



ANNEXURE 4

TRANSFORMATION IS A MUST

**Briefing paper prepared for the second national
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South African Union of Students

Brief literature review

The notion of 'Quality of Student Life' is founded on the concept of 'Quality of Life'. Moro-Egido and Panades (2009) argue that Quality of Student Life variables are a composite of student and institutional factors that determine student satisfaction. Among these variables are social factors such as living on or off campus, self-evaluation, impact of recent events, and, most significantly, academic performance.

According to Yu and Lee (2008) the Quality of Life (QOL) of students spills over to their overall quality of life. The Quality of Student Life (QSL) is influenced by QOL, for example basic needs (biological and safety), self-esteem, and social life (Schmuck et al. 2000; Sam 2001; Chow 2005). In contrast, QSL is influenced by the following dimensions of student services in the university: for example, education service, administrative service, facilities service, student service management and many other service components (Simpson and Siguaw, 2000). Indeed looking at on and off campus contexts is important in order to understand the influence QOL has on QSL.

Yu and Lee (2008) define QSL as the overall satisfaction of students with respect to their university experience. Moro-Egido and Panades (2009) define QSL as the satisfaction of the students with the professional and academic aspects of the university.

In a study conducted by Benjamin (1994) on QSL at the University of Guelph (Canada) they discovered from students that the satisfaction of students is determined by on and off campus life domains and that these domains do not operate independently. In addition it is the latter domains that can amputate or serve as enablers for the student in their pursuit of academic achievement. Therefore tracking students' overall QOL does assist the university in achieving its core mandate of sustaining a good graduate throughput rate. If the former is neglected students may be alienated and as a result end up dropping out of the university.

The quality of life of students in our universities is largely influenced by the overall quality of life of the student of campus. Indeed it would be naïve to discuss transformation in higher education without first contextualizing it within the socio political and economic challenges faced by South Africa, both past and present. We are all clear on the cause of the existing disparities that still find expression in South Africa today, they are namely: colonialism, apartheid, white supremacy and other social ills. However, the SAUS will not detail that history but it is important to bear it in mind as we progress.

South Africa's challenges

SA, as it were, is what we would classify as a nation stuck in stabilisation (agreeing with Pons and Vignon). The financial ministry constantly has to make a trade-off between our debt to GDP ratio and other imperative socio-economic programmes in the country. What is further not helpful in this instance is the decline in the economic growth of the country which has also shrunk the fiscus of government. These are not easy trade-offs to make.

Poverty, infrastructure, unemployment, energy crises and basic education are chief among the challenges that need immediate attention in addressing overall transformation in South Africa. It is said that there is R9.4 billion owed to Eskom of which half is owed by Soweto: this will not assist us in trying to achieve economic growth. Makana municipality reportedly owed over R60 million to Eskom and this cannot be acceptable in a community that has over 70% of its community unemployed. Some of our teachers are also doing the country a disservice in that they do not teach children in our rural township schools: some arrive late and others don't arrive at all. This has long term repercussions on learners at high school and beyond.

It is one thing to offer a student a schooling opportunity but if you have done so outside the material conditions the child has to go back to after school, the intervention will be short lived. How does the government address social challenges under a declining economy without compromising stabilisation?

The SAUS believes that all sectors have a role to play in the economic transformation of our country. The role of the university should transcend being simply a knowledge production centre and move towards being a role player in building local communities. Universities must engage and try to find solutions to the complex challenges facing South Africa. The private sector must also play its role and partner with government in trying to achieve economic transformation. Otherwise it remains a fact that we are all compromised in the long term if we do not do the bit we can where we find ourselves.

The position of SAUS on universities

We refuse to believe that Stellenbosch is persistently, and under the watch of government, excluding the majority of its students by using Afrikaans as a medium to teach its students. Moreover, this is happening in a globalized world and in a South Africa that has come to accept English amongst all other languages as its tool of communication, more especially as a tool of teaching in higher education. This of course is not to say the latter is *sine qua non* and that other languages cannot be used in view of our democracy. But on that very note languages cannot serve as a tool of exclusion and oppression of others. We welcome diversity but we reject this supremacist tendency or oppression of students who do not speak the language of Afrikaans in Stellenbosch.

