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**POLICY FRAMEWORK ON
DIFFERENTIATION IN THE
SOUTH AFRICAN POST-SCHOOL SYSTEM**

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Policy Framework on Differentiation in the South African Post-School system

1. Introduction

Following the restructuring of the higher education landscape after 2005, the number of institutions decreased from 36 to 23. During this process certain institutions were subjected to mergers and many argued that this restructuring process and government policies opened a window towards a dedifferentiated higher education system which may have been caused by a perceived academic and mission drift.

However the university sector is quite diverse in nature and programme offerings, although this has only partly been policy-driven. Some of the differentiation has been the result of historical legacies that have not been adequately redressed, resulting in a great inequality among the universities, some of which still find themselves with inadequate resources and capacity to provide for the basic needs of their students and other stakeholders. Other forms of differentiation have been policy-driven, particularly the categorisation of universities into traditional universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities, stipulations in university missions, programme offerings as a result of government policy and partially the result of the individual decisions of institutions and the resources they have been able to acquire from government or elsewhere.

The debate on higher education differentiation and diversity needs to be linked to the wider, constantly evolving post-school system and this should be viewed by higher education institutions as a casement of opportunity and be viewed in a positive light. The post-school sector should be seen as a continuum – ranging from further education colleges and training institutions offering vocational and technical programmes, to largely undergraduate institutions (some with acceptable and appropriate research and postgraduate niches) to specialized research-intensive and research-led institutions which offer teaching programmes from undergraduate to doctoral level. All types of institutions are equally importing to the overall post-school system and should function within a specific mandate.

A platform should be provided where institutions are encouraged to revisit their roles in relation to social and economic imperatives, priorities and societal challenges, and redrafting their institutional missions, development trajectories and identities accordingly towards a dedicated niche and mission emphasising their contribution towards the relevant human resource development needs of the country. The higher education system specifically should provide more choices for the students, articulation possibilities between the different institutional types

and supply a quality cohort of graduates. Innovation and the generation of new knowledge should be stimulated in order to be competitive in the global context.

Differentiation as a process towards diversity is necessary to ensure the provision of access for a diverse cohort of students that is widely distributed. Differentiation is also necessary to provide the opportunity for institutions to focus on specific areas of strength. Institutions should be more responsive to national and labour market needs through innovation and flexibility.

2. Purpose of the policy framework

It has become apparent that a clear policy framework on differentiation is necessary. Therefore the purpose of this document is to provide a policy framework on differentiation for the South African post-school education system with clear government steering in terms of planning, quality assurance and funding. Funding is the most contentious issue as it is argued that differentiation needs to be accompanied by a funding framework that does justice to current individual institutional realities and adequately fund each institution to optimally enhance its growth trajectory.

The framework is therefore situated within the context of taking into account market forces, geographical location; and institutional strategies linked to an applicable mission statement; social or community expectations and pressures; internal dynamics, legacies and the capacities of the institutions. A resolution reached at the Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation (2010) is that *such a (national) framework for differentiation should be national, integrative and linked to the wider post education system, and provide a basis for 'negotiated' determinations of individual institutional trajectories - taking into account their local and regional contexts, legacy challenges, current capacities and realistic prospects.*

The policy framework should be an enabling and coherent policy framework that includes thoughtful governmental supervision, effective steering, predictability, continuity and consistency in policy.

The policy framework should strengthen the post-school sector towards a functional continuum where the university system must become an integral part of the post-school system, interfacing with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and other vocational colleges, SETAs, employers, labour and other stakeholders. Such cooperation should be taken into account an institution's planning and the development of its programme and qualification mix.

It is paramount to link this development to adequate funding, especially for under-capitalized institutions; relating to regional and local economic agreements and needs; and, enabling portability of students, academics and knowledge across the sector.

