Reconfiguring
the Post School Sector

Felix Maringe

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**LABOUR MARKET
INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIP**

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Preface

One of the gravest economic challenges facing South Africa is high unemployment, but at the same time, a skills mismatch. The market demand for skilled labour is greater than the number of individuals completing post-school education and training. Prospective employers often complain that the education system does not give individuals the necessary skills to be productive in the workplace, or to start their own enterprises.

Government acknowledges that the unemployment crisis is a systematic problem and cannot be addressed by ad hoc interventions scattered across line departments. With this 'big picture' thinking in mind, DHET aims to create broad and equitable access to a full spectrum of post-school opportunities and lifelong learning encompassing adult education and training, workplace training, the FET college system, artisan and technical training, higher education and innovation.

DHET's ability to create these learning opportunities requires a network of partners to gather and maintain a labour market intelligence system. Such a system can provide analytical insights to support policies and intervention programmes.

In February 2012, therefore, DHET commissioned a HSRC led research consortium to support its capacity to create and maintain a labour market information and intelligence system, guided by the national Delivery Agreement 5. The primary focus is the development of a 'strategic intelligence capability' towards the establishment of 'a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning'. The HSRC coordinated research project is organised in terms of six interlocking research themes, two which focus on labour market information and four which focus on labour market intelligence:

- Theme 1. Establishing a foundation for labour market information systems in South Africa
- Theme 2. Skills forecasting: the supply and demand model *(a Wits EPU project)*
- Theme 3. Studies of selected priority sectors
- Theme 4. Reconfiguring the post-schooling sector
- Theme 5. Pathways through education and training and into the workplace
- Theme 6. Understanding changing artisanal occupational milieus and identities

The consortium made a strategic decision that their research must not duplicate or repeat existing research about the challenges facing South Africa's education and training system and labour markets. Their research must address gaps, promote synergies and explore complementarities.

Hence, as a first step, working papers were commissioned to inform the research agenda for each theme. Although the working papers cover different issues, each has four common dimensions: policy challenges to institutionalise and build a post-school education and training system in South Africa, lessons from seminal national and international research, conceptual frameworks, methodological issues and data challenges raised by this research, and potential research gaps.

One of the HSRC led consortium's goals is to create a living community of practice that researches and debates education, skills and labour market issues. These working papers were presented at a conference in May 2012 to start building such a research network.

The dissemination of these working papers is intended to encourage more individuals to join the research community. We look forward to individuals' comments. They can be emailed to agoldstuck@hsrc.za.za. Welcome to the research community!

Theme 1: **Establishing a foundation for labour market information system in South Africa**	Theme 3: **Studies of selected priority sectors**	Theme 4: **Reconfiguring the post-schooling sector**	Theme 5: **Pathways through education and training into the workplace**	Theme 6: **Understanding changing artisanal occupational milieus and identities**
Simon McGrath Some international reflections on developing VET indicators	**Haroon Bhorat and Morne Oosthuizen** Studies of Selected Priority Sectors in the South African Labour Market: A Proposed Research Programme	**Andre Kraak** Private post-school education in South Africa	**Michael Cosser** Pathways through education and training and into the labour market	**Angelique Wildschut** Conceptualising the study of artisans
Phil Toner Establishing a foundation for labour market information systems in South Africa	**Peter Jacobs and Tim Hart** A critical review of the research on skills development in rural areas	**Andre Kraak** Differentiation in the post-school sector	**Pundy Pillay** Pathways through education and training and into the workplace: a concept paper	**Jeanne Gamble** Models and pathways to institutionalise apprenticeships
Anthony Gewer Developing a framework for institutional planning and monitoring in FET Colleges	**Shirin Motala** A critical review of research on skills development and labour market demand in the early childhood development sector	**Joy Papier et al** Contemporary issues in public FET colleges	**Sharlene Swartz** Navigational capacities for youth employment: A review of research, policies, frameworks and methodologies	
Carmel Marock Developing a framework for understanding SETA performance: Monitoring and evaluating their role in skills planning, steering and enabling a supply within their sector	**Thembinkosi Twalo** A comparative review of skills development in cooperatives	**Veronica McKay** A critical review on Adult Basic Education (ABET) in South Africa	**Fiona Lewis** Traffic jams or trees – how are South African youth progressing through the higher education sector? And what lessons can we learn from current studies?	
Bongiwe Mncwango Towards a demand side firm level survey of labour information in South Africa	**Margaret Chitiga and Stewart** Development of a national skills forecasting model	**Thenjiwe Meyiwa and Nolutho Diko** The state of graduate teacher transitions to the labour market	**Stephanie Alais** Jobs? What jobs? Skills? What skills? An overview of studies examining relationships between education and training and labour markets	

Theme 1: Establishing a foundation for labour market information system in South Africa	Theme 3: Studies of selected priority sectors	Theme 4: Reconfiguring the post-schooling sector	Theme 5: Pathways through education and training into the workplace	Theme 6: Understanding changing artisanal occupational milieus and identities
Michael Cosser and Fabian Arendse Education and labour market indicators	**Imraan Valodia** Conceptualising skills development in the informal sector	**Felix Maringe** An overview of studies exploring systemic issues related to the South African post-school sector		
Joan Roodt National database sets and research on labour market demand		**Peliwe Lolwana** Is post-school education adult education and training? The shape and size of post-school education		
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper addresses theme 4 of the DHET commissioned research on developing credible sectoral and institutional mechanisms for skills planning in the post school sectors in South Africa. The paper specifically explores issues and research around aspects of reconfiguring the post school sector. It focuses on four fundamental aspects which are critical antecedents to any systemic reconfiguration. These include the need for greater coherence and articulation; a focus on systemic effectiveness and efficiency; enhancing quality and systemic equity and prospects for reconfiguring the funding of post school education and training.

