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HIGHER EDUCATION AS A FIELD OF STUDY AND RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter we address four issues concerning HE as a field of study and research. We start off by discussing the typical characteristics of a field of study as opposed to a discipline, then we trace a number of moments in the development of HE studies and research internationally and locally. Next we try to suggest a way to 'map' the field in South Africa against the background of international mappings and finally we suggest a number of issues to consider for possible future research to extend and promote HE as a field of study and research – particularly in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed that higher education (HE) in its variety of forms contributes to social and economic development through at least four major missions:

1. The formation of human capital (primarily through teaching)
2. Building knowledge bases (primarily through research and knowledge development)
3. The dissemination and use of knowledge (by interacting with the users of knowledge)
4. The maintenance of knowledge (inter-generational storage and transmission of knowledge)

(OECD 2008)

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Yet, while HE considers itself to be a universal sector of society, its research, structures, curricula, governance and organisation vary greatly and seem deeply rooted in national, cultural and policy contexts (Schwarz and Teichler 2000). It therefore appears most fitting to study HE as a phenomenon or research object from a range of angles and perspectives. As HE has expanded enormously during the past decade or two, research interest in the field has grown significantly and it is well known that this research matters, as the character and performance of HE systems and institutions have considerable implications for all members of society, whether they engage directly with them or not (Brennan and Teichler 2008).

Earlier, a typical approach to study the field of HE was to explore programmes that emphasised the field as a focus or study object (Dressel and Mayhew 1974) and later encyclopedic versions (Knowles 1977; Clark and Neave 1992), in-depth articles of topical issues in 'handbook' format (Smart 1985; 2008) or comprehensive works on topical issues (Teichler and Sadlak 2000; Schwarz and Teichler 2000) were produced. Also of note is the proliferation of scholarly and popular academic journals, commissioned research and investigative reports concerning HE systems and burning issues in countries internationally that emerged in the past 15 to 20 years.

In South Africa there were reports of "an active, but confused field, lacking many of the attributes of scholarly work that you find in well-recognised disciplines or fields of study with their learning programmes" (Strydom 2002). Apparently, the study field of HE locally lacked academics of stature who were largely absent in professing from a position of research expertise and practical experience. This lack of expertise was confirmed by various viewpoints (Kraak 1999; Le Grange 2002; Muller 2000), although the Council on Higher Education (2004) hailed successes in its review of South African HE in the decade after the first democratic election in 1994 and beyond (Council on Higher Education 2004).

HIGHER EDUCATION: DISCIPLINE OR FIELD OF STUDY?

With developments and progress in higher education studies and research over the past two decades questions might arise as to whether HE as an object of study has not reached disciplinary status. This is a legitimate question as many prominent works and methodologies have pointed in that direction (see for instance Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie and Henkel 2006), several scholars have made seminal contributions and many research units and professors of higher education have been instituted.

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However, Dressel and Mayhew (1974) have outlined at least six criteria for a field to be termed a discipline: Firstly, a general body of knowledge should exist that can be forced into a reasonably logical taxonomy so that scholars could tell, at least quantitatively, where the knowledge gaps exist. Secondly, it should possess both a specialised vocabulary and a generally accepted basic literature that outlines its parameters. Thirdly, some generally accepted body of theory and some generally understood techniques for theory testing and revision should exist. This criterion is supplemented by the essential of a generally accepted body of consistently applied techniques for analysis or a generally agreed set of methodologies. The fourth criterion is that a recognised sequence of experiences for the preparation of researchers or knowledge workers should be in place and fifthly it is expected that the discipline should have reached a level of maturity that occupies a defined space in relation to other disciplines. A sixth and final criterion is that in a mature discipline considerable energy is devoted to solving basic or theoretical questions as well as to theory building. By applying this set of criteria in their own evaluation of higher education as a discipline in 1974, Dressel and Mayhew came to the conclusion that higher education “appears to be a field of study – ill-defined at the parameters – ... and has not yet attained that distinction” (p. 7).

By 2000, Fourie and Strydom (in Schwarz and Teichler 2000) came to the same conclusion when they pointed out that HE researchers in South Africa had to cope with a lack of an independent disciplinary base and a shortage of trained young HE researchers. In addition, they found a lack of specialists in the field of HE, little collaboration among HE research units and individual researchers, an absence of a widely accepted, well articulated theoretical framework and methodology suitable for addressing the diverse South African scene and an unreliable funding base.

It seems that the non-disciplinary status of HE is widely recognised. Brennan and Teichler (2008) point out that, in Europe, research on HE was undertaken by only a few hundred persons prior to the 1970s. In reports on trends within the humanities and social sciences, HE research was treated as a sub-area of educational research and it was only during and after the 1970s that research and studies on HE began to take a more prominent position as the public awareness of inter-relationships between education and economic growth, social mobility, student unrest and reform efforts increased. The 1980s and 1990s also saw more interest in HE in the wake of debates that included the knowledge society, new HE steering modes and increasing internationalisation. Currently the debates and work that involve, for example, the Bologna and Lisbon processes in Europe, stimulate further research and interest in HE.

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In Section 5 of the *Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (Kerr and Neave 1992), several disciplinary perspectives on HE are highlighted. One such perspective (Fulton 1992) indicates “Higher Education Studies” as one disciplinary perspective. Fulton (1992:1810) explains this stance as not being “the application of social science (and indeed other) disciplines to an understanding of higher education”, but rather as taking “a distinctive approach to higher education that transcends these separate disciplinary perspectives”. He then goes on to consider the organisational context in which the study of HE has developed and examines the question of what the content of a HE studies perspective could be. According to Fulton, a crucial area in which an HE studies perspective seems to be more than the sum of its parts lies in the interaction between the public and private lives of HE institutions. Although this single indication cannot be claimed as a possible embryonic start of HE as a discipline in its own right, it succeeded in examining a unique contribution to explain parts of the academic enterprise.

In summary, we conclude on the discipline/field-of-study debate that there is little evidence that HE as a field of study owns the characteristics of a discipline. Nor does it portray itself as a mature field of study because of its vast and complex nature and also because HE as a phenomenon can be studied from an almost endless number of perspectives using an endless number of methodological combinations and permutations. In South Africa, in particular, HE as an emerging field of systematic study and research is far less developed than in most developed countries although it has been in existence for over four decades. We shall attempt to address aspects of this issue in the next section.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIELD

It is obviously impossible to sketch an account of the developments of the field of HE studies and research in one chapter – particularly if a chronological view is taken. The aim of this section is rather to provide a few broad ‘brush strokes’ or examples of developments rather than to paint a complete picture. In doing so, we highlight some ‘developmental moments’ internationally (especially post-1960) and in South Africa (from as far back as we could detect developments) as they have emerged from literature and from our own background knowledge and experience of HE as an emerging field of study and research.

Examples of international developments and contributions

Just as Flexner's (1930) work may stand out as seminal in representing a comparative study of university systems, the contribution of Dressel and Mayhew (1974) stands out as probably one of the most comprehensive in outlining programmes of study and research in HE in the United States at the time. In view of their emphasis on the promotion of research and scholarship, highlighting HE problems that point towards emerging models of studying HE and future prospects, we consider their book as ground breaking. It aptly pointed to the lack of a theoretical base for HE studies, provided some first accounts of institutional histories in the United States since 1887 and outlined the emergence of doctoral study programmes in HE. The contributions of university presidents who became interested in the field (e.g. Clark Kerr, James Perkins and Warren Bennis) as well as the work of educational agencies and associations which enabled a range of new publication options characterising the era, were also explored by Dressel and Mayhew. Towards the end of their introduction to the book (p. 31) they concluded:

What emerges then is an active, confused field, lacking many of the attributes of a discipline, yet demanding more disciplined effort. Its future is obscure; but if the present lines of development are strengthened and if the many perplexities are resolved, it may join the band of established specialities such as history, sociology and medicine, which once were in similar limbo.

Similarly, in his foreword to the *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (IEHE 1977) edited by AS Knowles, Clark Kerr (the then chairperson of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education) hailed the IEHE as of an "international dimension, not just a local or regional one" and acknowledged that "a nearly impossible task has been accomplished" (p. 15a). The IEHE was prompted by the wide acceptance of its forerunner, the *Handbook of College and University Administration* (1971), of which Knowles was the editor-in-chief. This publication brought together in one publication many major aspects concerning the field of HE. The IEHE represents a global perspective describing national HE systems, academic fields of study within higher education institutions, educational associations, research centres, institutes and documentation centres, academic and administrative policies and procedures as well as issues and trends in HE of the time. Among others, the IEHE contains articles about the systems of higher education in 198 countries and territories, 282 articles on (which were then) contemporary topics in HE, 142 fields of study offered in HE and their availability around the world, information on 314 associations (including societies, committees and commissions) and contact details of a selection of 91 major research

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and development centres and institutes in the field of HE. In the subject index of the IEHE, Africa alone, for example, attracted no fewer than 96 entries. The IEHE indeed has served not only as an important instrument to bring HE as a field of study and practice into the open and to foster multinational technology transfer, but also to enrich the understanding of the variance and the relationships among HE systems, institutions and the communities they serve.

