would be to take the top ten students in every class in the country, no matter how good or bad their school and no matter how good or bad their marks – on the grounds that within any particular micro environment, the best rise to the top, those with talent, those with motivation, and those who are overcoming the odds do the best in that class. He contended that in this way UCT would probably get much more talent, much more potential out of that group than it would through some of its other current APS systems.

In order to look at the changing demographic profile at UCT, I refer to the following trends that are apparent in the enrolment profiles by “race”:

- Between 1994 and 2004, the overall proportion of white students at UCT dropped from 60% to 49% while the overall proportion of African students increased from 21% to 29%². The proportional increases in Coloured and Indian enrolments over the same period were comparatively smaller. By 2004 only the Humanities faculty had more than 50% white students. Between 2007 and 2011, the overall proportion of white students at UCT dropped from 40% to 36% while the overall proportion of African students increased by a margin of 4%, Coloured enrolments increased by 1 % and Indian enrolments were at a constant percentage, neither increasing or decreasing
- The proportion of African undergraduates increased from 24% in 1994 to 30% in 2004, and the proportion of Indian students increased by 2% to 8% during the same period. The proportions of white undergraduates in most faculties dropped markedly between 1994 and 2004, other than in Humanities which witnessed an increase in the proportion of white undergraduates over this period. Between 2007 and 2011, the proportion of African undergraduates increased by 5%, while the number of white undergraduates decreased by 5%, Coloured undergraduate enrolment numbers showed an increase of 1% and Indian undergraduates maintained an unchanged percentage.
- The overall proportion of black postgraduates increased by 18% to 46% between 1994 and 2004. By the end of 2004, only the Faculties of Law and EBE (Engineering and Built Environment) had less than 50% white postgraduates (46% and 46% respectively). Between 2007 and 2011, the number of African postgraduates increased by 2% and Coloured postgraduates increased by 1%, while the number of white postgraduates decreased by 4 %, and the number of Indian postgraduates showed no change.
- The most significant change in student body of UCT over the last decade is that international students have replaced a portion of South African white students.

(<http://www.uct.ac.za/usr/ipd/QA/news/regnatintl/StudentLife@uct.pdf>: 16)
(University of Cape Town, Faculties report 2011)

To look at how UCT in the management of its admissions policy is responding to the need for redress in higher education, I will look at the number of first-time entering undergraduate

² It must however be borne in mind that the percentage of international students, especially from the rest of Africa, also increased. In order to ascertain the extent to which UCT's enrollment addresses specifically issues of redress, I will discuss the percentage of black African students from South Africa as given in the figures from 2007 – 2011.

applications (Table 3), the number of first-time entering undergraduate offers (Table 4) and the overall enrollment of students at UCT according to population groups (Tables 5 - 8). The latest figures as mentioned in the UCT Faculty report 2011, note the number of overall undergraduate applications from the African population group has shown an average annual increase of 15,4 % while the average annual increase in undergraduate applications from white students is only 4.2% between 2006 and 2010. Below are figures for first-time undergraduate applicants:

Table 3: First-time entering undergraduate applications by population group

Population group	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Average annual change
S A African	4289 34%	4884 38%	5557 40%	6275 39%	6770 38%	12.1%
S A Coloured	1342 11%	1486 12%	1595 12%	1683 10%	2113 12%	12.0%
S A Indian	902 7%	989 8%	1116 8%	1182 7%	1300 7%	9.6%
S A White	3431 27%	3146 25%	3263 24%	3532 22%	3748 26%	2.2%
S A Chinese				77 0%	112 1%	1%
Other	283 2%	174 1%	227 2%	539 3%	325 2%	3.5%
International	2397 19%	2128 17%	2025 15%	2817 17%	3500 20%	9.9%
Total	12644 100%	12807 100%	13783 100%	16105 100%	17868 100%	9.0%

(University of Cape Town, Faculties Report 2011)

The statistics regarding first-time entering undergraduate offers show that there is an annual increase of 6.7% in the number of African students while the number of offers to white students shows a decrease of 1% between 2007 and 2011.