Based on local and international literature including snippets from experiences in India and Brazil on the above critical factors, the paper identifies gaps in policy and research which could be incorporated into a national framework for a research agenda to create credible evidence bases for post school systemic reconfiguration in South Africa.

The paper specifically identifies streams of research in the short and long terms in areas of:

- Mechanisms for generating coherence and articulation through partnership and collaborative processes
- Exploring ways of increasing participation and capacity through processes designed to generate greater sectoral and institutional efficiencies and effectiveness
- Research which seeks to interrogate issues of quality of instruction and the student experience including ways of creating space for student participation in policy formulation and evaluation and the further development of a culture of student centeredness
- Exploring mechanisms for further enhancing issues of equity in admissions, recruitment, progression and outcomes and ways to narrow opportunity differentials among different socio economic groups in South Africa including a dedicated focus on the potentially explosive NEETs phenomena
- Interrogating how globalisation is impacting the sector and identifying ways of strengthening leadership for a rapidly internationalising post school sector

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper, commissioned by the DHET responds to the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) call to 'contribute to the development of a strategic intelligence capability' seeking to establish 'credible institutional mechanisms for skills planning' in the post school sector in South Africa. One of many similarly commissioned 'state of the field' pieces, the paper responds to theme 4 relating to issues around reconfiguring the post school sector in South Africa. It tries to provide an in-depth and critical analysis of existing research, policy and conceptual issues around the idea of systemic change needed to achieve coherence, articulation, quality and equity across the provisions in the post school sector in South Africa.

Systemic structural changes are fundamental changes aimed at state wide, provincial, district or even school level transformation (Reigeluth, 1994). A defining characteristic of such changes is the subordination of smaller organisational units to the ideals of the entity. Success or failure of such changes often hinges on this defining characteristic as tensions and contradictions abound at the interfaces and boundaries within the system (Senge, 1990).

In South Africa, the post school sector has undergone several systemic changes. In apartheid South Africa, the sector like all other facets of life akin to it, was meant to pursue a segregated agenda in providing differentiated and unequal opportunities for economic and labour training and education to young people. Africans and black people in particular, despite their dominance in population terms, had highly limited opportunities in the post school sector. The sector was also designed in ways which ensured very limited contact between learners of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Such institutionalised segregation and discrimination became etched in the structural aspects of the system with separate departments for White and for Bantu education and universities for white and black students. Apartheid has had a fundamental impact on the effectiveness of South African post school system leaving behind a legacy of disadvantage, segregation, inequality. The current system, despite the best efforts and political willingness of the new democratic dispensation, continues to be burdened by the ghost of apartheid and can only boast qualified success in terms of deleting from society the historical inequalities of the past.

With democracy in 1994, based on the principle of equality of humanity, race ceased to be a vehicle for privilege. Opportunities were to be created for all irrespective of racial background. Systemic transformation was to be based on an amalgamated system of universities admitting students on the basis of entry level performance not the colour of their skin. Currently the post school sector in South Africa provides education and training to all people who have left school including adults who have never been to school and comprises the following structural elements:

- **Higher education sector:** this comprises universities which include traditional, comprehensive and universities of technology all offering degree programmes to a relatively small percentage of some of the brightest young people in the country. Evidence suggests that this sector faces several challenges including: low success and throughput rates; residual discrimination as experienced by students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds; inadequate capacity; severe financial, human, infrastructure and other resource constraints especially in

former black universities and what has been described as a serious mission drift among many universities particularly the former Technicons who see the holy grail in HE as being more closely associated with an academic rather than a technical purpose. On the whole, the sector has been described as diverse but grounded in inequality. There is also a sizeable but rather legally and politically constrained private higher education sector whose potential for increasing participation is probably not being tapped sufficiently.

- **The Further Education and Training (FET) College sector:** this sector comprises a diverse but relatively small number of colleges including also a small number of private colleges offering a range of qualifications including National Vocational Qualifications in a range of subject areas, professional and technical/vocational curricula and SETA certified Learnerships and skills programmes. Nationally, the college system has relatively smaller capacity compared to the universities which admit almost 3 times more the number of students admitted in the FET sector. Evidence suggests that this sector's nemesis is with its staffing structure. Two types of staff are generally found in this sector; those with an industrial or professional background but without credible pedagogical skills and those with pedagogical training, but without industrial experience. Both types of staff are only half useful to the needs of vocational training and education. Other challenges of this sector include: inadequate capacity to accommodate an ever increasing number of post school leavers and a growing army of NEETS; mismatch between training provision and the needs of the labour market; resource inequalities between colleges, with severe inadequacies in the rural and former black townships; poor governance; inadequate student support, both financially and academically The Green Paper, 2012). The sector also has a sub system of public colleges offering specific vocational and professional training for different ministries and departments such as defence, agriculture, mining, the prison services and the intelligence services among others. A major problem associated with this sector has been the unclear system of quality monitoring and assurance and weak coordination with the DHET.