In our view, another major contribution to the development of the field was the publication of the *Eyclopedia of Higher Education* (EHE 1992) edited by Burton Clark and Guy Neave. This formidable work, encompassing four volumes, contains descriptive data of national systems of higher education (Volume 1), analytical perspectives (Volumes 2 and 3 – see Annexure 2 for details on the different sections and topics included in these perspectives) from several academic disciplines and indexes (Volume 4). Of particular interest are the analytical perspectives that delved more deeply into five salient areas, namely (1) HE and society, (2) The institutional fabric of the HE system, (3) Governance, administration and finance, (4) Faculty and students, and (5) Disciplinary perspectives on HE. One contribution that was included as part of the latter area and apparently seems highly relevant as a contributing element to the development of the field is an article by Fulton (in Kerr and Neave 1992:1810). This contribution points out that HE studies is not just one among the many focuses of study within the core disciplines, but proposes that in terms of an organisational perspective, HE had (as early as the 1990s) disclosed the embryonic features of a discipline – at least in the US. Fulton found that the proliferation of HE master’s and doctoral study programmes gave rise to or resulted from at least three developments. Firstly, autonomous departments or specialist divisions of HE were created (mainly within schools of Education) and these provided organisational structures and specialist teaching staff complements through which HE studies developed. This, in turn, also helped to support the development of professional associations and journals, similar to what was apparently experienced in Europe (see Teichler 1989). Secondly, the expansion of higher education provision increasingly forced HE institutions into institutional research projects that addressed issues such as competition, marketing, data-based decision making, quality assurance, student progress and student access. Much research concerning these issues involved HE expertise and postgraduate students. And thirdly, as a possible result of the increased size of HE systems and an growth in student diversity, many research projects were directed towards teaching and learning in HE. State universities and colleges in the US in particular had set up special research and development centres with a remit to promote reflection on teaching, learning and assessment matters, as well as staff

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development in these fields. Fulton (1992) purports that all three these developments were given greater exposure by the growing availability of information systems since the late 1950s.

Outside of the US, reports on HE, such as the report of the Robbins Committee in the UK in 1963 and comparative studies of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), also provided much impetus for new research avenues. Examples include higher education specialist research based at the London School of Economics and work of researchers from economic and sociology backgrounds based in Paris, the Leverhulme inquiry into the future of HE (1979-1983) and work sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation and the Rowntree Trust in the UK (Fulton 1992). In the US, two higher education reviews funded by the Carnegie Commission on HE (1967-1973) and the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies (1974-1980) were responsible for a number of influential policy proposals and, more importantly, for an upsurge in newly commissioned scholarship and research published by McGraw Hill and Jossey-Bass publishers. Similar effects were recorded in countries such as Sweden, where the Research on Higher Education Programme (RHEP) supported by the National Board of Universities and Colleges had contributed since 1971.

It appears that at least four models of financial support for research into HE were operative during the period prior to the 1990s: In the US a model of multiple funding sources prevailed which apparently promoted a rich variety of research topics and approaches. In contrast, the Swedish model supported research with earmarked government funding for fewer, but more quality projects of national interest, while the model used in China followed the same line, but in a political context that inhibited creative projects. In the UK and Western Europe, according to Fulton (1992), the funding model represented a more 'hand to mouth' approach where an unstable division of research between governments and institutions prevailed with a shortage of alternative funding sources implying a vulnerability to changes in funders' preoccupations.

A number of specialised centres and research units have contributed in important ways to the field of HE. Fulton (1992:1815) emphasises them as exceptional cases for playing a part in developing the field "out of all proportions to their numerical size". They include the Higher Education Research Group (directed by Burton Clark at Yale University), the Comparative Higher Education Research Group (at the University of California, Los Angeles), the Centre for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California: Berkeley, the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at Melbourne University in Australia, the Centre for Vocational and Higher Education Research at

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Kassel in Germany and the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies in Twente, The Netherlands. Furthermore, a number of specialised scholarly journals, ranging from *Higher Education* to the *Journal of Higher Education* and *Studies in Higher Education* were prominent in furthering the field while members of societies such as the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the Higher Education section of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) made important initial research contributions. Apart from these centres and associations, Fulton points to the nature of the field by highlighting the research approaches that were followed as well as the early book publications (the 'great books of HE') that influenced further research and writing. He concluded that at least in the early 1990s HE appeared to be a rapidly changing field where the changes in higher education systems and institutions happened fast enough to require constant reassessment. One of the advantages of the field was (and probably still is) that it can draw freely on other disciplinary perspectives it may find appropriate. At the same time, this is also a drawback, since new 'immigrants' to the field who are trained in 'core disciplines' will always tend to use and foreground their own preferred methods and issues.

In our view another developmental thrust was the contribution of the publication *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* that saw its 23rd edition in 2008. The *Handbook*, currently edited by John Smart and sponsored by the Association of Institutional Research (AIR) and the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) has been published since 1986 and none fewer than 242 excellent and in-depth articles have been included in these volumes. The collection ranges from Pascarella's seminal contribution on how college environments influence students' learning and their cognitive development (the very first article in the *Handbook* in 1986) to Feldman, Yang's most recent (2009) article on China's return into the higher education community. A brief inspection of the 242 articles indicates that the contributing authors were/are all leaders in their respective areas of specialisation, that the articles cover a wide range of highly relevant topics and issues and that their nature ranges between in-depth qualitative, quantitative, and mixed mode research as well as personal and analytical reflections over career spans in HE research. The value of these contributions is, in our view, that they represent in most cases ground-breaking research and ideas that assisted in major ways in shaping the research and publications that followed on them.

The last developmental instance we want to highlight is the publication series of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and Open University Press.

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The series has, over the past 10 or more years, published excellent scholarly and some very professional and practical works in HE, including a range of books in areas such as staff and students, theory and history, policy and content, planning and management, supervision and postgraduate issues, research skills and study skills. Authors such as Barnett (*Beyond all reason, The limits of competence, Improving higher education, The idea of higher education, Realizing the university in an age of supercomplexity*), Tight (*Researching higher education*), Biggs (*Teaching for quality learning at university*), Becher and Trowler (*Academic tribes and territories*) and many others have made relevant contributions by stimulating debate and research in the field of HE. Publications from SRHE and Open University Press are cited numerously at conferences and in publications worldwide. In our view they have made (and are still making), a substantial contribution.

A recent 'developmental moment' that needs mention, and has the potential to contribute widely to debates and further publications on HE research, is a report by John Brennan (UK), Jürgen Enders (The Netherlands), Chriatine Musselin (France), Ulrich Teichler (Germany) and Jussi Välimaa (Finland) titled *Higher Education looking forward: An agenda for future research*. The report, which focuses mainly on the UK and Europe and is sponsored by the European Science Foundation (ESF), questions the relationships and connections between contemporary social and economic changes, the changes happening in HE and the roles of academics. This also leads to other questions for which, according to the authors, new forms of social science methodologies will probably be needed. They include questions such as: How might new forms of comparative research achieve a better understanding of the interactions between HE and society, and the different forms these take in Europe and more widely? How do national, regional and local contexts help to determine the characteristics of HE systems? What is the role of public authorities? Do different types of HE institutions have different relationships with the wider social and economic worlds which they are part of? Must universities adopt new functions and blur their boundaries with other social institutions to retain their importance in the knowledge society? The report also characterises current HE research as small and theme-based with varied institutional bases implicating risks and dangers as well as challenges and opportunities. Some of these questions are reminiscent of those put (in a less sophisticated manner, though) by Professor Charles Kendall Adams in addressing the Phi Beta Kappa Society of the University of Vermont on the relationship between higher education and national prosperity (as far back as 1876!).

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These are but a few examples in scratching the surface of a wealth of resources that have enhanced and are still enhancing the international development of HE as a field of study and research. We shall now turn to developments in South Africa and again, these are merely examples that do not pretend to provide a complete picture.

Examples of South African developments and contributions

The aftermath of the first democratic election and a peaceful transition of power in South Africa in 1994 saw a proliferation of policy documents, workshops, conferences, papers and publications on HE (see Table 17.1). It may not be far-fetched to say that the newly elected ANC government and the so-called progressive groupings and leaders wanted to transform the whole of the educational dispensation as quickly and as radically as possible. While this position could be understood after many years of domination and missed opportunities, it was also an approach with risk, as education systems do not change easily and radically unless much energy and resources are invested in them. This was exactly the challenge posed to the newly elected authorities: Radical policies and plans were being set in place, but only limited funding was available for their implementation. Therefore, it was not before the 2000s that the implementation of transformational plans really began to take shape and that HE in particular started experiencing major changes. These changes, accompanied by new challenges such as broadening student access, increasing student funding and effecting equity brought new dimensions to HE research and study opportunities, as we shall try to explain (also see the chapter on policy analysis by Hay and Monnapula-Mapesela as well as other chapters on the university as a HE institution in this book).