Table 4: First-time entering undergraduate offers by population group

<i>Population group</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>Average annual change</i>
<i>SA African</i>	1647 25%	1791 25%	2157 31%	1803 26%	2137 29%	6.7%
<i>SA coloured</i>	791 12%	944 13%	885 13%	727 11%	930 12%	4.1%
<i>SA Indian</i>	542 8%	711 10%	791 11%	711 10%	802 11%	10.3%
<i>SA White</i>	2499 38%	2584 36%	2333 33%	2320 34%	2401 33%	-1.0%
<i>Chinese</i>				45 1%	64 1%	
<i>Other</i>	108 2%	80 1%	58 1%	106 2%	131 2%	4.9%
<i>International</i>	903 14%	1033 13%	772 13%	1198 13%	919 12%	0.4%
<i>Total</i>	6493 100%	7143 100%	6996 100%	6910 100%	7384 100%	3.3%

Comparing 2011 applications with actual offers, we see that of the 6,770 applications by South African Africans, only 2,137 were actually offered a place, i.e. only 31,5% of South African Africans were successful. In contrast, of the 3,748 South African white applicants, 2,401 were offered a place, i.e. 64%. So, despite UCT's affirmative action policies, there is still a daunting backlog before demographic representivity is attained. It signals that there are persistent problems with the quality of high school education in preparing students for admission into higher education. I will pick this up in more detail in chapter 5.

Table 5: Matric A level aggregate equivalents of SA African first-time entering undergraduates

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Commerce</i>	44%	53 %	42%	40%	47%
<i>EBE</i>	22%	26%	21%	34%	42%
<i>Health Sciences</i>	24%	52%	41%	30%	60%
<i>Humanities</i>	4%	4%	2%	4%	5%
<i>Law</i>	17%	7%	53%	12%	43%
<i>Science</i>	11%	10%	11%	9%	19%
<i>TOTAL</i>	193	254	274	236	337
	22%	20%	22%	24%	34%

Table 6: Matric A level aggregate equivalents of SA Coloured first-time entering undergraduates

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Commerce</i>	45%	53 %	31%	31%	45%
<i>EBE</i>	48%	46%	30%	25%	50%
<i>Health Sciences</i>	40%	42%	45%	23%	45%
<i>Humanities</i>	8%	8%	4%	9%	8%
<i>Law</i>	9%	13%	14%	25%	33%
<i>Science</i>	18%	18%	9%	26%	21%
<i>TOTAL</i>	138	163	110	92	133
	25%	27%	17%	19%	26%

Table 7: Matric A level aggregate equivalents of SA White first-time entering undergraduates

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Commerce</i>	74%	66 %	69%	64%	63%
<i>EBE</i>	55%	53%	47%	45%	60%
<i>Health Sciences</i>	78%	82%	80%	66%	68%
<i>Humanities</i>	28%	29%	28%	28%	30%
<i>Law</i>	59%	43%	27%	57%	60%
<i>Science</i>	49%	53%	47%	44%	63%
<i>TOTAL</i>	785	747	725	593	580
	51%	50%	45%	43%	49%

Table 8: Matric A level aggregate equivalents of SA Indian first-time entering undergraduates

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Commerce</i>	78%	76 %	73%	65%	66%
<i>EBE</i>	58%	69%	58%	64%	63%
<i>Health Sciences</i>	78%	85%	72%	69%	75%
<i>Humanities</i>	18%	8%	10%	5%	6%
<i>Law</i>	33%	17%	100%	33%	33%
<i>Science</i>	48%	34%	33%	47%	70%
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>169</i>	<i>202</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>151</i>
	<i>59%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>54%</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>59%</i>

Tables 5 to 8 refer to the difference in the numbers of A aggregate students from the different population groups applying to UCT between 2007 and 2011. The average number of students with A aggregates was: African 25.6%, Coloured 22.8%, Indian 57.4% and whites 47.6%. Referring to the statistics from UCT's Faculty Report 2011 regarding Matric A level aggregate equivalents of South African first-time entering undergraduates at UCT according to race, one notes that there has been an increase in the total for South African African students which stands at 34% for 2011 compared to the total for South African white students at 49% and South African Indian students at 59%. These figures give support to the claim that there remains a lack of epistemological preparation of many black matriculants to cope with higher education.

Despite the increase of A aggregates among South African African students (from 22% in 2007 to 34% in 2011), in general the lack of adequate high school preparation for tertiary education is reflected in the high percentage of applicants who were not offered places (in 2011, 68,5% of South African Africans were not offered a place at UCT). For those that are enrolled, especially due to affirmative action policies, it is crucial that they are provided adequate support in their studies. When looking at expanding formal access to higher education institutions through the lens of affirmative action it becomes easy to ignore the problems of epistemological access. As Wally Morrow notes, "We promise our students higher education by offering them formal access to our higher education institutions, but we renege on our promise by being unable to offer them adequate epistemological access"(Morrow, 2007:41). I have included tables 5–8 to reinforce Morrow's plea that if we formally admit students to higher education institutions when we have

failed to offer them epistemological access, we not only betray their personal aspirations but we also undermine some of the central ideals of higher education.