- **Adult education sector:** is a system of public adult learning centres, usually operating in the evenings out of schools or other institutions, offering educational opportunities to adults who may never have been to school or who left school with inadequate passes and those who have deliberately or inadvertently chosen to pursue other life choices instead of progressing into other forms of post school provision. A huge challenge facing this sector is the lack of articulation with other post school sectors making progression to higher forms of learning and qualifications almost impossible. Other challenges include: lack of institutional identity and capacity (most tend to operate in primary or secondary school premises in the evenings); no full time staff and very inadequate success rate.

- **Work place training:** this sector provides excellent opportunities for two groups of post school clients. The first are students in education and training who need work experience as an essential component of their programmes. The second are people who may be in full time employment with the respective service providers undertaking, for example apprenticeship like training. All in all, the sector faces some challenges which include: lack of policy clarity about the future of apprenticeships in general especially in the context of the learnerships; lack of equivalence between apprenticeships and Learnerships; a general lack of sectoral strategic

foresight evidenced for example by inability to capitalise on major national projects such as the Gautrain and world cup events and finally lack of articulation with other segments of the post school sector.

Taken as a whole, the post school sector in South Africa, despite the many post-independence achievements continues to bulk under the burden of seemingly intractable challenges. The sections that follow discuss these challenges using available evidence setting the scene for considering implementable structural reform. The paper also draws evidence from comparator countries such as Brazil and India exploring how such countries have dealt with similar issues that South Africa faces. In addition, some examples of programmes in the UK and other English speaking countries aimed at ameliorating similar challenges will be briefly discussed. The paper ends with a summary of propositions for systemic strategy and research which could provide a useful basis for this change agenda.

Drawing from the above, it appears that the post school sector in South Africa faces serious challenges in the following broad areas:

- Coherence and articulation
- Systemic capacity and resource deficiencies
- Systemic quality and equity issues
- Student funding

Each of the above will now be discussed to provide a basis for articulating proposals for reconfiguring the structure of the sector.

2. COHERENCE AND ARTICULATION

Successful educational systems across the world have a measure of coherence and articulation between the varieties of provision that serve the education and training needs of their societies (McInnis, 2005). While there is undoubtedly a diverse range of post school provision in South Africa which includes HE institutions; vocational or FET colleges; adult learning centres; organisation specific professional development centres; and youth development provisions, little integration and articulation exists between these various programmes and provisions. For example, articulation is severely constrained by limited deliberate planning for progression across the various provisions; a lack of equivalence between different programme levels in universities making it difficult or nearly impossible for students to transfer credits from one institution to another; and finally, little coherence with the requirements of the world of work. Despite having developed a commendable system of levels of learning (from 1-10) to define attainment at different stages across the sector and thus laying a basis for learning transferability and standardisation, efforts by SAQA through the National Qualification Framework (NQF) to create a coherent system have not been fully successful. The purpose of Qualification Frameworks across the world is three fold: to embrace and monitor standards across the diverse range of vocational and academic qualification; to facilitate flexible pathways in education and training between the sectors and to encourage cross sector collaboration (Young, 2003). In South Africa, there remains much to do on all three fronts.

2.1 Embracing and monitoring standards across the sector

The qualifications monitoring framework in South Africa is characterised by diversity and complexity. Currently there are many bodies which play a role in qualifications including the SAQA; Umalusi; the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and Education and the QCTO, as well as the SETAs, which fall under its auspices. The Quality council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) is the most recent kid on the block in this expanding market of quality monitoring and assurance. According to the Green paper, many of these emerged with no institutional foundation and had severe human resources deficiencies. As such, they have largely been incapacitated to fulfil their mandate of quality determination. There is thus a multiplicity of qualifications issuing authorities in the sector and these are not always deemed to be of high quality and equivalence. What may be needed is more research to discover ways in which the various qualifications authorities could be more streamlined and coordinated in order to achieve the goals of greater coherence and standardisation of the diverse qualifications (Blom 2011; UMLAUSI, 2008; and DHET, 2011)

2.2 Facilitating flexible pathways across the sector

The key to achieving this is first and foremost is to undertake an audit of all national qualifications and to determine the levels across the sectors. Such research has been difficult to conduct because of a wide range of problems, but largely due to inadequate data storing processes and capacity in different institutions, multiple data reporting requirements, and un updated data sources on public platforms such as institutional websites (Blom 2011) While to some extent this has already been undertaken in South Africa, there remains a great deal of confusion regarding the equivalence between similar qualifications such as learnerships, apprenticeships, and qualifications on the NQF (Visser and Kruss 2012). An additional problem is that when young people move between sector provisions, they often do so to attain higher levels of learning and qualifications and not just to obtain equivalent qualifications. Therefore flexibility should not only be determined by qualifications equivalence, but by mechanisms which allow vertical articulation between provisions in the sector (Jansen 2001). In other words, an apprentice for example, upon completion of a first level qualification in that area, should be able to move across to Learnerships programmes to progress their learning and qualifications. Equivalence should also be about determining key competences for different levels across the different provisions and determining competences which become base level entry qualifications to higher forms of learning (Jansen 2004). Another way to encourage flexibility across the sector may be to modularise all learning across the various provisions. This has its own problems nevertheless not least of which is the notion of pre-requisites which some programmes stipulate as a precondition for access to certain forms of learning or programmes (Badat 2010).