TABLE 17.1 A summary of key HE policy and publication initiatives at a national level (1990-2009)

| Date | Initiative or process |
|-----------|---|
| 1990 | The National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC) starts HE policy proposals in view of the African National Congress (ANC) gaining the political power. |
| 1992-1994 | Policy proposals by the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA) and the Education Policy Unit (EPU) at the University of the Western Cape. Publication of the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) report: Post-secondary Education. |
| 1995-1996 | Promulgation of the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58 of 1995). Establishment of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). Publication of the report: A framework for transformation (1996). |

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| Date | Initiative or process |
|-----------|--|
| 1997 | Publication of the Green Paper and White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education. Release of a Bill on Higher Education and the adoption of the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997. Requirement for all HE qualifications to be recorded and registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Extensive curriculum restructuring. |
| 1998 | Establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and its standing committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Ministry initiatives around private HE. HE qualifications to be accredited on the NQF and initiatives to start the work of the HEQC. |
| 1999 | Passing of the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NASFAS). Initiatives to launch the accreditation process of 50 MBA programmes at 24 institutions. |
| 2000 | Release of CHE report: Towards a new higher education landscape: Meeting the equity, quality and social development imperatives of South Africa in the twenty-first century. Group appointed to report on language policy for HE, including the use of Afrikaans as language of instruction. CHE evaluation of the technikon qualifications quality assurance body (SERTEC) and the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU). |
| 2001 | National Working Group (NGW) releases the report: The restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa. Cabinet approves ministry proposals to reduce 36 public institutions to 23 through mergers and incorporations. All teachers' training colleges to be incorporated into universities' faculties of education. It is proposed that all technikons become universities of technology through mergers and transformational measures. Initiatives to review cooperative governance in HE. |
| 2002 | CHE requested by the ministry to investigate distance education provision in South Africa. CHE releases a research report: Governance in South African higher education and a policy report: Promoting good governance in South African higher education. |
| 2003 | CHE provides advice to the ministry on an interdependent National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for higher education. |
| 2004 | Several publications from the CHE, including South African higher education in the first decade of democracy, Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF – draft for discussion), Higher education and social transformation – a South African case study. |
| 2005-2007 | Several publications and advisory documents from the CHE, including Towards a framework for quality promotion and capacity development in education (2005), Academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability in higher education (2006), Higher education monitor: A case for improving teaching and learning in South African higher education (2007) and the HEQC evaluative study of institutional audits in 2006 (2007). |
| 2008 | The Higher Education Amendment Bill is published to make provision for the implementation of the HEQF in HE institutions in South Africa. |
| 2009 | CHE publishes a report on Postgraduate studies in South Africa: A statistical profile. |

(Some of the detail in Table 17.1 was adapted from Cloete *et al.* 2004: *National policy and a regional response in South African higher education*:10-16)

One may well ask what the situation was regarding HE study and research before 1994. Documented history reveals an interesting number of brush strokes. The first

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indications of institutionalised education beyond schooling in South Africa emerged with the establishment of the “Zuid Afrikaanse Athenaeum” or ZAA (South African Athenaeum or South African College – SAC) in Cape Town on 1 October 1829. By 1837 this institution, which offered advanced education to young men and prepared them for the examinations of the University of London, received full college status (Coetzee and Van Rooy 1949:17). The ZAA/SAC thus became the forerunner to the first examining body in South Africa, the University of the Cape of Good Hope (UCGH), which was established in 1873. Several colleges were subsequently established and affiliated to the UCGH, many of whose histories were aptly recorded by FC Metrowich in a BEd thesis (Metrowich 1929). Before 1873, church-related institutions for theological training such as the Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in Stellenbosch (1859) and the Theological School of the Reformed Church in Burg(h)ersdorp (1869) were founded. These were followed by institutions for specific purposes such as the Womens’ College in Wellington (South Africa) which many years later (1907) became the Huguenot University College. Metrowich’s study is a most valuable source in the sense that it recorded a general survey of HE facilities in South Africa under the regime of the UCGH between 1873 and 1916. It also analysed the main defects of the system and described attempts to reform both before the South African war in 1899 and after the war – covering the year 1910 when South Africa became a Union. Metrowich’s contribution closes with an account of a report by the Van der Horst University Commission (1928) which recommended a number of drastic changes to the HE system in South Africa at the time (also see Annexure 17.2 for a list of universities established between 1829 and 1970, as well as Annexure 17.3 for the position of public universities in South Africa in 2009).

The purpose here is obviously not to reflect on the historical development of HE in South Africa per se, but rather to capture some key moments in the furthering of studies and research in the field of HE. For this, one has to look at sources beyond early legislation and policy formation in South Africa’s colonial past. One such source is a publication by EG Malherbe (1925), a lecturer in Education at the University of Cape Town at the time. Malherbe published an account of over 500 pages of South African education covering the period between 1652 (when the first Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape of Good Hope) and 1922. In Malherbe’s bibliography, a number of interesting sources are listed which might indicate a set of very loosely organised HE research activities in South Africa during the earlier colonial periods. Examples of artifacts include a copy of correspondence between the Colonial Government and the South African College between 1829 and 1854 (dated 1854), a lecture by GG Cillie titled ‘Ontwikkeling

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van de Hogere Onderwijs in Zuid-Afrika' ('The development of higher education in South Africa') dated 1918, a lecture by EM Clarke: 'Higher education of women in South Africa' (1905), a published document by AS Kidd in Grahamstown (1912): *Higher education in the Cape Colony in the period 1874 to 1910*, and an article by G Knoethe: 'Kijkjes in de Geschiedenis van ons Hoger Onderwijs' ('Glimpses into the history of our higher education'), Potchefstroom (1913).

Another useful source is number of research reports on education published by the then South African Council for Educational and Social Research (SACESR), which appeared in the 1930s. Topics included (some now quite embarrassing) titles such as *The learning ability of the South African native*, *The educatability of the South African native* and *The relationship of entrance age to academic success of university students*. The latter study by Malherbe and Cook (1938) was an inclusive survey of first-year students at nine (so-called 'European') universities that existed at the time. Comparative work involving international participation was part of the study that attempted to answer questions such as: How old are students when they enter universities? Is there a trend to attend university at an earlier stage? Do younger entrants do better or worse at university? How do the results of students that did a post-matriculation year compare to those that did not? This study seems to be one of the first of its kind in South Africa that did not only make use of a rather sophisticated survey methodology, but also reported quite sophisticated research results and findings.

Following a significant contribution by Reyburn (1934) in an area of study which was then known as 'tertiary didactics' or the methodology of teaching in higher education, a book titled *Beginsels en metodes van die Hoër Onderwys (Principles and methods of higher education)* was published by Coetzee and Van Rooy (1949). It was used at many (particularly Afrikaans-medium) universities as a resource for staff and educational development. Useful in particular was a chapter by Coetzee in which he highlighted, from contemporary sources, issues such as the history of university education (in the Western World), the role and place of the university in society, the professor-student relationship, teaching methods and techniques as well as the issue of discipline in the university curriculum. The chapter ends with a discussion of university administration and organisation. The rest of the book provided more detailed discussions of educational/instructional issues in a range of disciplines taught at universities such as theology, philosophy, education, classics, languages, mathematics, biology, geography and others. In a nutshell, Coetzee and Van Rooy succeeded in providing a framework for educational development on the one hand, and in setting a relevant research agenda

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for higher educationists which was actively explored in the 1960s and beyond, as we shall try to illustrate.

After South Africa became an independent republic in 1961 and the Nationalist Party was firmly in power, many new universities were established – mainly to serve the apartheid agenda (see Annexure 17.2 for a chronological version of the establishment of universities in South Africa between 1829 and 1970). It was also a time when studies in HE began to flourish and public addresses and publications in book and other formats appeared more frequently. Many of these documents reflected a range of issues and challenges important to HE at the time, such as race relations (Behr 1969; 1970), the roles and functions of the university (Versveld 1962), university and society (Thom 1965), student revolt (Gouws 1973), academic freedom (Esterhuysen 1973), university research (Arndt 1973) and university teaching (Pauw 1969; Behr and MacMillan 1971). One source of particular note was a book by JR Pauw, a prominent researcher of university education of the 1960/1970 era. Pauw, who had a background in education, made an in-depth study of the Western university and related these characteristics to the position of universities in South Africa at the time. He addressed issues such as the university of ‘yesterday’ (universities in the Middle Ages), the university of ‘today’ (the modern Western university), a changing student body and its implications for university teaching, the university and society, academic freedom and the university of ‘tomorrow’ (a perspective of what universities might look like in the future). Seen in South African terms, Pauw’s work was seminal at the time although he did not address the volatile political context in his future perspective and did not pay any attention to university models outside of the Western world. What he did include as an annexure to the book were comments on and a critique of the report by the Van Wyk De Vries Commission (VWDVC) that was published in October 1974. This Commission, under the chairmanship of Judge J van Wyk de Vries, was appointed by the then Nationalist Government in 1968 to investigate major aspects of university education in South Africa. Although it addressed a number of important points including academic freedom, governance, the legal position of universities, the relationship with the State, the establishment of advisory bodies on higher education, the relationship between universities and professional councils, financing universities and student unrest, it failed to address important structural issues that divided the higher education system and the people of South Africa. This included the fact that in the apartheid era, universities for different racial groupings were accountable to different government departments and consequently little or no coherence existed in the HE system. Needless to say, the VWDVC report sparked heated debates from

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different audiences, a proliferation of research projects and many publications on most of the issues the commission reported on.