In conclusion, I would like to quote James Sterba who argues that we could regard affirmative action as justified when the following requirements are met:

- “Race is used as a factor to select from the pool of applicants a sufficient number of qualified applicants to secure the educational benefits that flow from a racially and ethnically diverse student body.
- Only candidates are selected whose qualifications are such that when their selection is combined with a suitably designed educational enhancement program, they will normally turn out, within a reasonably short time, to be qualified as, or even more qualified than, their peers” (Cohen & Sterba, 2003:278).

Keeping Sterba's arguments in mind and the fact that not only does UCT's admissions policy move towards a more demographically representative student body, it also recognizes that learners from historically advantaged schools will tend to do better in the SC and NSC and students from disadvantaged schools (i.e. black schools) will tend to fare more poorly, I think UCT's admission policy is socially just. I will, however, expand on this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

TENSIONS BETWEEN THE POLICIES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, THE DEMANDS OF A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

5.1 Introduction.

In this chapter, I will explore some of the tensions within affirmative action as well as between affirmative action and economic needs. I discuss some alternative criteria upon which affirmative action could be based, criteria such as an individual's socio-economic condition and will also look at the impact of inadequate high school preparation on the students' future in higher education. In conclusion, I will outline some aspects for further research.

The international agreement on affirmative action within both the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations is that its implementation should satisfy two basic conditions. One is that it should be of a corrective nature, and the other is that it should be temporary (Hermann, 2007:20). I would be hard put not to agree with Hermann who opines that the Employment Equity Act, and other such affirmative action policies, go much further than a remedy. These policies militate against the temporary nature of affirmative action because they require that the composition of the population be reflected at every job and education level. For Hermann, the problem that the corrective nature of affirmative action raises in South Africa is that the present design of affirmative action does not really effect the correction of imbalances; instead new imbalances are being created. Hermann (2007:21), states that only about 5% of the black elite would be advantaged by the Employment Equity Act, while an overwhelming 70% of the non-designated group presently employed would have to leave the labour market. He contends that there is an almost universal tendency to move away from the original purpose of affirmative action that is to achieve equality, to a model which uses demographic representativity to measure success and the subsequent permanent nature bestowed upon affirmative action (Hermann, 2007: 23).

5.2 Affirmative action: Temporary or here to stay?

Is there a time limit for affirmative action? This is a pertinent question that could be asked in any nation that applies affirmative action, but elicits very few answers. Affirmative action that aims for demographic representivity has resulted in bestowing it with a permanent nature as evidenced in a study by the Bureau of Market Research (Hermann, 2007:66). The reason why affirmative action based on demographics tends towards a permanent character is that demographics are constantly changing. If the goal for this year is achieved, the population composition would have changed next year, so affirmative action has to be applied all over again.

When looking at affirmative action as aiming at demographic representivity, one can ask “representivity of what”? Should there be demographic representivity of opportunities, or outcomes, or both? Thomas Sowell as quoted by Dirk Hermann (2007: 66) contends that representativity is a rare phenomenon in the world, since equal opportunities can be created within a relatively short time, but not equal outcomes. Sowell asserts that any temporary policy which has a time frame based on certain factors for it to be terminated, and if these factors have not been achieved anywhere in the world, may more aptly be regarded as permanent. His thoughts are echoed by Crain Soudien, writing in 2007, who stated that “South Africans are having to come to terms with the reality, as the Americans did in the post-bellum era, that its almost 350-year long history cannot be remade in a mere decade, and much less can its social formations, inscribed as they are in the fracturing language of race and class, be re-composed by 10 years of democracy” (Soudien, 2007:182).

In the 1960s, the United States implemented affirmative action programs to compensate African Americans for the 350 years of oppression wrought by slavery, disenfranchisement and discrimination. Affirmative action can begin to address past wrongs but cannot remedy them. Beverley Lindsay refers to Benjamin who wrote in 1997 that “the idea that thirty years of half-hearted and ill-defined compensatory programs is sufficient can only be considered nonsense at best, and a cruel hoax at worst” (Lindsay, 1997:525). Also from an American perspective, Carl Cohen writes, “Race preference is counterproductive in all institutions, but as long experience proves, it is particularly injurious to universities because it entails lowering of standards for

admission...widely practiced for three decades, race preference has seriously damaged our universities” (Cohen & Sterba, 2003:163). Thus, according to Cohen, affirmative action has undermined the academic integrity of universities.

India's affirmative action programme is the oldest and most comprehensive, aimed at addressing the hierarchical differences of the caste system. In order to limit political resistance and conflict, leaders of the disadvantaged groups even suggested that affirmative action should be limited to a ten-year period (Hermann, 2007:68). We should bear in mind that this was in 1949, but as yet in 2012, there is no end in sight for affirmative action in India. Affirmative action has such a strong hold there, that there are instances where people try to reclassify themselves as members of the designated groups (Hermann, 2007:68).