Educational pathways are however not neutral mechanisms for allocating opportunities to young people. They are according to social analysts, mechanisms for reproducing inequality. Durkheim? Ref for example argues that in post schooling systems, educational pathways reproduce societal stratification (in Giddens 1972). Children from disadvantaged communities are often found pursuing learning in specific learning pathways. For example, studies from different parts of the world show

that children of professional parents rarely chose the apprenticeships pathway of learning while those from families with low rates of literacy tend to be found in vocational and manual skill pathways (Shaienks and Gluszynski 2009). There is also much we still do not understand about young people not in education, employment, training (NEETs) in society, especially the factors which contribute to young people making such choices and indeed whether it is by sheer dint of misfortune that many of them seem to have disadvantaged backgrounds. This is a vicious cyle which any society should be obliged to interrogate (see for example Altman and Marock 2008; Krishna 2002; Cloete, 2009; Youth Development Network 2004 and Smith 2011).

2.3 Encouraging cross sector collaboration

The formation of Joint review committees as explained above is an important step to ensure integration and dialogue amongst the various segments of the sector in the post school system in South Africa. However, this should not be limited to the post school sector alone. Cross and Adam (2007) for example have argued for a national and institutional framework for educational pathways. As discussed earlier, throughput from the school system is generally seen as problematic and is often cited as the cause of poor quality outcomes and learning in the post school sector Fleisch 2008; Shindler and Fleisch 2007). While these studies provide robust evidence to demonstrate the nature and causes of poor performance by pupils in South African school, the problem of throughput cannot be addressed just by focusing on issues in the school system. Countries which operate a five year secondary school system before entry to university face a disadvantage in terms of the general level of preparedness of the students to undertake degree studies. Some countries such as Hong Kong have opted for an Associate Degree to cater for a large group of non-traditional entrants to university programmes. In the UK, through the widening participation process which has had a fundamental impact on entry to university by previously marginalised communities, a substantial contribution has been made by FE Colleges through the Access to Higher Education Programme. About 54% Access to Higher education students are aged 25 and above and currently, over 1443 courses are available in over 500 FE colleges across the country (see www.accesstohe.ac.uk). Through this programme, tens of thousands of young people without traditional A-level entry qualifications have been prepared and made eligible for university entrance. This illustrates the possibilities that can be created through cross sector collaboration. In addition, there has been an Aim Higher programme which targeted students ordinarily considered unable to register success at A-level. Such students have had additional support while they are still in school, and have been encouraged to attend weekend and summer school camps, road shows and visits to universities to raise aspirations and develop a mindset focused on progression beyond compulsory schooling. The Aimhigher programme, although it has now recently been disbanded, has had a significant impact on widening participation; raising aspirations amongst young people who previously might have been left behind own their own by the school system whose learning culture and systems tends to favour the more able students. Such initiatives have a more direct impact on removing barriers to access and hence on narrowing the socio-economic differentials in patterns of attendance in universities. It can be said that such structures in the education system, have the potential not only to create more dialogue between different sectors but also contribute quite significantly to deconstructing the

reproduction of inequalities in society (Gorard, 2009; Gwimbi and Monk 2003. Hoadley 2007; Coleman et al. 1966; Gelb 2003; Fleisch 2008).

3. SYSTEMIC CAPACITY AND RESOURCE DEFICIENCIES

The issues of capacity and resources are intricately intertwined. Capacity is a concept which relates to supply and demand in the sector. At about 5.3% of gross national product (GDP) and 20% of total national expenditure, South Africa is one of the top investors in education in the world relative to GDP. At grade 12, children write the Matric examination.   A total of 496 090 candidates sat the matriculation exams in 2011, 70.2% of whom passed. Of those who wrote exams, 24.3% qualified for university study. This suggests that almost 60% of those who pass Matric are unable to proceed to university in South Africa, a quite significant level of wastage in the system. However, this is also related to capacity in the current 23 universities. Although universities have generally expanded their capacity post 94 by about 85% across the sector compared to the pre democracy numbers, access for blacks and women especially has remained negatively skewed in relation to other groups in society (Green Paper, 2012). In addition, there is a significant drop out and non-completion rate for these groups once they become enrolled in universities. There is also evidence of residual racism and discrimination on campuses reported quite frequently in the media. In addition, although the university sector is highly differentiated, in terms of the historical antecedents of the different institutions, finding the right funding formula to help narrow the differentials between the institutions has proved quite intractable and elusive. Therefore, the university system in South Africa could generally be described as having inadequate capacity, wasteful, iniquitous and as being still residually racist and discriminatory. All these are issues which need addressing in the context of increasing capacity (see for example Barefoot 2004; Johnson, 1995; Lindsay 1997; Maboleka 2000).

The issue of wastage in the system could be addressed in a number of ways. First is the need to strengthen the throughput from the schools and FE sector where students are prepared for university entrance. While schools need to play their part in this, universities cannot be completely exonerated from the entire process. Schools are only as good as their teachers and universities are the main providers of qualified teachers to the school system. Research needs to be done which seeks to determine both the content knowledge and pedagogical skills required for effective teaching in schools. Special courses designed to equip student teachers with a capacity to work effectively in rural and township schools would go a long way to enhance the quality of newly qualified teachers passing through the universities. In addition, universities could work together with schools to help increase student performance in critical subject areas such as literacy and languages; mathematics and numeracy and science subjects. Apart from just seeking school placements for PGCE students, universities could do more, working with school clusters to enhance school staff expertise in critical subject areas as identified above as an ongoing and productive part of the partnership between schools and universities.

Internally universities also need to play their part. Non completion and drop out in universities result from a host of factors including poor academic support; inadequate financial support for students especially those from marginal communities; lack of confidence in the ability and willingness of the

labour market to offer meaningful employment opportunities upon completion of studies; personal and family related problems (Sayed, Kruss and Badat, 1998; Ensor 2003; Young 2002). A powerful strategy universities could use is to develop ongoing anxiety audit systems (Maringe, 2010) to monitor student anxieties about their studies as an integral part of student performance monitoring. Focusing both on academic performance as many universities do well and monitoring student anxieties has the potential to reduce drop out and improve completion rates.