Apart from Nationalist government initiatives to investigate aspects of HE, there were increasing efforts from HE institutions and associations to focus on a number of current issues spanning the 15 years between 1975 and 1990. One of the recommendations from the VWDVC report had to do with the obligation of universities to enhance the throughput rates of undergraduate students in particular. This sparked a number of initiatives to establish units for teaching and learning support at various universities. The first university to do so was the then Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) under the leadership of the late Professor Gerrit Viljoen who later became minister of education in the Nationalist (FW de Klerk) government. The Bureau for University Education at the RAU published various articles and reports of quality in their in-house bulletin for academic staff, the 'Bulletin for Lecturers'. Most other universities followed suit and an array of such units and bulletins appeared in this period. Collectively they did excellent work to put HE on the research agenda and from their ranks a number of master's and doctoral programmes in HE were established (mostly under the auspices of faculties of education). As a result, the South African Association for Research and Development (SAARDHE) was founded in 1979 and the South African Journal of Higher Education (SAJHE) emerged in 1987. In the latter case the Committee for University Principals (CUP), an advisory body on HE, assisted financially to enable the publication of the SAJHE. This journal is still a major outlet for HE research in 2009. On the other side of the bench, mostly driven by the more 'liberal, English' universities were those academics and staff who were most critical of what the more 'conservative, mainly Afrikaans' universities were doing. Therefore they openly challenged apartheid legislation by increasingly accommodating (mostly black) students from disadvantaged backgrounds and exploring ways to support these students academically. The research conducted in this respect made their contribution to HE most relevant. Academic development units were subsequently established at a number of institutions. Academic development officers formed a national association, the South African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD) and held their first national conference in 1985. SAAAD later became defunct and was relaunched in 2002 as the South African Academic Development Association (SAADA) which then became the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association (HELTASA). This association still makes valuable contributions to HE studies and research.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s three important developments added much to the momentum of HE studies and research. Financially supported by the Human Sciences

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Research Council (HSRC), the first Unit for Research into HE was established under the leadership of Kalie Strydom at the Free State University. The initial work of the Unit centred on issues of quality assurance and leadership in HE. Studies on HE as a field of study in South Africa, student access to HE, regional educational cooperation as well as international comparative studies were published by the Unit. In addition, and through its projects, research training for developing future HE researchers formed part of the Unit's work. The early 1990s also saw the formation of the Post-Secondary Research Group convened by Nico Cloete and Mfundu Nkhulu. This group, consisting of 21 research members from varied backgrounds and supported by the National Education Coordinating Committee of the ANC, conducted a National Education Policy Investigation. From the investigation a report, *Post-secondary Education* (NEPI 1992), was published which provided an overview of the South African post-secondary situation and addressed a number of important HE issues that included inequalities and equity in the HE system, student access, student development, institutional inequalities and staffing inequalities. It finally proposed a number of policy options and a possible future HE policy structure that was taken into the realms of the political change in 1994 and the consequent investigation of HE by the National Commission on Higher Education in 1996. Addressing a different sphere of work, but also of extreme importance in the development of HE research, was the formation of the Southern African Association for Institutional Research (SAAIR) in 1994. With its affiliation to the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) in the USA, SAAIR is a dynamic and active association that involves members from institutional research units at all universities, organises conferences and conducts independent research on such issues as student retention and reporting of HE management information (see www.saair.org.za).

Against this background it is unfortunate that one has to leave out details of important research contributions supported by international funding agencies such as the Ford Foundation and donations by the British, Dutch and Nordic governments to South African HE researchers. Other valuable contributions that deserve to be mentioned are the many postgraduate programmes and study opportunities provided by universities (see an example of a listing of programmes offered by 2009 in Annexure 17.4) and contributions by newly established research outfits such as the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) and independent education policy units.

Invariably, this brief exploration begs the question: How can the field of HE studies and research in South Africa be classified or 'mapped'? This question is addressed next.

MAPPING THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Considering the various observations and uncertainties about HE studies and research in general and in South Africa specifically, this chapter would not be complete without an effort to answer a number of questions relating to the nature and scope of the field in South Africa. We therefore attempt to provide some 'map' of the field which might put the reader in a better position to consider developments in the field as well as its strengths and weaknesses when compared to international maps.

We took notice of Teichler's overview of research on higher education in Europe (Teichler 2005) and the aspects he covers in the overview. These include references to the relatively small size of the field, the varying interest among countries and institutions, the diversity of institutional settings where higher education is studied and researched, the impact of national priorities on the themes being studied and the mixed nature of journals and joint associations.

Without attempting to cover all these aspects, the following questions directed us in our 'mapping' exercise:

1. What is the (thematic) nature of higher education studies and research in South Africa? Are there particular South African emphases in the research? How do these relate to international trends? Does available evidence suggest a possible/unique categorisation of current higher education research themes in South Africa?
2. Where in South Africa is HE formally studied? What are the institutional or organisational settings where HE is studied? What is studied in the various programmes?
3. How stable is the professional basis of higher education research in the country? (Formal associations? Journals? Other forums and outlets? The researchers? Communities of practice?)

We believe that some clarity on the above questions can contribute to the enhanced status and a further recognition of the field of study and its standing in national as well as international terms. However, due to the limitations of a single chapter, we focus on the first question and leave the others as either summarised data or pointers for future research.

PART SIX • RESEARCH FRONTIERS AND AGENDAS**THE THEMATIC NATURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Clarity on the thematic nature of higher education studies and research in the country can be an important starting point towards addressing uncertainties and ignorance about the field and providing a possible answer to those who ask: What is it all about? (Strydom 2002). At the same time awareness can be created of the 'uniqueness' or elements of 'disciplinarity' in the field, in particular themes or sub-themes that will not be found or studied as part of the curricula or research agendas of any other discipline. A classification can also assist students of higher education in locating and demarcating their studies within the broader field. International classifications, in particular those of Teichler and Tight, can provide frameworks against which South African trends can be judged.

International classifications of HE studies and research

Teichler, an authority in the field of higher education research, has suggested a classification of higher education research which gives a useful indication of the nature and extent of the field in the absence of clear delineation. He proposes four broad categories or spheres of knowledge in higher education, because it is his view that a classification of a research area based on themes might be "short-lived" as "major concerns change rapidly" (Teichler 2005:440). He suggests four typical areas of research for each sphere and relates them to the disciplinary settings of those undertaking the research (Teichler 1996:440-443; 2005:450-451):

1. Quantitative-structural aspects such as access, admission, types of institutions, and graduation employment and job opportunities (often informed by economists and sociologists)
2. Knowledge- and subject-related aspects relating to disciplinarity, academic/professional, skills and competences, quality, research on teaching-curricula relationships (mainly informed by education, sociology and history)
3. Person- and process-related aspects, including teaching and learning, communication, counselling and assessment of academic staff and students (with education, psychology and sociology involved)
4. Organisation and governance related to administration, planning, management, funding and decision making (mainly from the angle of law, political science and public or business administration)

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Frackmann (1997, in Tight 2003:6) suggests five clusters or issues for research in Western Europe, namely: (1) the role and function of higher education; (2) the nature of knowledge and learning; (3) coordination and mechanisms between society and higher education; (4) learning and teaching and (5) higher education and European integration. In this categorisation, the regional (European) interest and the place provided for interaction between higher education and society are of interest. Similarly, a separate category was assigned to “higher education and society” – showing some correspondence with the category of “social psychology” in the classifications of Clark and Neave (1992, in Teichler 2005). Seen from a South African perspective, it is not always clear within which of the widely-accepted Teichler areas or “spheres of knowledge” this important aspect (HE and society) should be grouped.