3. Policy context

Historically the apartheid higher education system was differentiated and diversified along lines of 'ethnicity' and geographical location and language, resulting in benefiting in various ways the historically white institutions - mostly urban based, and disadvantaging the historically black institutions - mostly rural based. Formal policies that mediated differentiation within the higher education system before 1994 were Report 150 (97/01 - General policy for Technikon instructional programmes), Report 151 and Report 116 (A qualification structure for universities in South Africa) stipulating a binary divide. After 1994, 'differentiation' and 'diversity' in South African higher education have been difficult and challenging policy issues.

The most influential policy formulation exercise in the higher education arena during the 1990s was the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996) which nominated three central attributes that shaped the new higher education framework, namely increased participation, greater responsiveness and increased cooperation and partnerships. The commission called for diversification within a single coordinated system and stated that this system will evolve through a planned process which recognizes current institutional missions and capacities, address distortions created by apartheid, and respond to emerging regional and national needs. In large part, this was accepted by government in the 1997 Higher Education Act (DoE, 1997) and confirmed in the National Plan on Higher Education (DoE, 2001).

In 1997 the *White Paper 3 - A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* made clear that an important task in planning and managing a single national co-ordinated system is to ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape which is diverse in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes, and offset pressures for homogenisation. This White Paper adds that these homogenization pressures can be avoided by (a) recognizing universities, technikons and colleges as three types of institutions offering higher education programmes, (b) having rigorous planning and screening process for approval of publicly funded programmes, and (c) rigorous quality control of providers. The three types will not be regarded as discrete sectors with exclusive missions and programme offerings but an easing of the boundaries between universities, technikons and colleges will be sought, as a new programme-based definition of higher education is implemented.

The 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) announced its commitments to 'achieving diversity in the South African higher education system', and 'to diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development' and sets it as a strategic objective ensuring diversity through mission and programme differentiation which would be based on the type and range of qualifications offered. To avoid shifts towards uniformity or homogenisation, the then Ministry recognised, up until at least 2005, technikons and universities as two institutional types representing a binary divide.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) recommended in their report “Towards a new higher education landscape” that the higher education system should be “reconfigured as a differentiated and diverse system so that there can be effective responses from institutions to the varied social needs of the country” and the proposal stated that differentiation and diversity should be achieved through structural differentiation between different institutional types (CHE 2000). The NPHE concurred with the CHE that a differentiated and diverse higher education system is essential to meet transformation goals of the White Paper 3, but it did not support structural differentiation as it would lead to a regulatory framework which pre-determine institutional programme mixes and missions, and would as a consequence contradict the White Paper’s programme-based definition of higher education. It was then agreed that if diversity is to be achieved, a clear regulatory and planning framework is required. The risk with structural differentiation is that it introduces an element of rigidity, which will preclude institutions from building on their strengths and responding to social and economic needs, including labour market needs, in a rapidly changing regional, national and global context. At the same time, an open-ended institutional framework, which leads to academic and mission drift and uniformity based on the values, priorities and practices of the major research universities, is not favoured.

The breakdown of this divide through a restructuring process resulted in eleven (11) ‘universities’, six (6) ‘universities of technology’ and six (6) ‘comprehensive universities’ whereas the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is a cause for concern towards promoting academic drift. It was argued at the Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation in 2010 that *this “designated categorization” of three institutional types should be seen in less ‘either/or’ terms, but rather as a continuum with various combinations of three (3) missionary functions, disciplinary foci, teaching, research and engagement specializations. It was also stated that an evolutionary transition across these designated categories, which should not be seen as permanent or static should be allowed. This transition should be supported and linked to adequate funding, especially for undercapitalized institutions; linked to regional/local economic networks; and, should enable portability of students, academics and knowledge across the sector.*