In addition, greater collaboration could be established between universities and FET colleges in order to help raise standards within that sector (see for example Ainscow, Muijs and West 2006). Such Collaboration could be directed at developing post compulsory Diplomas in Education and Training by universities to help bridge the skills and knowledge gaps amongst FET staff.

With more funding and government support, university facilities could be more effectively utilised especially during the long summer break. In some developed countries, such facilities are opened up for a variety of programmes including community engagement programmes, school staff in-service education and training; university vacation schools for both the talented and disaffected students in schools see for example Bailie, Leith, and Hagan 1996; the Flowers commission report 1993; Higher education Funding council 1999).

4. SYSTEMIC QUALITY AND EQUITY ISSUES

Quality and equity are very elusive issues. For some, quality is in the eyes of the beholder while for others, it has to be based on clearly defined and publicly acknowledged benchmarks. In higher education generally, quality is a difficult concept to pin down. This is because institutions, in pursuit of the omnipotent goal of autonomy and cherished values of independent thought, tend to define quality in their own terms. However, in a rapidly globalising world and the growing importance of league tables of performance, including the increasing dependence of institutions on government funding, quality has ceased to be a private good for individual institutions. The literature on quality identifies four significant pillars of quality determination in education. It can be defined for example as a measure of excellence or perfection (Hanushek and Wossmann, 2007). The complication here is that the notions of excellence and perfection are equally difficult to pin down and hence the view tends to linked to the 'eye of the beholder' group of definitions of quality. Unless the notions of excellence and perfection are clearly defined, it is difficult to apply this view of quality generally or comparatively. Another competing view of quality is as value for money. This tends to be related with economic models of the measurement of quality. The issue here is to put in place mechanisms which reduce all forms of wastage in higher education so that every dollar/rand that is put in the system can be accounted for. Despite this, it is a view of quality that is increasingly becoming important as institutions have to adopt cost saving measures in an environment where governments are increasingly requiring individual universities to be financially self-supportive (Ramcharan, 2004). A third view of quality is strongly linked to the commercial model which places the customer at the centre of the business enterprise. Quality in this case is determined by the levels of customer satisfaction with the experience they go through during the educative encounters in the life course of the degree programme. Fourthly, quality is sometimes defined as fitness for purpose. The notions of relevance and appropriateness are central to this view of quality in higher education. Finally,

developmentalists view quality form a perspective of the transformative power of education. In this respect, quality is the extent to which graduates have undergone a transformative process which makes them suited to the various occupations and other labour market requirements in society (SAUVCA 2002). To this, a sixth definition of quality needs to be added. That is quality as systemic fairness and justice in creating opportunities for all to engage with and benefit from the outcomes a higher education experience.

However it can be argued that excellence is an overarching philosophy that determines an organisation's approach to quality and should therefore not be identified as a separate element but one which cuts across everything else. Because of this, a four dimensional model for quality in the post school system could be postulated as follows:

Quality in post school education is the attainment of excellence in delivering an educational experience based on four fundamental principles of:

- Equality of opportunity
- Relevance and appropriateness
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Customer satisfaction

Each of these elements of quality is multi-faceted and complex and would require separate papers by themselves. However, at system level, it is important for the sector to have very clear guidelines about what each of these elements mean and identify criteria by which excellence in delivery will be measured. A brief exploration of some of the key challenges associated with each of the above follows:

4.1 Equality of opportunity

This is a highly contestable concept which, in the context of education generally seeks to remove barriers experienced by those in difficult or disadvantaged backgrounds in order to allow free access to educational opportunities and participation in programmes offered across the sector Jansen 2010). Most evidence seems to show that despite progress achieved following independence in 1994, marginalised communities continue to register lower rates of participation, higher rates of non-completion and drop out, and sadly, lower quality outcomes in the form of degree/diploma classification. Participation and success also remains seriously skewed in gender terms, and the rate of production of doctoral graduates is considered quite low for a country with a fairly stable and progressive economic growth (Jansen, 2010)

Challenges associated with delivering excellence in this dimension are related to:

- The legacy of apartheid and its residual impact
- Tensions in balancing political ambition and economic reality
- Uneven distribution of institutions which offer post school education and training
- Uneven quality in intuitions offering post school education
- An economy not expanding sufficiently to absorb all post school graduates in gainful employment

- Insufficient sectoral capacity to provide opportunity to all (Green Paper 2012)

Interrogating these issues is a complex undertaking. On the one hand, some would argue that tackling equality of opportunity is accepting to work within a deficit model which in itself introduces new forms of inequality (Secada 1998). However, a counter to this argument is that failure to redress past inequalities is a far worse crime of omission than the original status-quo. The truth about this lies somewhere in the middle of this polarised debate. In navigating these issues, a lot of give and take has to be applied within a framework of justice and equality of opportunity and in terms of research, new ways have to be found to interrogate the boundaries between explanations proffered through the lenses of functionalism and the conflict theory. The contradictions associated with each of these perspectives should become the new fertile ground for research which seeks to maximise processes of transformation of educational systems (Bourdieu and Passerson 1990).