For current purposes of a national categorisation, which may serve as a South African map of higher education studies and research, we regard Tight’s (2003) more detailed categorisation of themes or issues in higher education as a valuable and very practical starting point. His research was based on the analysis of 406 articles in 17 specialist higher education journals published in English outside North America during 2000. This work resulted in the identification of the following eight major themes and sub-themes or issues (Tight 2003:7; 2004:6):

1. *Teaching and learning* – including approaches to studying, learning styles and pedagogical styles
2. *Course design* – including assessment, competencies, the higher education curriculum, learning technologies, portfolios, reflection, writing and postgraduate study
3. *The student experience* – including access, counselling, motivation, diversity, success and non-completion, employment and evaluation
4. *Quality* – including course evaluation, grading and outcomes, national monitoring practices and system standards
5. *System policy* – including economics of scale, funding, national policies, policy studies, globalisation, massification and returns on investment
6. *Institutional management* – including autonomy, departments, institutional leadership and governance, institutional development and history, institutional structure, mergers, marketisation and relationships between higher education, industry and community

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7. *Academic work* – including careers, induction, mobility, professionalism, academic roles, academic development, training, writing and women academics
8. *Knowledge* – including the nature of research, disciplinarity, forms of knowledge, research, and the nature of the university

Tight (2003:7-8; 2004:6) acknowledges that a definite listing is not possible and that overlapping among categories will always occur. He justifies the inclusion of specifically the quality category in terms of the amount of attention it had received at that point. He also describes his approach as “indicative and useful” with the possibility that others would identify “more, less, or different” categories. We are of the opinion that this built-in flexibility makes the Tight framework even more useful and attractive for possible adaptation in any ‘mapping’ endeavour.

The question thus arises whether or to what extent the Teichler “spheres of knowledge” and the Tight categorisation cover or represent current higher education research and study trends in South Africa. Based on our experiences of the field of HE in South Africa, we intuitively feel the necessity of a more prominent place for the abundance of research undertaken and published on the transformation of higher education since democratisation in 1994 and efforts of addressing inequities in all spheres of postsecondary education. In considering this era, there is uncertainty about the possible placement and prominence of higher education community links, with emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects, as well as about the growing importance of the application of the information communication technologies (ICTs) in HE. In our search for directives in this regard we were guided by a number of classifications undertaken in the South African context.

South African classifications of HE studies and research

The classifications we discuss in this section were either based on analyses of the publications in a recognised higher education journal or on postgraduate study topics registered with the National Research Foundation (NRF). Both approaches can be regarded as reliable and valid sources of information, although not entirely comparable. Closer consideration of these studies proved, however, that both might at least provide clear indications of the thematic nature of and trends in HE research at specific periods of time.

The analysis of Muller (1993-1997)

Muller (1998) undertook a worthwhile analysis of 371 higher education research topics registered on the Nexus Database at the NRF in the five-year period covering 1993 to 1997. The sample included 164 completed and 207 ongoing research studies. When combined, the two most popular study topics at that stage proved to be student learning (26%) and curriculum development (22%). These were followed by topics each comprising less than 10% of the total, including instructional practices, Course evaluation, teacher training, technology in education, bridging courses, student career/counselling, governance of HE and staff development.

It is interesting to note that the emphasis in most of the studies during this period was on aspects related to students and teaching. The scope of the research on postgraduate level is furthermore surprisingly narrow for the period during and just after the transition to a democratic government in 1994, with relatively little attention to the spheres of knowledge described by Teichler as “Quantitative Structural” and “Organisation and Governance” respectively. The question therefore arises whether changes in society and in particular those brought about by legislation aimed at changing the higher education scene are more strongly reflected in higher education research undertaken since the late 1990s. Uys and Frick’s research (2009) sheds some light on the matter.

The analysis of Uys and Frick (1987-2007)

In applying an innovative approach to topic modelling Uys and Frick (forthcoming) analysed all 1,237 abstracts of articles published in the South African Journal of Higher Education (SAJHE) in the period 1987 to 2007. The analysis comprised the electronic ‘counting’ of keywords by using the software program CAT (Computer Analysis Toolkit). As rationale for this major endeavour the authors hold that the way in which societal change at a broad level, and educational change in particular, influences academic discourses may be reflected in what a journal such as SAJHE offers its readership (Uys and Frick forthcoming).

The researchers did not make use of predetermined topics or coding, but 50 broad topics, each associated with a large number of keywords and phrases, emerged from the computer-aided categorisation. The authors undertook several types of analysis, all providing very interesting research trends, such as the following list of the 10 topics best covered over the 20-year period:

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1. Institutional research (National Plan for Higher Education)
2. Factors influencing student performance
3. Learning theory
4. Institutional research (General and institutional self-representation)
5. Quality assurance
6. Academic staff and development
7. Academic performance
8. Teacher training
9. Postgraduate supervision
10. Teaching evaluation

Although not directly comparable with the Muller's listing when source (postgraduate studies vs. published research) and period of undertaking (1993-1997 vs. 1987-2007) are compared, at least two major observations can be made: (1) the high priority assigned to institutional research and in particular, legislation aimed at steering HE into desired directions (for example, the national Plan for Higher education and quality issues) which were not 'visible' in the Muller listing and (2) the occurrence and presumably high priority assigned to student and staff matters on both lists with a noticeable absence of curriculum development/design from Uys and Frick's 'Top 10' topic list.

A better comparison with the Muller listing is, however, made possible in one of their other analyses. A highly informative account of research trends (as reflected in SAJHE articles) can be found in their graphical representation of so-called topic time trends. This representation clearly depicts the fluctuating trends, the topics becoming less popular over time, as well as those becoming more attractive in recent years. When considering the time period of 1993-1998 for example, the trends identified by Muller are confirmed. Some of the research trends of the middle 1990s are also very prominent in the Uys and Frick listing of topics with the longest duration over the period of investigation (1987-2007). Student-related matters (counselling, performance, learning), academic staff matters and aspects of teaching, course design and teaching evaluation seem to have been of longstanding importance over the last two decades. The correspondence in findings between the two classifications based on different sources (postgraduate studies and journal publications respectively) provides a clear indication that research trends are more likely to be time-dependent than dependent on source of publication.

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The Uys and Frick time trend analysis can be regarded as a valuable overview of research trends in higher education in South Africa. Reference to their observations regarding more recent trends also becomes relevant in the discussion of the analyses by Wilkinson and Van Jaarsveldt (2009).

The analyses of Wilkinson and Van Jaarsveldt (2003-2008)

Wilkinson and Van Jaarsveldt (2009) had a somewhat different purpose in mind with their analyses. They are both lecturers and supervisors in a large postgraduate programme in higher education studies and had identified the need to provide a more consistent demarcation of their field to the many students currently undertaking studies in the field. Their analyses included articles recently published in the field of higher education as well as postgraduate studies registered at the NRF. In the first phase of an ongoing project all 159 articles published in the SAJHE in 2006 and 2007 were manually coded and categorised. In their analysis an attempt was made to link the research trends/topics they had identified to the Tight classification and, in so doing, to determine possible adaptations needed to make it more applicable to the local scene. The adapted classification was then applied in the analysis of registered postgraduate research topics. The rationale was that the use of an empirically based and internationally recognised classification as a foundation in the possible adaptation to national research priorities may be a constructive move towards bringing some order and legitimacy in a very blurry field.

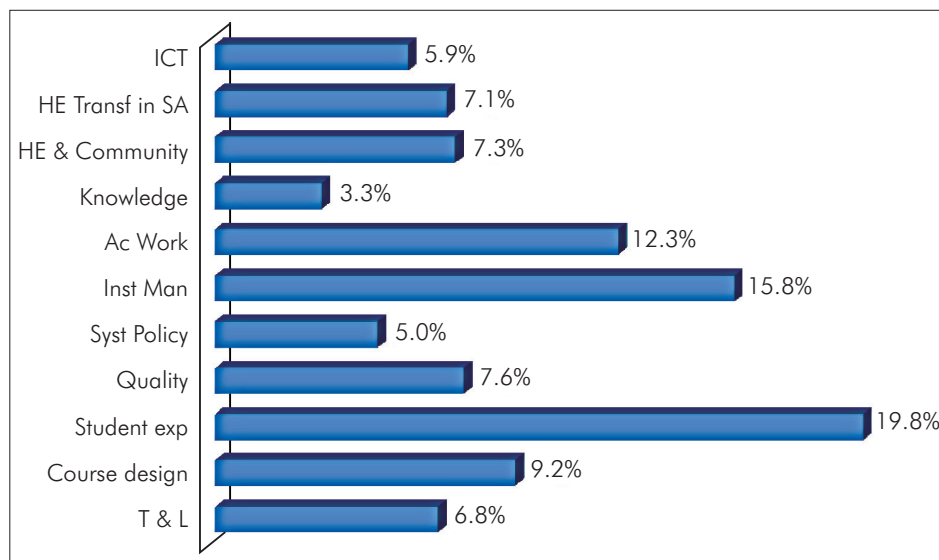
The preliminary analysis of the articles in the SAJHE substantiated the following observations:

- The Tight categorisation is, to a large degree, applicable to South African publications on HE, although the sub-categories do not always suit the SA emphasis and may need at least re-phrasing in some instances.
- International trends like the one on quality and audits, as recognised by Tight, were confirmed, with a decrease in interest already noticeable. The growing importance of and interest in the role and use of information communication technologies (ICTs) in HE suggests a possible new theme (that may replace the Quality theme in time).
- As can be expected, higher education transformation issues are on the forefront. Although most themes could be fitted into one of the main categories a need was recognised for an additional (SA) category in this regard.