5.3 Three apexes of the affirmative action triangle: equality, representivity and redress.

In South Africa, the apartheid regime was overthrown by a historic agreement between Afrikaner and African nationalist leaders, which resulted in the consistent growth of the economy in favour of capital accumulation. In order to redress past wrongs, affirmative employment policies were adopted. However, not everyone of the target group benefited because the demand for skilled labour that accompanied this economic growth created opportunities for the schooled black middle class who managed to escape from the desolation of the rural areas and urban shack lands. According to Neville Alexander, these are, clearly, the real beneficiaries of an affirmative action strategy based on race, because they, i.e. the black middle class, alone have the qualifications comparable to those of their white counterparts and get preferential employment (Alexander, 2010:55). Alexander however rues the fact that, “To date, affirmative action has benefited only the black middle class and not the masses of people in urban and rural areas” (Hermann, 2007:17). In other words, representivity of both opportunities and outcomes through affirmative action is still an outcome to be achieved within a very long timeframe.

One tends to agree with Johan Rabe that redress must be achieved by leveling up and not leveling down, which means that those at the bottom must move upwards and equality must not

be achieved by making everyone equally disadvantaged (Rabe, 2001:399). What Rabe implies is that the disadvantaged individuals should make the necessary efforts to better their position albeit with the help of affirmative action policies, but an attempt should be made to attain this without unfair discrimination against the previously advantaged individuals.

Because of the inherent difficulty in proving grades of disadvantage suffered by the previously disadvantaged races in South Africa, the degree of representivity, rather than disadvantage itself, determines the need for affirmative action. This is done on the basis that race and class overlap to a large extent. Representivity is the basis of calculating possible changes in employment as a result of affirmative action in South Africa. If the number of whites in the workplace were reduced until the composition of the population was reflected in the workplace, unemployment amongst whites would increase to 76,05%. These whites would need to be replaced by blacks in order to ensure representivity in the workplace. This would translate into only 4,3% of blacks enjoying any advantage in terms of employment as a result of affirmative action (Hermann, 2007:64). This is the shortcoming of affirmative action based on representivity.

Judith February utilizes the example of *Rugnath v. University of Cape Town* to show how the rationality and constitutionality of the affirmative action policy came under scrutiny. In 2005, Rugnath, a South African Indian challenged the admission policy in the UCT school of medicine, contending that the decision not to admit him constituted unfair racial discrimination. Rugnath's academic record was superior to other South African Indian, African, Coloured and white students who had been admitted to the program³. UCT responded by explaining that its admission policy gave effect to the statutory requirement that appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities be provided. It added that conditions prevailing at schools for African and Coloured children are worse than at other schools, and that therefore adjustments to entry requirements are justified. The court dismissed the application, stating that Section 37(4) of the Higher Education Act enabled the university to formulate its own admissions standards and requirements as long as they redressed past inequalities with fairness and nondiscrimination. I wonder if perhaps UCT had filled its "quota" of South African Indian students and therefore

³ Right now a similar case is winding its way to the US Supreme Court, in *Fisher vs. the University of Texas*. Although the court upheld the use of race in admissions in a 2003 ruling, indications are that consideration of race for admission remains a highly contested issue.

refused admission to Rugnath. February notes that in many legal cases in South Africa, the applicant contests the access to the benefits of affirmative action but not the idea of formal affirmative action itself (February, 2010: 80). This example makes one tend to concur with Hermann, who believes fairness is not a matter of brute representivity. He argues that merit must be rewarded, absolute racial exclusion is not acceptable, and if you help white achievers, it does not mean that you are committing treason against black disadvantaged people (Hermann, 2007:19).

As James Sterba notes, (Cohen & Sterba, 2003:232) “to be justified, affirmative action programmes must favour only candidates whose qualifications are such that when their selection is combined with a suitably designed educational enhancement program, they will normally turn out, within a reasonably short time, to be as qualified, or even more qualified, than their peers”. The idea that Sterba seems to be putting across is that epistemological access in conjunction with formal access afforded by affirmative action would address the effects of past injustices in a meaningful way by benefiting disadvantaged candidates. I concur with Sterba as this would facilitate redress without the previously disadvantaged individuals carrying the stigma of being recipients of affirmative action largesse.