HESA (Higher Education South Africa) states that for the South African higher education system to effectively meet the varied social, economic, cultural developments needs of South Africa and the African continent, which range on a continuum from the global to the local, it must demonstrate *diversity* ‘in the institutional landscape’ and ‘its organisational form.’ *HESA’s Strategic Plan for the 2010 to 2020 period* supports a system of progressive self-differentiation based on varied institutional visions, missions, policies and practices that enable institutions to meaningfully progress on a distinct development path. It can also be seen as institutions evolving within and across various categories in complex and dynamic ways. At the same time, an open-ended institutional framework, which leads to academic and mission drift and uniformity based on the values, priorities and practices of the major research universities, is not favoured by the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). To achieve a ‘single national co-ordinated system’

maximum collaboration and academic articulation between the variety of institutions needs to be ensured, unnecessary duplication needs to be avoided, and the greatest possible student and staff mobility should be planned. The system of progressive self-differentiation based on varied institutional visions, missions, policies and practices that enable institutions to meaningfully progress on a distinct development path is proposed because it makes different development trajectories for higher education institutions possible. However it is noted that one effect of mergers and incorporations, has been the establishment of three main types of higher education institutions: traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology. It adds however that other less clearly delineated groupings of higher education institutions exist or, are beginning to emerge.

The latest policy framework that provides a position on differentiation is the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training system (2013) contextualising the path towards the building of an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system. It has recognised that the principle of differentiation must apply beyond the universities to the entire post-school system. It refers to differentiation as a way of ensuring a diverse system that will: improve access for all South Africans to various forms of educational opportunities; improve participation and success rates in all higher education programmes; enable all institutions to find niche areas that respond to the range of national development needs; provide different kinds of modes of learning, content of learning programmes, methods of teaching and assessment across the system for diverse student bodies; support both flexibility and innovation in the system; allow an effective and focused way of distributing public funds; and improve the overall quality of the system.

4. Conceptualising the term ‘differentiation’

4.1. Clarification of concepts

Differentiation as a concept should be distinguished from diversity as it means different things to different interest groups.

4.1.1. Differentiation

Differentiation has been conceptualised through the social sciences in the following contexts:

- Building on the first study on differentiation as indicated by Durkheim’s classic *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Parsons designed his famous structural-functionalist conceptualisation of differentiation (Parsons, 1966 in Van Vught, 2007) which was directed to the effects rather than the causes of differentiation. The classical studies of Marx and Spencer define differentiation as an element in the “*adaptive processes of social systems which retain these structures, processes, etc. that lead to greater adaptation to the environment*” (Campbell, 1965, p. 16 in Van Vught, 2007).
- Smelser (1959) describes differentiation as: “*a process whereby a social unit changes into two or more other units where the new social units are structurally distinct from each other, but taken together they are functionally equivalent to the original unit*” (Smelser, 1959, p. 2).
- Cloete and Mbatia conceptually confirmed this at the Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation (2010) stating: “*differentiation is the process in which the diversity of a system increases*” and “*differentiation is the process by which new entities emerge in a system which leads to greater diversity*”.
- Gibbon (2011) indicated that differentiation may also be understood as: “*the purposeful means to achieve a desired state of diversity through the active exercise of judgement*”. This will involve an assessment or measurement against specified criteria. Therefore differentiation is a process that can be driven purposefully.

From these view points and for this purpose differentiation in the South African context is seen as: “*a process in which the diversity of the system is increased*” (White Paper on building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post –School system, 2013).

It should be noted that there are various types of differentiation defined as follows:

- **Mission differentiation:** Differentiation through institutional missions and the institutional variables that follow from the institutional mission. By "mission" is meant the larger purpose of the institution which can be ambitious, purported or actual. The mission in turn drives the programmes, the kinds of students attracted, the kinds of faculty appointed and the expectations upon them, and the way the institution is assessed (or would be assessed) (in Johnstone, 1998).
- **Performance based differentiation:** To maintain and even increase the diversity of higher education systems, where different ranking instruments need to be developed in which different forms of institutional performance can be compared.
- **Self-differentiation:** This process is based on varied institutional visions, missions, policies and practices that enable institutions to meaningfully progress in a distinct development path. It can also be seen as institutions evolving within and across various categories in complex and dynamic ways. However differentiation should not occur to the cost of some institutions in order to advance others.