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- The emphasis on the linking of South African HE with and responsibility towards society/communities does not fit comfortably into the Tight framework, and suggests an additional category (relating to relevant socio-cultural aspects).

In the second phase of their project, Wilkinson and Van Jaarsveldt applied the suggested expanded version of Tight in an analysis of the topics of 382 master's and doctoral studies with a clear HE focus registered at the NRF and completed in the period 2003-2008. (The expanded version comprised three additional themes relating to transformation, community links and ICTs.) The findings are displayed in Figure 17.1.



*ICT – Information and Communication Technology; HE Transf – Higher Education Transformation in South Africa; Ac Work – Academic work; Inst Man – Institutional Management; Syst Policy – Systems and Policy; Student exp – Student experiences; T & L) Teaching and Learning.

FIGURE 17.1 Themes of M and D studies related to HE registered at the NRF and completed in 2003-2008 (N = 382)

A consideration of the distribution of research topics into themes shows clear correspondence with the topics and the occurrence thereof in Uys and Frick's (forthcoming) analysis, with a confirmation of some of the trends already visible in the 1990s in Muller's (1998) analysis. Student and staff matters are shown as longstanding priority research areas. The three additional categories make up about

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20% of the research and support the argument for their inclusion as research themes. A further consideration of the representation of topic time trends in Uys and Frick's (forthcoming) analysis of also substantiates this extension, as most of the more recent trends displayed relate to topics in the two additional new (country-specific) categories. Examples are topics related to indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), HIV and AIDS, the restructuring of HE, the contemporary/African university, academic freedom and democracy, access to higher education and wellness of academics.

All three analyses reflect the diversity of issues covered in research on HE in South Africa as well as the interdisciplinarity of the contributions. The correspondence with international themes and research priorities is very obvious, in particular when it comes to themes that transcend nationality, such as student and academic matters, teaching and learning, access, course design, institutional management and quality. The element of stability noticed here not only confirms the applicability of Teichler's four broad spheres of knowledge, but also suggests the existence of a particular body of knowledge consistently linked to the field of higher education studies – despite time span or the nature of the interdisciplinary involvement. The applicability of the Tight categorisation has also been confirmed. His classification provides flexibility with the possibility of removing outdated themes or adding themes, in particular new trends or research priorities distinctive to a particular country.

Preliminary findings have thus confirmed the need for at least two new categories. The first would focus on South African HE in transition with sub-themes related to democracy, transformation, equity, changing the higher education landscape, relevance and African involvement. The second category would relate to South African HE and society/community links, relationships and responsibilities, which would address community engagement issues including aspects of service learning, HIV and AIDS research related to higher education and many topics with a socio-cultural origin, including research on IKS and other cultural differences impacting on HE. It is also foreseen that the strong emphasis on quality monitoring will fade away to some extent – most likely to make way for research related to the ICTs. [This observation may not hold ground in all contexts when considering the OECD's (2008) *Synthesis Report on Tertiary Education* that indicates the assuring and improving of quality as one of the targeted policy directions of the future.] The suggested extension of the Tight classification at this stage would display at least two additional categories with a suggestion that ICTs may soon replace Quality in Category 4 (see list in Figure 17.2):

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| | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Teaching and learning |
| 2. | Course/curriculum design |
| 3. | Student experience |
| 4. | Quality (or ICTs?) |
| 5. | System policy |
| 6. | Institutional management |
| 7. | Academic work |
| 8. | Knowledge |
| 9. | <i>HE transformation in South Africa</i> |
| 10. | <i>HE and socio-cultural links/relationships/responsibilities</i> |

FIGURE 17.2 A South African extension of Tight's (2003) classification of themes in HE studies and research (the suggested additions in italics)

We also suggest that any 'explanation' of the scope and nature of higher education studies and research in a South African context can soundly be based on the four broader "spheres of knowledge" of Teichler. However, the consideration of a *fifth sphere* can make this framework even more applicable to the South African HE scene. Such a sphere may include *socio-cultural aspects* relating to trends/links/relationships impacting on HE, but also indicating a responsibility agenda for HE (thus mostly country specific).

It must be taken into account that our suggestions are based on empirical studies and intend to place current HE studies and research trends in South Africa within an international frame; they do not indicate the gaps and obvious shortcomings in the South African HE research agenda that were also identified or attend to methodological trends. The extensions suggested here do show some correspondence with the three priority areas for debate and action identified at the 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in the 21st Century (the three areas comprising HE and development; new trends and innovations in HE; and HE, culture and society). When the sub-categories of these broad areas are considered, however, the gaps in the SA research agenda become even more obvious and alarming. The *Overview Report on Tertiary Education* by the OECD (2008) also points to challenging policy directions that urgently need study and research in all countries. This aspect needs further inquiry.

CONCLUSION

There seems to be little doubt that the studying of HE as a phenomenon remains important. The accusation that higher education institutions are good at studying

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everything except themselves appears to be something of the past if one considers the proliferation of studies and publications on HE during the past 10 to 15 years – in South Africa in particular after democracy in 1994. However, there is a lack of evidence that HE studies and research in the country have reached maturity. Considering our brief review of the history and a possible map for HE studies and research in South Africa we want to make three salient points. Firstly, it seems clear that HE studies and research had an unstable and fragmented past with very few leaders and scholars who were able to take the field forward. Apparently, much of the initial research was directed at the level of policy formation and linked to the country's unstable and volatile political and social history. Much of the impetus for these studies thus originated from political changes or government initiatives to investigate the HE system at various junctures. Secondly, the emergence of institutional units for teaching, learning and academic development was instrumental in sparking new structures and programmes for HE studies and research. Their research agendas were clearly not confined to these three areas, but addressed wider issues such as governance, institutional autonomy, leadership, staff issues and theoretical underpinnings of higher education. Although the period 1960-1994 was one during which South Africa was internationally isolated, HE research did not stagnate and many initiatives have paid good dividends until the present day. Thirdly, one of the most productive developmental eras for HE studies and research was in the post-apartheid years when working groups, institutions, associations and non-governmental institutes such as the CHE started cooperating. While initial efforts were mainly directed at the policy and systemic level, other areas of prime interest such as student access, student throughput, quality promotion, academic freedom, the effects of internationalisation and globalisation, language and indigenisation and the nature of knowledge emerged as research topics, involving a variety of methodologies.

In terms of mapping the field, we have asked three prominent questions. The first relates to the nature of HE studies and research in South Africa. Based on our analysis of publications from at least three different exercises, it seems that the South African map possibly justifies two new broad themes or classes of research when compared to Tight's (2003) classification and at least one additional 'sphere of knowledge' of HE studies and research when related to Teichler's (2005) classification. This finding of course needs to be further investigated, particularly in terms of methodologies used and gaps in research. Our second mapping question asked about the locations and content of formal study programmes in HE in South Africa. Annexure 17.4 reveals a spectrum of qualifications and the universities that offer them in South Africa. We found

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it extremely difficult, however, to determine the exact content of these programmes as not many are published on websites or elsewhere. More research in this area will definitely be needed to determine the range and scope of these qualifications and to find out whether and in which ways they possibly relate to one another. The third question on mapping concerns the professional stability of HE as a field in South Africa. From the historical and publication analysis we conclude that although HE as a field of study is professionally better off than it was 15 or 20 years ago, it is far from stable. Therefore, for future research into South African HE studies and inquiry we suggest a number of possible priorities. One is the need to document, more accurately than is currently the case, the historical development of HE in South Africa – particularly against the background of a divided past of the country and the field. Obviously, more accounts of reality from more participants and researchers need to be recorded and critically discussed to get closer to a true representation of the development of the field. Another area of study – and linked to the third question we have put forward in our ‘mapping’ section of this chapter – could be to investigate ways and means by which the uncoordinated and fragmented theoretical and professional basis of the field might be strengthened. Several options exist. One might be to follow the route of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and investigate possibilities for the creation of a strong ‘division’ or interest group for HE studies and research within the ambit of broad educational research. Another might be to investigate possibilities towards a more coherent, single dispensation for HE studies and research in South Africa that takes into account the important work of associations in the area of teaching and learning (HELTASA), HE inquiry more generally (SAARDHE), institutional research (SAAIR), independent investigations via private and expert personal initiatives and funding, government/ministry and semi-governmental research (Department of Education, the Council on Higher Education, Higher Education South Africa) and research bodies and institutes such as the National Research Foundation and institutional research and development centres. What also needs to be accounted for is the work contributed by professional councils such as the South African Institute for Chartered Accountants (SAICA), the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

In our evaluation of HE research in South Africa from a variety of sources we tend to agree with Tight (2004a) who found in his analysis of 406 articles in 17 prominent HE journals that theoretical perspectives of the field are very implicit and that engagement with theory is still very much absent. One implication, as suggested by Tight (2004a:411), is that researchers in the field should be encouraged to engage more

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with theory in order for the field or the community of practice to gain more credibility and respect. This view is also shared by Clegg (2007). Another implication is that HE studies and research should be recognised by all concerned as an interdisciplinary field where multiple communities of practice operate and that effective ways should be found through which researchers from different backgrounds and perspectives can be joined together.