We cannot have a situation where subjects are not accessible to students merely because of language; outside the languages themselves of course. This sort of injustice should be frowned upon by the department of higher education and by all members of society. The exclusionary teaching that manifests itself through language and, put squarely, a racist agenda in Stellenbosch is to the detriment of the black and white students who do not have access to this language. We call for the intervention of the Department of Higher Education and Training to act decisively on the exclusionary nature of Stellenbosch.

It was reported that a council member of Stellenbosch tweeted “Blade Ndzimande and his transformation will not win” (translated from Afrikaans). Another report stated that a local High School principal in Stellenbosch reportedly said to a black parent “I have no place for your child in my school, take your child to khayamandi”. These individuals are “leaders” in our society. Such regressive thinking is unacceptable, and they must account.

The acceptance of the colonialist, bigot and imperialist Cecil Rhodes is apparent in the history and institutional culture of Rhodes University in the 1900’s. Much of what characterised the history of the university is a clone of the character of Cecil John Rhodes the bigot. The history of Rhodes University is not something to boast about or be proud of, in fact it is far from what the university and its alumni perpetually deem it. It is a history of exclusion, oppression, dehumanisation of black people and segregation much fitting of the man Cecil Rhodes. And we still see remnants of that in Rhodes University today in different ways. Rhodes University in its past awarded honorary doctorates to people who founded acts that advocated for segregation and repression of blacks. The honorary doctorate was given to a J.H. Viljoen, the National Party’s Minister of Education in 1952.

Rhodes was built on heteronormative ideals and thus you see very few if any women in senior management positions, black or white. So the question we leave here is: how do we create an inclusive space and re-imagine a university that is welcoming to all when it has a name such as Rhodes University hanging over it?

We as the SAUS welcome the mobilization of different student movements across the country in a call for decolonising institutions of higher education. Among these groupings are Open Stellenbosch, Decolonise Wits, Rhodes Must Fall and The Black Students Movement. These movements have, amongst other achievements, heightened and intellectualized discussions around transformation across all universities. This ought to be celebrated.

SAUS believes that our future is bright. Decolonization is imperative in traditionally white institutions like Rhodes and Stellenbosch and equally so in the former Bantustan universities.

We as an organisation recognise that our universities were used to advance a colonial agenda and as such we must unmask all its remnants. The traditionally white institutions must become African institutions in Africa and not Western Universities in Africa. On the other hand the former Bantustan universities and their facilities must be improved in terms of facilities, as we know these institutions are historically deprived and we see the remnants of this today.

Areas of transformation in higher education

In trying to restore the imbalances of the past as articulated above, the SAUS has chosen to address a few key areas that need immediate attention from all stakeholders.

Higher education transformation musts

- Quality of education
- Symbols
- Black staff development
- Fee structures
- Improved quality of student services and safety

- ***The quality of education (pedagogy and epistemology)***

An overall review of undergraduate and postgraduate curricula needs to be undertaken, so as to assess the appropriateness and relevance of qualifications in terms of the social, ethical, political and technical skills and competencies embedded in them. This should be done in the context of post-apartheid South Africa and its location in Africa and the world. In short, does the curriculum prepare young people for their role in South Africa and the world in the context of the challenges peculiar to the 21st century?

Socrates concluded that education must be very personal. It must be concerned with the actual situation of the pupil, with the current state of the pupil's knowledge and beliefs, with the obstacles between that pupil and the attainment of self-scrutiny and intellectual freedom. Instead of this, we see an education system that is not reflective or reflexive. We see a student populace graduating with no knowledge of their ethnical or African history. What is a man if she or he does not know where she or he comes from? It is said that our history tells us about the present moment and that our present actions tell us where we are going. In light of the latter and our current education system we are condemned. The white paper of 2012 further argues that "the education and training system should not only provide knowledge and skills required by the economy. It should also contribute to developing thinking citizens who can function effectively and ethically as part of a democratic society. They should have understanding of their society, and be able to participate fully in its political, social and cultural life".