- Programme differentiation: Differentiation can be considered at the level of programmes as well as institutions where the primary differentiator is programme purpose. The then Ministry adopted a system based on three institutional types which adheres to the proposed programme differentiation in the NPHE: universities, technikons (called “universities of technology”) and “comprehensive” institutions, which would be a hybrid of both. Within this broad three-fold institutional framework, *universities* would focus on niche areas of ‘traditional’ general formative and professional undergraduate and postgraduate programs and research; *universities of technology* would emphasize career-oriented programs, mainly at the undergraduate certificate and diploma levels and they would also offer, with government approval, undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs in identified areas of strength; and *comprehensive institutions* would offer a combination. Within its planning framework, the then Ministry initiated the Programme and Qualifications Mix (PQM) initiative. This formed one of the government’s three main policy levers for systemic change, the other two being the Funding Framework and the Higher Education Quality Committee’s Quality Assurance Framework.

4.1.2. Diversity

A very general definition of diversity is offered by Trow (1995), and cited by Meek et al. (2000) (cited in Codling and Meek, 2006, p. 5) as: “[...] *the existence of distinct forms of post-secondary education, of institutions and groups of institutions within a state or nation that have different and distinctive missions, educate and train for different lives and careers, have different styles of instruction, are organised and funded and operate under different laws and relationships to government*”.

Diversity can therefore be defined or explained as:

- A term indicating the *variety of entities* within a system. External diversity implies that the focus will be at the level of the system in this situation the post-school system rather than at the level of the higher education institutions or sets of programmes (of teaching and research) organised by these institutions which is referred to as internal diversity.
- In terms of Birnbaum’s (1983) (in Van Vught, 2007) typology of forms of diversity, the focus is on *external diversity* (a concept which refers to differences *between* higher education institutions), rather than on *internal diversity* (differences *within* higher education institutions).
- Differentiation is referred to as the social and economic mandates of institutions whilst the term diversity is often used to refer to specific missions of individual institutions.
- Diversity is also referred to as: “*the variety of the entities at a specific point in time* (Huisman 1995, as referenced by Van Vught, 2007).

Differentiation and diversity is therefore both distinct and connected whilst differentiation signifies a dynamic process, diversity refers to a static situation at a certain point established through a committed process.

Types of diversity:

- *systemic diversity* refers to differences in institutional type, size and control found within a higher education system;
- *structural diversity* refers to institutional differences resulting from historical and legal foundations, or differences in the internal division of authority among institutions;
- *programme diversity* relates to the degree level, degree area, comprehensiveness, mission and emphasis of programmes and services provided by institutions;
- *procedural diversity* describes differences in the ways that teaching, research and/or services are provided by institutions;
- *reputational diversity* communicates the perceived differences in institutions based on status and prestige;
- *constituent based diversity* alludes to differences in students served and other constituent in the institutions (faculty, administration);
- *values and climate diversity* is associated with differences in social environment and culture.

4.2. Perspectives on differentiation

Environmental pressures especially governmental regulation and related policies as well as the dominance of academic norms and values are crucial factors that influence the processes of differentiation and dedifferentiation in higher education systems. In order to survive, institutions have to adapt to the existence of and pressures by other institutions in their environment as well as governmental regulatory frameworks. Institutions react more or less similarly to uniform environmental conditions and therefore these adaptation processes tend to lead to homogenisation. It is therefore clear that environmental competition forces organisations to resemble other organisations that face the same set of environmental conditions especially the weaker institution to mimic a more reputable institution (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983 in Van Vught, 2007, p. 4).