A particular concern is that the relationship between South African studies and research in HE and that of the rest of Africa remains an unexplored field. Institutions such as the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) are looking into this area more closely from a comparative perspective, but as in Europe a number of years ago, African higher education is extremely diverse and many programmes of study and research in HE as a field are either not recorded or are non-existent. The Association for African Universities (AAU), the African Higher Education Forum (AHEF) and Leaders of Higher Education in Africa (LHEA) play major roles in facilitating debates, projects and programmes in HE studies and research, while UNESCO, the World Bank and Foundations have sponsored such research, but to date not many of these studies have been taken seriously or have been related to South African HE by scholars in the field. Other issues that probably need further investigation, particularly with regard to the present developmental phase in South Africa's history, are diversity studies, sustainable financing of HE, the role of HE in a developing economy, HE and social responsibility, democracy in and through HE and the continuous quest for quality.

There are at least four related reasons why studying the field of HE is needed (Tight 2003). One is that HE matters much to both a country as a whole and to each citizen. It is therefore worthy of a better understanding and, where possible, of improvement. A second reason is that HE is a field of interest for most who work in it and who are concerned about it. Many aspects of HE are intriguing in terms of their complexity, their relatedness or their comparability to other systems or practices. This makes both small- and large-scale research projects most useful and valuable. A third reason constitutes research for credit. In some contexts (not in South Africa as yet) HE practitioners are required, as part of their initial or continuing professional training, to study aspects of improving their roles as teachers and researchers in HE institutions. In most instances this requirement involves small-scale pieces of research on HE that make valuable, contextualised contributions. The fourth reason is for publication, which has been extended from purely disciplinary publications to including publications on aspects of HE that locate practitioners within the debates related to their professional roles. Most of these reasons hold water for the South African context, while publishing

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research and encouraging those in HE academic and support roles to do so are all needed to theoretically enhance and professionalise the field and move beyond off the cuff, personal experiences and mere perceptions of HE as an enterprise and a field of study. It is hoped that this chapter might have added in a humble way to this pursuit.

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ANNEXURE 17.1**ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HIGHER EDUCATION
(CLARK AND NEAVE 1992)**

| Section 1: HE and society | |
|--|--|
| Examples of topics | |
| Applied research and technology transfer | Business and industry contributions to HE |
| HE and economic development | Economics of HE |
| HE and government | HE and local communities |
| Occupational structures and HE | Adult participation in HE |
| Credentials of HE and the value of qualifications | International equivalence of qualifications |
| Qualifications and earnings | Equality and HE |
| HE and human resource provision | National models of HE and society |
| Non-Western societies and HE | Schools and HE |
| Section 2: The institutional fabric of HE | |
| Examples of topics: | |
| Undergraduate HE | Graduate HE |
| Adult and continuing HE | Business schools |
| Community colleges | Junior colleges |
| Systems of HE (e.g. unitary/binary) | Distance HE |
| Private HE | Institutes of technology |
| Liberal arts colleges | Multicampus institutions |
| Section 3: Governance, administration and finance | |
| Examples of topics: | |
| Academic freedom | Accreditation |
| Student affairs | Finance |
| Governance models | Leadership |
| Systems planning | Research funding |
| Accountability | Academic administration |
| Coordination of subsystems | Student financial aid |
| Institutional autonomy | Performance indicators |
| Strategic planning | Privatisation |
| Section 4: Faculty and students: Teaching, learning and research | |
| Examples of topics: | |
| Access to HE | Academic labour markets |
| The undergraduate and graduate curriculum | Degree structures, credit, duration and transfer |
| Longterm effects of HE | Students: Non-traditional and minority |
| Students: Third-age and part-time | Student achievement |
| Student attrition and retention | Student cultures |
| Student development | Student movements and associations |
| Faculty and professional service | Faculty and student interaction |
| Faculty cultures | Faculty recruitment, promotion and tenure |
| Faculty and research | Faculty rewards and incentives |

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| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Faculty vitality | The professoriate: History and status |
| Teaching in HE | Student learning |
| Learning assessment | |
| Section 5: Disciplinary perspectives on HE | |
| Examples of topics | |
| Anthropology | Comparative education |
| Economics | Higher education studies |
| History | Linguistics and rhetorical studies |
| Women's studies | Macrosociology |
| Microsociology | Philosophy |
| Policy analysis | Political economy |
| Public administration | Social psychology |

ANNEXURE 17.2**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA (1829-1970)**

| Year | Activity |
|------|---|
| 1829 | South African College is established (since 1918 officially the University of Cape Town). Prepared students for degree examinations of London University. |
| 1855 | Grey College in Bloemfontein established. Since 1935 the University College of the Orange Free State and in 1950 the University of the Orange Free State. |
| 1855 | St. Andrews College established in Grahamstown. Since 1904 Rhodes University College and 1951 Rhodes University. |
| 1866 | Stellenbosch Gymnasium established. Since 1881 Stellenbosch College, which became Victoria College in 1887 and the University of Stellenbosch in 1918. |
| 1869 | Theological School of the Reformed Church established at Burg(h)ersdorp. Transferred to Potchefstroom in 1915 and became Potchefstroom University College in 1921 (under the auspices of the University of South Africa) and in 1951 the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. |
| 1873 | University of Cape of Good Hope became an examining university for established colleges in South Africa. Ceased to exist when the University of South Africa was established in 1918. |
| 1874 | The Huguenot Seminary established in Wellington, South Africa. Became the Huguenot College (a university-type institution) in 1907 and ceased to exist as a university-type institution in 1950. |
| 1896 | The School of Mines established in Kimberley. Moved to Johannesburg as the Transvaal Technical Institute in 1903 and became the Transvaal University College in 1906, the South African School of Mines and Technology in 1910 and the University of the Witwatersrand in 1921. |
| 1908 | A branch of the Transvaal University College established in Pretoria. Became independent of the SA School of Mines and Technology in 1910 and became the University of Pretoria in 1930. |
| 1910 | The University College of Natal established at Pietermaritzburg. Extended to Durban in 1922. Became the University of Natal with campuses in Pietermaritzburg and Durban in 1949. |
| 1916 | The South African Native College at Fort Hare. Became the University College of Fort Hare in 1952 and affiliated with Rhodes University, Grahamstown. Functioned under the auspices of the Minister of Bantu Education from 1960 and became the University of Fort Hare in 1970. |
| 1918 | The University of South Africa established. Initially only an examining authority, but became a correspondence/distance university in 1951. |
| 1959 | University College for Indians established in Durban. Became the University of Durban-Westville in 1971. |
| 1959 | University College of the North established at Turfloop (mainly for Sotho-speaking blacks). Became the University of the North in 1970. |
| 1959 | The University College of Zululand established at Ngoye. Became the University of Zululand in 1970. |
| 1960 | The University College of the Western Cape established for 'coloureds' at Bellville. Became the University of the Western Cape in 1970. |
| 1965 | The University of Port Elizabeth established. |
| 1967 | The Rand Afrikaans University established. |

(Adapted from Pauw JR. 1971. *Eerstejaar op die kampus [First-year student on the campus]*. Pretoria: Boekhandel De Jong)