- **Symbols**

We as South Africans in all our diversity ought to ask ourselves the following questions about our heritage and about the monuments of South Africa. What do these monuments mean in light of our current democratic dispensation? How do we as South Africans celebrate the fallen 'heroes'? More importantly how we move forward as a country united in our diversity?

- **Students and staff**

Student success after access

Universities should devise approaches that will improve throughput rates of students, while government, as part of its human capital development initiatives, should provide financial support to students who are studying in fields where skills are scarce. It is apparent that some students are failing to succeed because they are also doing other jobs in order to support their families. This applies largely to black students who cannot afford to study on a full-time basis.

Inadequate infrastructure (manifested for example in the poor state of student accommodation in many cases) makes it very difficult for universities to deliver on their core mandates (an example of this is WUSU).

Black staff development

There are inadequate networks and structures in place in institutions to identify and retain black and female members of staff. Institutional staff development programmes, aimed at black and female postgraduate students: where these networks exist they are racialized, intentional or not.

There is a lack of clear and established networks of retaining and developing black academics, and at the same time continued discrimination practices based on class, gender, race, historical imbalances and so on persist.

- **NSFAS and fee structure**

The SAUS acknowledges that DHET has rolled out funding to over 1 million disadvantaged students over the years. Secondly, the money of NSFAS has more than doubled over the past 7 years. The challenge we identify from where we stand as an organisation is the increase in the number of students wanting to go into institutions of higher learning. Coupled with the latter is a continuous increase of the cost of higher education at rates higher than inflation.

In the short term, the DHET needs to intervene on fee increments. Higher education inflation needs to be targeted across all institutions of higher learning.

The challenge of NSFAS

NSFAS is increasingly creating a debt society of which is regressive to the gains we are intent on acquiring. We cannot expect a student from Lusikisiki who has a NSFAS loan of R180 000, for example, to alleviate poverty in the family and yet have to pay a debt of R180 000. However, the job market is not favourable. It may be that there is a connection between the debt NSFAS students have and many others that they acquire whilst working trying to make up for the gap NSFAS payments leave, and unemployment. This may be a stretch but it's worth looking into. We have an increasing number of elderly black workers who are not retiring because they are held by debts. At the same time, we continue to stay in the households of our parents because they won't retire (we are unemployed because of them). It's all a vicious cycle that ought to be corrected and we believe that it can only be

achieved via free education. And we certainly believe that through free education for the poor we will optimize economic transformation.

- **Improved quality of student services**

Education services, administrative services, facilities, student service and management are factors that contribute to the quality of life that a student has in university and it is these areas that lead to a student being able to self-actualize. Therefore the SAUS will continue to engage the department in order to fast-track transformation in these areas, otherwise student success will continue to be compromised.

SAUS Transformation vision 2025

SAUS understands and considers seriously the context of South Africa's economic climate which has been in decline for a number of years. The SAUS envisions a transformed education sector to be a sector that would have advanced the underlying factors:

- corruption-free universities;
- free quality education for the disadvantaged;
- Councils and senates that are diversified in accordance with the countries demographics;
- fully transparent Councils that fully account to the public and ministry of higher education;
- a shift from managerialism towards leadership by university leader-managers;
- a professoriate that is 27% black;
- more significant African curriculum and knowledge production;
- names of all universities across South Africa must represent the democratic ideals of South Africa; and
- all universities must abide by and implement the legislative framework of higher education.

The above should be utilized as a measure of how far the sector has come and what direction it ought to be taking.

The basic confrontation seems to be transformation versus decolonisation, education versus 'being woke'¹ and indeed economic stabilization versus social welfare. It is up to us as a country what we choose to gravitate towards. We as South Africans have very important decisions to make and if we amongst all of that do not prioritize the students of this country we are doomed for failure.

¹ Defined as 'being aware' by the Urban Dictionary www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=woke