4.2 Relevance and appropriateness (fitness for purpose)

Relevance and appropriateness relate to the extent to which the educational experience serves and meets the requirements of: a rapidly globalising world; a young developing nation in the process of building up its economy; a nation traumatised by the legacy of apartheid and the liberation struggle; a nation seeking to urgently address issues of unemployment, HIV and AIDS, rural poverty and township vices associated with rising crime and drug abuse. Relevance also relates to a curriculum fit for local learners but with the increasing numbers of foreign learners in the country, it is also about the extent to which the curriculum addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse global and international group of learners. In this respect, the major challenges facing the post school sector in South Africa seem to relate to the following:

- Capacity to undertake scoping studies aimed at forecasting the changing nature of human demography in society and to understand the nature of its diverse learning needs
- Capacity to redevelop relevant curricula which addresses both national and international concerns in both the socio cultural and economic contexts
- Determining ways of engaging with NEETS to discover the true nature of value they seek to obtain and bring to society
- The need to develop situated curricula in post compulsory sector which address issues of AIDS and HIV; rural poverty and other conditions which determine human disadvantage.

4.3 Efficiency and effectiveness

Barnett, 2003; Chaffee, 1985; Rae, 1997; Mintzberg, 1994; Combe and Botschen, 2002; Whittington & Melin, 2003 all contend that post school environments have transformed quite significantly over the last two decades or so. Two factors have been driving these changes in the post school sectors; globalisation and the massification of education following political independence in many Southern African countries especially. There is a growing recognition that if institutions have to become more competitive and admit more students at the same time, then they have to radically change ways in which they organise themselves to deliver both effectively and efficiently.

Effectiveness is a term used to describe the extent to which organisations meet their own stated objectives. If for example a goal of an institution is to develop and deliver quality teaching programmes at undergraduate level, then a benchmark for effectiveness is to determine the extent to which quality programmes have been developed and delivered. The quality criteria could be defined in terms of external examiner assessments while quality of delivery could be defined in terms of students' assessment of that quality. On the other hand, efficiency is about achievement of goals with the minimum resources. Given the environment of increasing austerity, there is a growing need across post school sectors to exercise stringency in utilisation of resources.

An effective post schooling sector is envisaged as one which:

- Produces the right type and numbers of graduates required in the labour and service markets
- Has a rich diversity of qualifications, properly articulated and with flexible pathways in education and training between the sectors
- Has adequate collaboration both vertically and horizontally to encourage equivalence in both standards and in the variety of qualifications
- Promotes recognition of the South African higher education programmes internationally and globally (The Green Paper 2012)

Evidence against these criteria is at best mixed (HESA 2007). The system is not producing the right numbers of graduates. Universities are not producing enough graduates in critical areas of science, engineering, medicine and indigenous languages to name but a few. The quality of graduates as construed by employers and employer organisations is below the standards expected. Although there is a rich diversity of qualifications across the sector, issues of comparability remain vexing questions. This is compounded by inadequate flexibility between sectors which would allow students to transfer qualifications in pursuit of progression to higher forms of training and education.

On the other hand, an efficient post school sector would be envisaged as one which:

- Reduces or eliminates wastage in the form of repeaters, non-completion, drop outs and unredeemable failures.
- Maximises use of available resources and facilities
- Depends on careful conjoint planning between different sectors to maximise the effectiveness of the system as a whole
- Becomes information and technology driven to enhance the systemic capacity to compete favourably in the cut-throat and increasingly competitive global system
- Reduces or eliminates barriers to entry, participation and to attainment for all those with potential and interest to benefit from the sectors' programmes

Yet again evidence against these criteria of systemic and indeed institutional efficiency is both patchy and at best mixed (HESA 2007). Whatever structural transformation may be needed and envisaged needs to take account of these performance measures and put in place structures and

systems that monitor, encourage and evaluate on an ongoing basis the performance of the both the institutions and across the sector as a whole.

4.4 Customer satisfaction

Education sectors have a natural resistance to what may be termed encroachment of their territory by the business or commercial world (Maringe 2011). Yet, in the context of globalisation, the need to become competitive has increased. Competitive education systems are strong players in the recruitment market; they attract the best talent from all over the world; they strive for global excellence and recognition against key performance criteria in research, teaching and public service; they aim to produce the best graduates needed by both local and global markets and finally, they aim to produce satisfied customers who will return for further education and training or recommend repeat business to new customers.

The use of the notion of customer is also highly contentious in education sectors. However, whether students are customers or not, the importance of their satisfaction cannot be underestimated (Molesworth et al. 2011). Research undertaken by Foskett, 2002; Maringe, 2005; Hemsley-Brown, 2011, Oplatka and Hemsley- Brown, 2007; among others, suggests that student satisfaction is generally obtained when:

- The educational or training experience is undertaken in caring environments
- The institution helps them to experience success in their goals
- The institution provides facilities and resources of such quality as to facilitate their success
- The environment provides opportunities for them to enjoy their learning, educational and socio-cultural experience
- The institution enjoys an excellent reputation comparable to or exceeding the very best in the sector, nationally and globally
- The institution provides opportunities for the disadvantaged to access support which enables them to engage meaningfully and to experience same levels of success with their studies.

The above could be used as a framework across the sectors to develop a customer focus both institutionally and systemically.