5.4 Affirmative action in a knowledge economy: Redress for inequality in education or yield to labour market needs?

February contends that historically disadvantaged communities consider affirmative action policies necessary to bring about parity of knowledge and skill. Most importantly, though, the arguments in favour of affirmative action in South African higher education are centered on equality of access, the implication being that this equalizing of opportunity opens the doors to economic and professional access in turn. (February, 2010:83)

However, with the adoption of the National Plan for Higher Education in 2001 as well as the merging of institutions of higher education, the basic policy commitments shifted from equity and redress to efficiency and responsiveness, with efficiency measured in terms of student throughputs. Du Toit quotes Aslam Fataar describing this shift as follows:

The discourse shifted rapidly from a strong equality-driven focus to an alignment with the government's macro development and growth path....By the late 1990s the growth and human resources discourse had trumped discourses of equality and redress in the higher education policy field.... Equity and redress, prominent in the pre-1997 policy moment, were secondary to the more primary task of making higher education more responsive to the labour market with its attendant requirements for knowledge workers and innovation (Du Toit, 2010: 96).

Fataar's quote could be read in conjunction with what Garrat et al (2003:447) mention in their study that:

The overwhelming emphasis is upon the need to cultivate the sorts of "standards" and "performance" required by a globalised economy. The economic imperative of globalisation suggests that any renewed optimism for greater human solidarity, respect and fairness through the development of cosmopolitan citizenship-is at best a wishful fancy and at worst hopelessly utopian..... there is no reference within the economic discourse to the equally vital need to promote cultural diversity or community learning.

Thus one notes that the implications for affirmative action with this shift to the needs of a global, knowledge based economy, is that the social justice aspects like redress and equality of affirmative action get blurred and market ideologies take first preference. The emphasis of affirmative action here is to get as many black graduates into the labour market as efficiently as possible. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but we should be concerned if it is at the expense of cultivating a society imbued with the ideals of social justice.

Crain Soudien posits that the government's difficulties in policy implementation of affirmative action emanate from, on the one hand, its social democratic political orientation and on the other, its commitment to a market-driven competition economic philosophy (Soudien, 2007:184). Furthermore, Soudien argues that globalizing pressures have propelled South African education policies in the direction of international universalism and placed these policies within the parameters set by the World Bank regarding the proportion of the national budget devoted to social welfare. He adds that "the challenge of South Africa's transition is rooted in financial and resource constraints which could be the reason for policy inconsistencies in the implementation

of new laws which lie in the conflation of equity and equality” (Soudien, 2007:185). These constraints do not necessarily point to a market oriented stance, but the point I am making here is that if the World Bank sets parameters to funding for education in South Africa, it may also get affirmative action to be more market economy focused for financial efficiency, rather than being equity and redress- based which are expensive undertakings on the scale needed in South Africa.

Hermann also states that in a study by Du Toit, almost two-thirds of South Africans supported the following statement: “In order to ensure that the youth receive the best possible education, school teachers should be appointed only on merit” (Hermann, 2007:75). This suggests that South Africans feel a need for quality education and resist political interference that could undermine learning. It clearly indicates that the respondents placed more value on quality education in comparison with values associated with affirmative action. The response also confirms that South Africans realise that real redress take place through education. Of course, a more charitable interpretation could be that the survey respondents don’t hold with affirmative action for teachers, but may support affirmative action policies aimed at learners.

Ian Scott questions if higher education is meeting South Africa's need for high-level human resources. He bases this question on a 2004 report on the first decade of post-apartheid education, by South Africa's Council on Higher Education which noted: “Without ... expanding opportunities for both young and adult learners, sustainable growth will be difficult, and competitive participation in the global economy well-nigh impossible, to achieve” (Scott, 2010: 230). So affirmative action policies cannot ignore the need to produce competent graduates who can participate in a competitive economy with other countries and so stimulate economic growth for South Africa. However, to achieve this, opportunities in higher education must be expanded. What that means is that affirmative action policies must expand formal access coupled with vigorous practices that strengthen epistemological access.

5.5 Higher education institutions dependent on high school preparation.

Higher education is dependent on external inputs like public education funding as well as throughput from the secondary education system, which provides candidates for admissions to institutions of higher education. Du Toit quotes John Kane-Berman's summary of the secondary school system's failure in producing an improved applicant pool as follows:

Of more than one million pupils in school only a third passed matric⁴ in 2006 and only 8% qualified for university. In 1994, altogether 392,434 Africans wrote the senior certificate exams, of whom 51,016 (13%) obtained university-entrance passes. In 2006, only 51,180 (11,6%) out of 442,800 African students who wrote the senior certificate examinations obtained university-entrance passes.... The lack of progress is all the more alarming if one remembers that discriminatory funding no longer applies... Today there is no longer any racial discrimination in how the state allocates resources to education (Du Toit, 2010:99).