The ‘knowledge economy’ is at the heart of many governmental policies these days. Governments design policies that intend to stimulate the creation and application of knowledge in economic activities; they try to stimulate ‘academic entrepreneurialism’, the use of Intellectual Property Rights, the setting-up of venture capital funds and the intensity of cooperation between universities, business and industry or as referred to in the system as the triple helix. Given these ambitions, political leaders craft higher education policies that have an intention to influence the

behavior of these institutions. It is then seen as a trade-off between autonomy and accountability and between less state control and more self-management on the one hand and more efficiency and responsiveness to societal needs on the other hand. More diversity is assumed to better serve the needs of the labour market, to offer more and better access to a larger student body and to allow institutional specialisation by which the effectiveness of the overall higher education system increases. Particularly the latter argument is regularly presented in the context of developing the 'knowledge society'.

The expansion and diversity in programme delivery is primarily an economic response. The globalised knowledge economy requires a more educated and better-trained work force, and this has been reflected in the massive expansion of vocational, technical, para-professional and professional continuing education. Technological change is occurring at such a rapid pace that any given state of occupational preparedness can be obsolete within years. This factor, in addition to the increased volume of information and specialist knowledge emerging, heightens the need for lifelong continuing education. It is particularly this argument, to make institutions more responsive to societal needs, that each institutional type in the post schools system should be stimulated to develop their specific missions and profiles, jointly creating a diversified higher education system in which different types of institutions co-exist, but function in a coordinated manner.

Therefore there is a need to both understand and respect different knowledge types and their traditions. In the absence of strong forms of external differentiation, there is a need to retain and protect the range of instructional offerings as the current programme tracks with specific reference to the South African higher education system is career or occupation-specific, professional or general formative. Most universities straddle two of these at most. Comprehensive universities straddle all three. There is currently a dominance of general academic programmes over vocational oriented programmes. Different institutional types may be expected to be characterised by a specific profile in terms of dominant programme types, such as traditional Universities to be professional and general-formative, whilst comprehensive universities (CU) are seen as career-focused towards professional and general-formative and the universities of technology (UoT) mainly career-focused and professional orientated. It has been proven that a clear convergence of programme types and knowledge continuums from conceptual to contextual are taking place within the universities. This convergence might increase due to the perceived impact of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). It is therefore imperative that a strong steering mechanism be used to curb the development of the system towards dedifferentiation.

It also appears that the more autonomy higher education institutions acquire, the more they will intend to engage in a competition for reputation. Public policy makers in higher education should be aware of these dynamics and look for more effective ways to create the contexts that can stimulate the application of knowledge and the creation of a more diversified higher education system.

The total cost of higher education appears to be growing immensely. The reputation race implies that universities are in constant need of more resources. They need these resources to recruit better staff, to offer more study-grants, to upgrade their facilities and to improve their public relations. Universities push their pricing up to the limits that market, regulators, and public opinion will allow. They justify their actions in terms of the rising cost of excellence and other factors beyond their control.

The recent popularity of world university rankings only appears to amplify the higher education reputation race. The annual Shanghai Jiao Tong University ranking (commenced in 2003) and the *Times Higher Education Supplement* ranking (commenced in 2004) provide extra stimuli for both policy-makers and higher education institutions to try to conquer higher positions at the global ladders of institutional reputation. Because they largely tend to favour traditional academic performance, particularly in research, these ranking instruments lead to an increase of mimicking behaviour (imitating the highly reputable institutions), and hence to more homogeneity, rather than diversity.

From a governmental perspective and a policy argument it can be debated that higher education institutions need to become more responsive to the needs of the knowledge society. They need to increase their capacity and willingness to become engaged in the production of useful knowledge and they need to develop their own specialised missions and profiles. In order to stimulate these institutions to do so, the mechanism of market coordination can be used. Reinforcing the demand side of the market will increase the sensitiveness to consumers' wishes, the level of institutional specialisation and the level of competition between universities. The result will be higher-quality outputs, a more diversified system and an increasing responsiveness to societal needs.