4.5 The issue of equity

Equity is another slippery concept in educational debates. This is because it is intricately intertwined with other terms such as quality and equality. A useful way for understanding equity is to view it as an issue of justice and fairness. While equality seeks to bring parity of opportunity to diverse groups in society, equity begs questions of fairness and justice regarding the processes of equalising opportunities. On one hand, there are various forms of opportunities the system may wish to create for students. The literature (see for example Cloette et al. 2004; Badat, 1999; The ANC, 2005) generally indicates that, in post schooling environments such opportunities include parity in:

- Accessing education and training opportunities for all
- Accessing financial support for pursuing education and training programmes
- Accessing the same opportunities for receiving support, both academic and social
- Experiencing and utilising educational and training resources
- Experiencing success and progression in programmes of study
- Accessing labour market opportunities following successful completion of study

On the other hand, equity concerns are directed at evaluating the extent to which the above issues of equality are being adequately addressed across the system and its sectors. Four dimensions of organisational or systemic equity have been identified. Greenberg (1993) has argued that competent organisations have to pass four equity or justice tests. The first is a structural justice test, which entails the structural elements of the organisation that support the equalisation of opportunities to all and allow for a fair distribution of outcomes. The second is a social justice test, which involves an organisation-wide perception that the organisation shares information openly and cares about their wellbeing. The third concerns distributive justice, which involves the distribution of resources, and facilities to aid the equalisation of opportunities to members of the organisation. The last is procedural justice, which relates to the processes utilised by the organisation to implement programmes of equality.

It appears therefore that both at institutional and systemic levels, structures and process need to be put in place to monitor, implement and evaluate the extent to which each of the equity dimensions are working to promote the values of equality.

Major equity challenges facing the South African post school sectors include:

- Inadequate mechanisms for promoting access especially of disadvantaged communities in society to the various programmes across the sector
- Inadequate mechanisms for promoting success and progression especially for students from disadvantaged communities
- Inadequate mechanisms for providing financial and other forms of support to students especially to those from disadvantaged communities

This leads us to the final issue of funding across the sector.

5. ISSUES OF FINANCING POST SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Despite the huge size of the budget allocated to post school sectors in South Africa, research suggests that there are major areas of inefficiencies that continue to vex the sectors. Johnstone (2004) argues that higher education is both a private and public good and because of this systems of education need to consider the principle of cost sharing between students and governments. Such arguments have had mixed receptions in different parts of the world and indeed have led to reduced public spending to HE especially under World Bank driven programmes of structural adjustment. Structural adjustment programmes have generally had disastrous impacts in weak and emerging economies and have tended to widen rather than reduce inequalities. A survey of the impact of

structural adjustment programmes in Africa by the Centre for Economic and Policy Research (1999) concluded that:

> ... the International Monetary Fund has failed in Africa, in terms of its own stated objectives and according to its own data. Increasing debt burdens, poor growth performance, and the failure of the majority of the population to improve their access to education, health care, or other basic needs has been the general pattern in countries subject to IMF programs.

Reducing government expenditure in HE in South Africa, while it may not be appropriate at this time, is nevertheless a likely policy option in the future and this will drive debate around issues of increased cost sharing.

Increased cost sharing in higher education has now become the norm in many developed countries and it is implemented in a variety of ways including:

- Deferred payment systems, involving means tested loans to students which they pay back following completion of studies at token interest rates and after they reach stipulated salary earnings thresholds in the job market
- Systems which combine grants and loans to students with increasing emphasis on the later
- Upfront payment systems for students with proven means to pay for their education and training needs

Introducing such measures in South Africa at this time is likely to be politically suicidal for ruling governments and could very well exacerbate the inequalities across society which the government is trying very hard to reduce. In the long term, serious thought needs to be given to issues of government funding of education generally and the big questions could be about:

- The fairness and justice of equalising financial support to students of all backgrounds
- Whether the current system and formulas for determining funding to institutions are based on fundamental principles of equality and equity and whether these adequately support institutional innovation and research. While a fee paying system has always existed in South Africa, the debate is now about how to introduce free higher education for the most disadvantaged. This raises new questions about equity especially in the context Johnstone's notion of private benefits of higher education which outweigh the private benefits.

6. COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Two country case studies have been used here to illustrate how Brazil and India are dealing with similar issues in their higher education systems. The cases are in no way comprehensive, but illustrate a few important principles which may inform policy and research in the post school sector in South Africa.

Brazil has been hailed in a recent World Bank (2010) report as the educational miracle of the 21st century. Although, like any other country, Brazil continues to face serious challenges, its successes in the last decade have been broadly attributed to a number of key and unique factors.

- A managed revolution of education based on three fundamental principles: equalising funding across regions, municipalities and districts; measuring the learning of all children on a common national yardstick; and protecting the educational opportunities of vulnerable children from poor disadvantaged communities. This has led to significant improvement in standards and student learning leveraging Brazil to dizzy heights of performance on many international comparative educational performance tables such as the PISA (Rodríguez, Dahlman and Salmi (2008). In South Africa, quality in the school system has become the nemesis of the entire education sectors. Universities point to a lack of preparedness of secondary school graduates for work in the post school sector. A variety of factors have been identified which contribute to this, including, low teacher quality, lack of resources, poor leadership in schools, inadequate teacher pedagogic skills (Bregman, Marit, Stallmeister, 2003). This issue has been brought up here because no amount of restructuring at the post school level can succeed in complete isolation of the quality of throughput from the school system in general and secondary school in particular.

- The Brazilian Education Action Lab (Ministry da Educao, 2007) was started as a nationwide effort to elevate the status of research, development and evaluation in education as the single most important basis for educational improvement. The effort comprises policy think tanks and implementation and evaluation groups in each education action zone. A wide range of action policies such as teacher bonuses; time on task initiative; parental involvement plans; homework policies; local testing and evaluation and curriculum integration policies have been developed, implemented and evaluated. The problems of post school systems cannot be solved solely within the sectors. External interventions with the involvement of HE such as improving schooling sectors is a critical aspect in the enhancement of throughput, which is a big issue in south Africa. The World Bank report of 2010 has described these initiatives under the Education Action lab as the 'single fastest road to world class education (p.87).