Although there is no longer discriminatory funding based solely on race, as in the apartheid era, the current government does apply discriminatory funding as part of its redress thrust. Schools are classified into 5 quintiles, according to the socio-economic standing of the learners and parents, with quintile 1 receiving more funding than quintile 5 schools. Even though there is no direct reference to race, there is a huge overlap with quintile 1 schools being almost all previously black schools and quintile 5 being almost all erstwhile Model C schools.

Despite the fact that there is preferential funding for poor schools, closer analysis would most probably show that these candidates for university entrance came from the same set of largely urban-based schools which are now also serving the new black middle class and not from the rural and township schools where the vast majority of African children are being educated. Thus it is this set of deracialised elite schools on which higher education depends for the entrants to its own small, deracialised elite system. As long as this correlation continues, it will hamper equity of access to higher education. The problem with the poor matriculation rates of black

⁴ 'Matric' is the highest secondary-level qualification, comparable to the British Sixth Form or the American twelfth grade. Not all matriculates qualify for university admission, which is traditionally known as 'matriculation exemption'. It should be noted that while matriculation exemption has been the traditional university entrance requirement, increasing numbers of students with so-called matriculation endorsements have also been admitted to higher-education institutions. Moreover, the traditional matriculation exemption requirement itself is due to be phased out, so that universities in future have to rely on setting their own admission tests (Du Toit, 2010:109).

students is that higher education institutions, despite their affirmative action policies with their race-based differential for entry requirements, still cannot recruit enough qualifying black students. This massively complicates and extends the issue of representivity.

Less than 6% of the students who qualify for university entrance pass mathematics and physical science. These passing grades are largely accounted for by the white minority students and a very small percentage of black middle class students who are the products of desegregated, formerly white, public schools (Jansen, 2010:129). Simply put, affirmative action policies have implications for higher education as the pool of high school students qualifying for university entrance is small and weak, leaving most black students falling short at a critical point in time where very important life chances are allocated.

Jansen notes that an important factor in undermining the access to universities afforded to black students is the weak preparation of high school students for higher education (Jansen, 2010:131). The hurdle between high school and university education is insurmountable for students who barely succeed in their matric examinations. After the initial euphoria of gaining formal access to universities, these students are usually faced with academic failure and its resultant institutional exclusion or individual dropping-out. Affirmative action policies thus can have the unintended consequence of setting up black students for failure.

Nan Yeld quotes a study of the entry-level performance in mathematics and academic literacy of 5780 students at seven South African higher education institutions which concluded that even the most selective institutions are admitting a significant number of students whose levels of performance was alarmingly low. This study also gave credence to the fact that there was a very low level of preparedness of incoming students to South African higher education institutions (Yeld, 2010:177), and thus making the issue of epistemological access crucial to affirmative action policies.

5.6 Aspects/issues that need further research

Some honesty is required with regards to the negative aspects of affirmative action, aspects frequently denied due to the fear that it would cause affirmative action to be discontinued. Not accepting that affirmative action is a flawed instrument of social change is a detriment to the successful achievement of the aim. It should, therefore be accepted that affirmative action is necessary to remedy some of the disadvantages, but if it is injudiciously implemented then it can cause more harm than good (Rabe, 2001:398). The real debate should involve the search for other more effective and just measures that are capable of helping the disadvantaged people in society, i.e. affirmative action policies that really do achieve redress and greater representivity.

It is difficult to achieve real mass redress if all those concerned are preoccupied only with demographic representivity. Presently there is a global drift towards focusing on the socio-economic position of people and a moving away from representivity. Namibia has already made provision for this, and the United Nations' latest report on human development recommends it for America (Hermann, 2007:65). He notes that in America, there is a move away from representivity, with a focus more on communities and their socio-economic position.

Hermann (2007:55) posits that a potentially flawed principle on which affirmative action is based is that there must be perpetrators (whites) and victims (blacks). The perpetrators carry the guilt and need to pay their debt and the victims feel that they have a right to claim. It is the perpetrators' (whites) responsibility to rescue the victims (blacks) from their predicament. This can be as disempowering for the victim as it is for the perpetrator, because the victim can easily lose initiative. The victim may come to rely on empowerment solely by means of the legislation intended to accelerate the process for paying the debt. Others have referred to it as engendering a culture of entitlement which stifles entrepreneurship and a robust work ethic (Morrow, 2009:71).

I tend to disagree with Hermann who comments that if young people could be exempted from affirmative action, then affirmative action would naturally come to an end. He argues that children, who started school in 1994, completed their entire school careers in the "new South Africa" should have been the first group to be exempt from affirmative action. He quotes the Du Toit study (Hermann, 2007:70), which was done among all South Africans of all races, in which 53,7% of people between the ages 18-24 said that young people should be exempt from

affirmative action. But, as I have stated earlier in this chapter, centuries of structured economic disadvantage and disruption of family groupings through the migrant worker system cannot be redressed in a matter of decades – let alone years.