4.3. Purpose of differentiation and diversity

Diversified educational systems are supposed to *produce higher levels of client-orientation* (both regarding the needs of students and of the labour market), *social mobility, effectiveness, flexibility, articulation, innovativeness, and stability*. More diversified systems, generally speaking, are thought to be 'better' than less diversified systems.

Many governments have designed and implemented policies to increase the level of diversity of specifically higher education systems. Unfortunately, it is not always clear how an increase of a higher education system's diversity should be realised. The current South African governmental policies that have been developed and implemented did not necessary lead to the desired results. It appears that, although these concepts have a long tradition in the social sciences, diversity and differentiation are still only partly understood.

It is often argued that an increase of diversity of any educational system, in this case the post school system is an important strategy to *meet student needs*. A more diversified system is assumed to be better able to offer *access* to students with *different educational backgrounds* and with a variety of histories of academic achievements and preparedness. The argument is that in a diversified system, in which the performance and quality of the institutional types varies, each student is offered an opportunity to work and compete with students of similar background. Each student has the opportunity to find an educational environment in which chances for success are realistic and achievable.

A second and related argument is that diversity provides for *social mobility / progression and or articulation*. By offering different modes of entry into higher education and by providing multiple forms of transfer, a diversified system stimulates upward mobility and progression, horizontal articulation as well as honourable downward mobility. A diversified system allows for corrections of errors of choice; it provides extra opportunities for success; it rectifies poor motivation; and it broadens educational horizons.

Thirdly, diversity is supposed to meet the *needs of the labour market*. The point of view here is that in modern society an increasing variety of specialisations in the labour market is necessary to allow further economic and social development. A homogeneous education system is thought to be less able to respond to the diverse needs of the labour market than in a diversified system.

A fourth argument is that diversity serves the *political needs of interest groups*. The idea is that a diverse system ensures the needs of different groups in society to have their own identity and their own political legitimation. In less diversified higher education systems the needs of specific groups may remain unaddressed, which may cause internal debates in a higher education system and various kinds of disruptions.

A fifth and well-known argument is that diversity permits the crucial *combination of elite and mass higher education*. Generally speaking, mass systems tend to be more diversified than elite systems, as mass systems absorb a more heterogeneous clientele and attempt to respond to a wider range of demands from the labour market. In his famous analysis of mass and elite systems, Trow (1979) has indicated that the survival of elite higher education depends on the existence of a comprehensive system of non-elite institutions. Essentially, it is argued that only if a majority of the students are offered the knowledge and skills that are relevant to find a position in the labour market, will a few elite institutions be able to survive.

A sixth reason why diversity is an important objective for higher education systems is that diversity is assumed to *increase the level of effectiveness* of all institutional types. This argument is made for instance by the Carnegie Commission (1973) which has suggested that institutional specialisation allows a education institutions to focus their attention and energy, which helps them in producing higher levels of effectiveness.

Finally, diversity is assumed to offer opportunities for *experimenting with innovation*. In diversified educational systems, institutions have the option to assess the viability of innovations created by other institutions, without necessarily having to implement these innovations themselves. Diversity offers the possibility to explore the effects of innovative behaviour without the need to implement the innovation for all institutions at the same time

Therefore diversity has the potential to:

- broaden the pool of student choice and access routes;
- facilitate student mobility and articulation through the different knowledge domains;
- allow for different institutional identities to co-exist;
- allow for greater effectiveness and efficiency;
- encourage institutional innovation and flexibility;
- enable more effective responses to labour market needs;
- enable greater development, responsiveness

4.4. Principles for differentiation

Factors influencing differentiation and diversity processes and therefore different perspectives relates to the environment, policy intervention, funding incentives, academic norms and values, institutional autonomy, competition and co-operation, governmental policies, system size, student demand and resource flow and ranking. The following principles formulated to guide a focused differentiation are based on the impact and the effect of these factors on differentiation and diversity (as signaled in the White Paper for the Post-school System):