- Strengthening standards and quality: it is law in Brazil that every institution from preschools to the top research intensive universities should have an internal mechanism for monitoring quality in terms of access, teaching, student engagement, curriculum relevance and progression. These units are supported financially by the government and they report directly to local authority structures which are answerable to the Ministry. This obviously creates tension especially between institutions of higher learning and government as the process is sometimes seen as unnecessary interference with what already works. However, the World Bank Report has described this as 'perhaps the most well developed mechanism in the world for monitoring quality and ensuring systemic standards across the sectors' (p.106).

India's post school sector also provides some useful lessons for South Africa. With more than 300 universities, with an average 40 000 students in each of these, India has one of the biggest HE sectors in the world. However with a population approaching a billion people, India faces serious

challenges related to capacity quality and equity. Key strategies that the country has used to meet these challenges include:

- Facilitating the growth of a private higher education sector. Currently, 20% of all degree awarding institutions in India are privately controlled. Some argue this has led to wholesale commercialisation of education in India. Government's intention is to bring this number to about 30% by 2020 (Blackwell, 2004). Like in South Africa, there are however huge issues related to quality and monitoring of standards in this context, as would be expected.

- Developing a cocktail of funding and student financing mechanisms including means tested study loans, grants and bursaries and clear institutional funding processes which are based on number of students, staff, research outputs, secured funding and entrepreneurial activity. Available evidence suggests that approaches used in India though problematic have had some positive impact on equalising opportunities and addressing equity concerns (Fielden and La Roaque 2008).

The paper ends with some ideas for further discussion, debate and research in areas of reconfiguring the structure of the post school sector in South Africa. These will be presented in two distinct but interrelated parts. These are: research directions for long term and ongoing reconfiguration at the systemic and institutional levels; and ideas for further research in the immediate and medium term that would bolster understanding of needed systemic changes.

7. SYSTEMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL RECONFIGURATION

- Research and policy analysis and evaluation about the effectiveness of existing structural organisations which coordinate and monitor curricula integration and articulation across the sectors may need to be undertaken. This would be aimed at delivering improvements in areas of standards accountability, corss sector collaboration and the creation of clearer progression routes for students. In terms of increasing capacity of the sector to meet ever growing demand for post school qualifications, it may be prudent for government to allow for the expansion of a coordinated and well monitored private sector. This seems to be working well in India and lessons regarding challenges associated with this could be learnt not only from India, but other countries that have embraced the idea of expanding the private sector.

- Research is needed to interrogate issues of efficiency of resource utilisation in post school institutions and more especially in universities. Universities and other national resources for further education and training generally lay idle for long periods of time during long vacations. In the USA and other countries, such facilities are generally used to develop community based courses, run in-service courses for professionals in different fields, and offer opportunities for students on part time programmes to use the facilities for intensive periods of learning and study.

- More research is needed which interrogates instructional conditions which optimise teaching and learning in post school institutions. Apart from increasing internal human resources capacity and costly infrastructural development, staff to student ratios should never be allowed to cripple the energy and enthusiasm of the teachers and lecturers in the system. Post school teaching and learning is resource intensive and time consuming. Universities, with government financial support could for example experiment with the idea of hiring more teaching fellows to remove the burden from staff with a more research intensive focus and free them to pursue their research and authorship

- Issues of fair access and admissions need further strengthening in order to further enhance equity across the sectors. Threshold levels of fair access and admissions could be drawn and stipulated which universities need to demonstrate commitment to and which could be linked, just as is done with institutional research, to funding streams aimed at enhancing equity and equality of opportunity especially for students from historically disadvantaged communities. Similar initiatives need to be duplicated at institutional levels through the formation of institutional committees for fair access and admissions. Such committees could be chaired by DVC s or other staff of similar standing and should include prominent members of the public of good standing who would represent the interests of the communities at large.

- Research is needed which seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional collaboration as a strategy for strengthening and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the FET sector through the development of a portfolio of qualifications and through closer collaborative partnerships with institutions in this sector.

- Ways to more effectively integrate the student voice into sectoral and institutional policy formulation need to be explored. This would drive the development of a more student focused culture in education in recognition of a heightened need to generate greater customer satisfaction in the wake of an increasingly globalising HE environment. Along with national student satisfaction surveys, all programmes should be required to administer student satisfaction surveys at local levels as the data is increasingly becoming important not only for university league table purposes, but as a way to monitor and improve student satisfaction.

In the immediate to medium term, the following research ideas could be used to drive ideas and gather evidence needed for to support ongoing systemic reconfiguration. The different funding organisations including the HSRC need to encourage and prioritise research with a policy and strategy brief which seeks to:

- Explore issues of equality of opportunity and equity in the post school sector in SA and the factors constraining full attainment.

- Explore the rationales, strategies and outcomes of diversifying structures and systems for funding and financing post school education in South Africa

- Explore the transforming nature of HE as a consequence of the forces of globalisation and internationalisation in South Africa and examine ways in which such transformation

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necessitate new leadership forms and strategies in institutions. This would strengthen the competitiveness of the SA HE brand nationally and internationally.

• Understand more clearly the causes, consequences and life choices of NEETS in the country, a phenomenon rapidly becoming a ticking time bomb.

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