Dr Neville Alexander endorses affirmative action but does not believe in it being based on race.

One needs to move away from race-based affirmative action before it leads to unforeseen consequences in the future. We need to apply affirmative action in such a way that it does not repeat the race-based identities of the past. The great overlap of race and identity in South Africa makes such an approach possible. One can look at income levels, the schools that people have come from, and then determine whether they were disadvantaged". (Hermann, 2007:85).

Since race and socio-economic class overlap to such an extent, we can omit reference to "Black", "Coloured" or "Indian" and still target disadvantaged students when applying affirmative action policies. Affirmative action could consider the socio-economic position of individuals, rather than concentrating on their race only. Poverty should be also a criterion for affirmative action, with no racial distinction between the victims thereof.

Hermann (2007:86) notes that legislation in Namibia identifies disadvantaged groups according to gender, and socio-economic circumstances, instead of race and ethnicity. In America, a new policy is being proposed that would change preference based on race to preference based on class. People in Malaysia are demanding that the socio-economic conditions of students rather than their race, be used as a basis for preferential treatment. The Supreme Court in India agreed to extend preferences to other disadvantaged groups but recommended that certain exclusions be made for socio-economically advanced persons. Based on these developments, Hermann suggests that though the vast majority of the poor in South Africa are black, a focus on the applicant's socio-economic status would mean that poor whites are included in programmes for upliftment. The non-designated group will therefore not feel completely separated from the system. (Hermann, 2007:108)

Opponents of affirmative action in education maintain that it creates a culture of entitlement. February quotes Sipho Seepe (February, 2010:82) as writing that "the new black elite is spared

the rigors of development. To demand excellence is regarded as blaming the victim and to deny the helplessness imposed by the heritage of oppression.” Seepe argues that ill-conceived and poorly implemented affirmative action policies impose a victim-versus-oppressor mindset and produces a new black generation lacking the self-confidence to compete academically, thus completing the cycle of entitlement.

More research is needed to be undertaken on alternative admissions procedures that will provide a route into higher education for previously disadvantaged students, especially if their educational needs could be identified and fulfilled. I agree with Yeld, who argues that it is very important to think about alternative assessment projects, particularly in South Africa, which is characterized by a generally low level of educational achievement at high school (Yeld, 2010:185). Yeld bases her argument on the Alternative Admissions Research Project (AARP), based in Cape Town, because it is used, to some extent at least, by almost all higher-education institutions in South Africa. The AARP test has been set up to provide an access route for applicants whose final school results might not reveal their full potential. The results on the test are used in the process of making Early Offers and securing Financial Aid and Scholarships. Furthermore the tests are the basis for UCT's "Senate's discretion" mechanism for enabling applicants without an exemption to be admitted to degree studies. Students with good matric results are not disadvantaged in any way by writing the tests. All first-time entering undergraduate applicants are invited to write the tests at one of the various testing centres around the country. Applicants to the UCT Humanities Faculty and the Health Science Faculty are required to write the tests as part of their admissions process (<http://www.aarp.ac.za/uct/project.htm>). The AARP consistently makes the point in annual reports that good performance on either the AARP assessments or the matric examinations, or both, could be used to predict success in higher education (Yeld, 2010:185).

5.7 Conclusion.

The fact that the number of Africans with university- entrance matric passes has remained constant at about 50,000 annually raises serious questions about the significance and function of affirmative action based admission policies. This small elite pool of Africans is not growing, so fiddling with admission procedures or ratcheting up admission targets is unlikely to generate demographic representivity (Du Toit, 2010: 104). Largely, the beneficiaries of these affirmative action measures would most likely be products of an elite secondary schooling system; children of black middle class parents who have themselves attended university. Thus affirmative action policies based on apartheid era racial categories will succeed mainly in providing an ideological validation for privileging established black elite groups, at the expense of the African majority.

South African universities cannot play their role in advancing the social mobility of black high school graduates without the school system being fixed. There are too few matriculants with the required skills and grades to enter university. If this trend persists, universities will succumb to the pressure and start admitting weaker students in larger numbers (Jansen, 2010:134), undermining their own academic integrity and, by implication, the value of their degrees.

An important aspect to bear in mind is that until schooling improves, it is imperative that higher education institutions continue to learn to infer what matric examination results mean by using school and individual biographical data, to develop tests and procedures that elicit different performances from those yielded by traditional achievement tests, and to develop appropriate curriculum routes that adequately meet the educational needs of students and place students into these routes (Yeld, 2010:186).