- The current three categories of universities will remain, and further categorisation of institutions will not take place.
- A continuum of institutions is required in the post-school system, including universities with differentiated missions, in order to ensure that the sector meets national developmental needs. In the university sector this continuum will range from largely undergraduate institutions to specialised, research-intensive universities which offer teaching programmes from undergraduate to doctoral level. All types of institutions are equally important to the overall system.
- Each institution must have a clearly defined mandate within the system. The mix and level of programmes offered at any institution should not be fixed, but should be capable of development over time, depending on its capacity and identified needs in its area.
- All universities in South Africa must offer a high-quality undergraduate education. This should be the first step to overcoming historical injustices inherited from apartheid. Good quality at the undergraduate level will lay the indispensable academic foundations for

students who wish to go on to postgraduate studies, and address the current challenges of poor throughput. All universities will engage in some level and type of research, though the extent of this will be determined in relation to the overall mandate of the institution.

- Differentiation will be responsive to the current contextual realities of different institutions. Policy and funding will recognise the need for developmental funding in poorly resourced institutions, particularly in relation to expanding infrastructure, establishing effective administrative systems, and upgrading staff qualifications. Policy and funding should ensure that where quality is high in the system, this level is maintained. The challenge of a differentiated policy framework will be to provide the appropriate differentiated support and resources to grow and maintain strong institutions and campuses across the continuum.
- Differentiation policy and strategy will be aligned with national development policies such as the National Development Plan, the New Growth Path, and the Human Resources Development Strategy.
- All institutions will be responsible for addressing the imperatives of equity and social justice. Differentiation policy will provide incentives for equal partnerships among universities and between universities and other post-school institutions, where such partnerships enhance the development of the system as a whole.
- The university system must become an integral part of the post-school system, interfacing with TVET and other vocational colleges, SETAs, employers, labour and other stakeholders. Such cooperation should be taken into account in an institution's planning and the development of its programme mix.
- Better intergovernmental coordination will be required to support policy alignment and implementation in a differentiated system, particularly in relation to collaboration between the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in the area of research funding and development.
- The systemic policy drivers of planning, funding and quality assurance will be aligned to the differentiation policy framework to ensure that the various components of the system are able to effectively support the development of a differentiated system.

5. Steering mechanisms

Certain conditions are therefore required to achieve a diverse system through a differentiation process. The appropriate functions of higher education specifically and further education generally need to be funded adequately and appropriately. Further, the progressively increase in quality and standards and success in higher education needs to be ensured.

The Department has indicated the following key position in relation to differentiation:

- The debate on higher education differentiation and diversity needs to be linked to the wider (and evolving) post-school system and the higher education institutions should view this as an opportunity.
- Diversity is already a current feature of the newly established post-school system due to the vertical stratification of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the activity of the different institutional types in the general, further or higher education bands.
- The various organisational forms and institutional types within the post-school system ranging from adult basic education and community-based providers, public and private colleges, corporate training institutes, nursing and agricultural colleges, SETA centres, and public and private higher education institutions should not be seen as a typical 'classification' or 'typology' of the post-school system but, with further work, could offer starting points of working towards a conception of an appropriate framework where specifically higher education differentiation should be debated along a functional continuum.
- Such a framework for differentiation should be national, integrative and linked to the wider post-school education system, and provide a basis for 'negotiated' determinations of individual institutional trajectories - taking into account their local context, regional impact, legacy challenges, current capacities and future developmental trajectory.
- The current institutional types within the higher education system specifically should not be seen as static or permanent.
- The combination of missionary functions, teaching, research and community engagements, disciplinary foci, extent of the knowledge base and knowledge production should inherently contribute to the diversity of the higher education landscape.
- The purpose of differentiation should be clearly understood. Should it be to measure the performance of institutions through a set of identified variable measuring the transformation of the system; should it be located solely within the context of mission fitness; should it be to improve the relevance of the knowledge base and knowledge production; and lastly should it be located purposefully in the human resource and development needs of the country?
- Differentiation should be driven to maximally realise the governmental strategies to be pursued by our universities, needed to achieve a skilled and capable workforce.