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ANNEXURE 17.3

CURRENT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

(AS IN 2009 – ALPHABETICALLY)

| | |
|--|---|
| Cape Peninsula University of Technology | Incorporating the former Cape and Peninsula technikons, the university is the largest in the Western Cape, with over 25,000 students on two main campuses, in Bellville and Cape Town. The university's IT Centre is the largest of its kind in Africa, housing 1,400 computers, various laboratories, a state-of-the-art video conference room and lecture theatre, and two e-business rooms. |
| Central University of Technology | Incorporates the former Technikon Free State and Vista University (Welkom campus). Although the language of instruction is English, the university plans to offer parallel instruction in Afrikaans and Sesotho. Over 100 courses are offered in three faculties: management; engineering, information and communication sciences; and health and environmental sciences. The university is based in Bloemfontein and has a number of centres that can provide research and other technological services to private companies, particularly smaller businesses. This fits in with the university's vision of engaging with its community and providing its students with opportunities for experiential learning. |
| Durban University of Technology | Incorporates the former ML Sultan, Natal and Mangosuthu technikons, as well as the former University of Zululand (Umlazi campus). The university has major campuses in Durban and Pietermaritzburg as well as satellite campuses in Umlazi. |
| Mangosuthu Technikon | Mangosuthu Technikon is a modern higher education institution offering superior quality, technologically advanced programmes and services in engineering, natural sciences and management sciences to almost 10,000 students. |
| Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University | Incorporates the former PE Technikon, University of Port Elizabeth and Vista University (Port Elizabeth campus). The university has more than 20,000 students and about 2,000 staff members spread across eight campuses in the Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and George in the Western Cape. |
| North-West University | North-West University has more than 45,000 students spread over four campuses, offers parallel instruction in Afrikaans, English and Setswana, and is experimenting with simultaneous instruction on its Potchefstroom campus. |
| Rhodes University | Situated in the Eastern Cape town of Grahamstown, Rhodes University has a 100-year history of academic excellence. Perhaps best known for its journalism department, Rhodes has around 500 academic staff and 7,000 students. |
| Stellenbosch University | Situated in the wine-growing region of Stellenbosch, 60 km from Cape Town, Stellenbosch University is one of South Africa's leading research institutions. The university's Centre for Invasion Biology, a Department of Science and Technology centre of excellence, studies the impact of invasive plant species on southern Africa's agriculture, biodiversity and ecotourism. The university has four campuses: the main campus at Stellenbosch, the health sciences faculty at Tygerberg Hospital, the business school in Bellville, and military sciences faculty in Saldanha. |

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|---|---|
| Tshwane University of Technology | Incorporating the former Northern Gauteng, North-West and Pretoria technikons, the university offers over 180 programmes, some of these unique to the institution, such as sport and exercise technology, equine studies, medical orthotics and prosthetics, and environmental management. The university offers masters and doctoral programmes in addition to degrees, certificates and diplomas, and boasts more postgraduate students than any other South African university of technology. |
| University of Cape Town | South Africa's oldest university, founded in 1829, has one of the most picturesque campuses in the world, situated on the slopes of Table Mountain's Devil's Peak and overlooking Rondebosch in Cape Town. The university is regarded as one of the top research institutions on the continent, with more "A"-rated scientists than any other South African university. According to National Research Foundation criteria, "A"-rated scientists are "leading international scholars in their field [known] for the high quality and impact of their recent research outputs". The university is home to Groote Schuur Hospital, where the world's first heart transplant took place in 1967. |
| University of Fort Hare | Fort Hare, dating back to 1916, is the oldest historically black university in the country. It has been the academic home of many of South Africa's most prominent leaders, including Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi. In 2005, the university was awarded the Order of the Baobab – SA's highest civilian honour – for its contribution to the country's leadership. Fort Hare has three Eastern Cape campuses, in Alice, Bisho and East London. The university offers a range of degrees and diplomas in its faculties of education, science and agriculture, social sciences and humanities, management and commerce, and at the Nelson Mandela School of Law. |
| University of Johannesburg | Incorporating the former Rand Afrikaans University, Technikon Witwatersrand and Vista University (Johannesburg campuses), the university offers both technical and academic programmes for around 45,000 students. The university has built a new School of Travel and Tourism on its Auckland Park campus, at a cost of about R70 million. |
| University of KwaZulu-Natal | Incorporating the former Durban-Westville and Natal universities, the university covers five campuses in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. |
| University of Limpopo | Formerly the University of the North, which was home to many prominent anti-apartheid activists of the 1970s and '80s. Situated in South Africa's northern Limpopo province, the university provides training in three faculties: humanities; management sciences and law; and sciences, health and agriculture. |
| University of Pretoria | Officially established in 1930 – but with roots stretching back to the founding of the Normal College for teacher training in 1902 – the university is one of South Africa's largest, with almost 40,000 students, including over 2,000 international students from 60 countries. The university's Gordon Institute of Business Science, established in Johannesburg in 2000, has already earned an international reputation, while its faculty of veterinary science at Onderstepoort is the only one of its kind in South Africa. |
| University of South Africa | Incorporating the former Unisa, Technikon SA and Vista University (distance education), the Pretoria-based University of South Africa offers distance education programmes – both academic and technical – to students across the country and the region. The university's Centre for African Renaissance Study is an interdisciplinary research institution with a mandate to develop outward to the whole of Africa and diasporic Africa. |

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| University of the Free State | Established in 1904, the university is home to around 20,000 students, 16,000 on the main Bloemfontein campus and 3,000 enrolled in the university's distance and internet learning programmes. |
| University of the Western Cape | Originally established in 1959 as an ethnic college for "coloured" students, the university has grown into an internationally recognised institution, providing facilities for over 12,000 students across 68 departments and 16 institutes, schools and research centres. |
| University of the Witwatersrand | Situated in Johannesburg, Wits University is one of the country's leading research institutions. A cosmopolitan campus close to the city centre, Wits attracts a large number of students from across Africa. Since full university status was granted in 1922, Wits has produced more than 100,000 graduates across a range of disciplines. The university offers degrees in the faculties of engineering and the built environment, humanities, health sciences, science and commerce. Wits hosts the Department of Science and Technology's Centre of Excellence in Strong Materials, the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, and the Wits Business School. |
| University of Venda | The University of Venda for Science and Technology, situated in Thohoyandou in Limpopo, offers career-focussed programmes in the fields of health, agriculture and rural development; humanities, management sciences and law; and natural and applied sciences. |
| University of Zululand | Based in KwaDlangezwa, the university positions itself as the leading local, rurally based comprehensive institution offering career-focused undergraduate and postgraduate education, including wide ranging research opportunities. |
| Vaal University of Technology | The university has around 15,000 students spread across its main campus in Vanderbijlpark, 60 km southwest of Johannesburg, and four satellite campuses, which include the Sebokeng campus of the former Vista University. |
| Walter Sisulu University | Incorporating the former Border and Eastern Cape technikons and the University of the Transkei, the university has around 20,000 students spread across its campuses in East London, Butterworth, Queenstown and Mthatha. The university offers a range of degrees, certificates and diplomas in 11 faculties, and hosts an MBChB programme in Mthatha. |

(Source: <http://www.southafrica.info/about/education/universities.htm>)

ANNEXURE 17.4**SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES THAT OFFER FORMAL POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN HE STUDIES AND THE TYPE OF PROGRAMMES ON OFFER (AS IN 2009)**

| INSTITUTION | PROGRAMMES OFFERED | DESIGNATED FACULTY |
|---|--|---|
| Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University | Postgraduate Certificate in HE | Faculty of Education |
| | MEd | Faculty of Education |
| | PhD | Faculty of Education |
| UNISA | Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education | College of Human Sciences |
| | Master of Education with specialisation in Adult Education | College of Human Sciences |
| Tshwane University of Technology | Higher Diploma in Higher Education and Training | Faculty of Humanities: Department of Educational Studies |
| University of Fort Hare | Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training (PGDHET) | Faculty of Education: School of Postgraduate Studies |
| Cape Peninsula University of Technology | Higher Diploma in Higher Education and Training | Faculty of Education and Social Sciences |
| University of Pretoria | Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education(PGCHE) | Faculty of Education |
| University of the Witwatersrand | Certificate Programme in Higher Education Management | Graduate School of Public and Development Management |
| | Master of Education in Tertiary Teaching | Faculty of Humanities: School of Education |
| University of KwaZulu-Natal | Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education | Faculty of Education: School of Adult and HE Centre for HE Studies |
| | Master's in Higher Education | Faculty of Education: School of Adult and HE Centre for HE Studies |
| University of Cape Town | Postgraduate Diploma in Education | Centre for Higher Education Development |
| | Master's in Education (ICT) | Centre for Higher Education Development |
| Stellenbosch University | MPhil in Higher Education | Faculty of Education |
| | PhD | Faculty of Education |
| | MPhil (Health Sciences Education) | Faculty of Health Sciences |
| University of the Western Cape | MEd in Higher Education – Policy Analysis, Leadership and Management | Faculty of Education |
| University of Johannesburg | MEd in Higher Education | Faculty of Education |
| | PhD in Higher Education | Faculty of Education |

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| INSTITUTION | PROGRAMMES OFFERED | DESIGNATED FACULTY |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Rhodes University | Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education | Centre of Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning |
| | Master's in Education (Higher Education) PhD | Faculty of Education |
| University of the Free State | Advanced Diploma in Higher (or Further) Education | Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development (Faculty of Humanities) |
| | MA (Higher Education Studies) | |
| | PhD (Higher Education Studies) | |
| | Master's (Health Professions Education) PhD (Health Professions Education) | Faculty of Health Sciences |

(Compiled by Nalize Marais, Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development, University of the Free State)