The South African higher education sector has a responsibility to review the suitability of its admissions and support methods for meeting the country's needs. According to Ian Scott, despite major changes in the student intake, particularly in terms of their linguistic and educational backgrounds, the system is still dominated by curriculum structures and teaching approaches that were established decades ago, for a very different and largely homogenous student body (Scott, 2010: 236). He argues that curricular reform will be necessary in order to accommodate student diversity and facilitate responsible affirmative action, and is thus a key element of the higher education system's contribution to transformation. It would be therefore important to do further

research on what such curricular reform for a heterogeneous student body might entail while keeping in mind the shifts in the global economy and the need for academic rigor.

Due to the problem of causality and the fact that affirmative action has both positive and negative effects, it is thus difficult to conclusively prove whether it is beneficial or not, or if is capable of creating more equality of opportunity for disadvantaged groups. The uncertainty whether affirmative action is beneficial or not, does not mean that it should not be implemented in South Africa, as the alternative of not doing anything is unacceptable and at present there are no alternatives (Rabe, 2001:397). However, more longitudinal research needs to be done on the complex consequences of affirmative action, on both an individual level (with issues of identity and career mobility), and on a broader socio-economic level (with issues of economic growth and social welfare).

Finally, I would like to conclude by reiterating the following views of Jonathan Jansen and Mamphela Ramphele regarding affirmative action and its application to higher education in South Africa. Writing in *Business Day* Jansen (2011), says that the uneasy thing for racial nationalists about replacing race-based admissions policies with socio-economic status-based admissions policies as the basis for university access is that it will place the poor black student from the township alongside the poor white student from an economically-challenged suburb. Yet, demographically this would mean that the vast majority of the applicants with academic potential, so measured, would be black. And so for those insisting on some kind of social justice to be attained for black people, the problem is overcome. For others, who struggle against the class elitism of universities such as UCT, or agitate for symbols of conciliation between black and white, the case of the poor white student achieves this goal as well. He argues that using socio-economic status could be a perfectly sensible alternative to race-based admission policies that overcomes the obvious difficulties of determining access to university on the basis of race. It should not be difficult to evaluate the social and economic backgrounds of the applicants, and therefore gain a real-time account of disadvantage measured against academic potential to determine access to university. Jansen asserts that race-based admissions policies fail to recognise that a shift has taken place within the public school sector in South Africa. We now have a small number of racially integrated public and private schools in South Africa, where the

borders of race have been largely overcome, in the social relationships among children as well as in the academic achievement of this class of students. For these young people reference to their racial selves is not only met with irritation, it is, to these youth, odd. It is hypocritical to use “race” as an admission standard for black students from these well-established schools; these youth are supposed to do well and what really determines their access to our best universities is not their colour, but their class status. According to Jansen, the real measure of equity, therefore, is the extent to which elite South African universities bring in first-generation students from poor households. And that means looking beyond racial appearance (Jansen, 2011).

As affirmative action policies are formulated and implemented Ramphela suggests that attention be paid to the following questions:

- When the colour-based classification system has been omitted, how will officials identify affirmative action recipients?
- Should self-classification be permitted?
- What other means are appropriate?

She further suggests five themes to consider before negotiating affirmative action policies. First, she recommends that policy makers acknowledge the importance of redress to correct the distortions that are part of apartheid’s legacy. Second, she contends that affirmative action must be based on a foundation of equity. Third, Ramphela posits that policy deliberations must reflect the fact that affirmative action cannot cure all past ills or undo all past wrongs and suggests that one may have to make peace with the past. Fourth, while noting that affirmative action definitely has a place in society, she maintains that individuals are ultimately responsible for their own growth and development. Last, she maintains that clear achievement goals and timeframes must be integral parts of affirmative action programs, stressing the point that such programs should not be sustained indefinitely. She holds the view that affirmative action is a strategy which has no inherent moral or ethical basis. Such a basis has to be created by locating it in a well thought-out and articulated equity framework (Lindsay, 1997:528).

In summary, affirmative action in admissions to higher education in South Africa is essential for economic growth as well as for social justice and development. However, it comes at a cost. If

we are to ensure that it is responsible and effective, affirmative action requires investment, not only of funds but more importantly of will, energy and creativity in developing an educational process that can unlock the talent present in all South Africa's ethnic and class groups.

In conclusion, I argue that universities need to be more demographically representative and facilitate access to previously disadvantaged individuals by adjusting entry requirements, but compromising on the value of their qualifications by adjusting their exit criteria in line with racial representivity would be detrimental to the very worth of higher education as a social good, the dignity of the individual graduate, as well as the economic growth of the country.

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