5.1. Planning

In terms of planning to ensure that differentiation remains a salient process in the post-school sector the following principles need to be emphasized as guiding the process.

- It needs to be accepted that education is at the core of all differentiation processes.
- Vertical stratification and horizontal width of a PQM is a core element of a diverse system (shape of the system). This relates to professional programmes in relation to technology / technical / vocational programmes, within particular major fields of study and specific qualification types.
- It should be noted that diversity exist, but differentiation is necessary to strengthen the system from a developmental approach.
- Funding should be allocated towards the developmental state of the system.
- Differentiation will be used to steer the system towards a diverse post school system.
- There is a continuum of institutions with identified niche areas and centres of excellence within knowledge domains and knowledge productions.

It is necessary that each university should develop, rethink or confirm their mandate and vision through their planning of various scenarios. The enrolment planning cycles are an established mechanism that can be used to facilitate this process. Institutions should therefore include differentiation as a key element in their enrolment planning strategies. It is necessary that all institutions in the post-school sector clearly understand what is meant by differentiation. The ultimate goal is a unified South African post-school education “with a diversity of institutional types, missions and identities, social and educational purposes and goals, institutional sizes, modes of provision, admission requirements, academic standards as appropriate to specified goals, and programmes qualifications”.

5.2. Funding arrangements

The different functions undertaken by specifically higher education institutions need to be used adequately in terms of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Adequate levels of subsidy, through a combination of core subsidy and appropriate earmarked allocations, are required so that institutions can enhance the quality of teaching and learning opportunities.

The new funding policy needs to address an appropriate funding arrangement for the differentiation process at institutions and where possible funding should be adjusted to take the process into account and to ensure that individual institutions meet their specific targets. Therefore funding arrangements will need to acknowledge the need for developmental funding in poorly resourced institutions, particularly in relation to expanding infrastructure, establishing effective administrative systems, and upgrading staff qualifications.

Therefore, one important but broad strategy to promote strategic diversity (empowerment of academic through improved qualifications for example) should be subsidized through funding

incentives, not a multitude of strategies as scarce resources imply a need to strategically concentrate investment to enhance optimal growth paths of all our institutions.

Funding should also ensure that where quality is high in the system, this level is maintained. Therefore appropriately differentiated support and resources needs to be provided to grow and maintain strong institutions and campuses across the continuum but also to strengthen inadequately resourced institutions to reach its developmental trajectory.

6. Conclusion

It should be understood that differentiation is an instrument and forward looking mechanism, a means to an end where the endpoint should reach a state of diversity.

The earlier history of differentiation, its legacy as well as the effects and efficacy of the restorative processes that have been tried needs to be acknowledged. There must also be recognition of the complications that have come out of the creation of the new institutional types and its implications on the institutions themselves as well as the national understanding of the types. Universities in a developmental state need not be the same. There is also an urgent need for the research pool and quality of research to be expanded and therefore the development of research intensive institutions needs to be financially supported. The DHET will play a central and increasing role in assisting the post-school education system to truly transform. It will particularly help previously disadvantaged institutions take their appropriate place in the provision of human resources for the development of the country. Deep structural inequalities created by the apartheid system must be consciously and consistently addressed through targeted interventions by the state. The inequalities in the sector need to be reviewed in terms of student support systems and learning and teaching facilities. Funding will be tied to differentiation as this will incentivise the strategic development of all the universities towards their applicable areas of strengths and contribution towards a diversified system.

In conclusion, it is important that differentiation should be driven to maximally realize the important governmental strategies to be pursued by our universities specifically and the post-school sector generally to establish a skilled and capable workforce.

Therefore this Departmental policy framework provides the platform inviting comments that will assist the development of strategies that will result in a diverse post-school education and training system.