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Settling Scores: A Reading of the Managerial Vision of Transformation at Unisa 2004-2010

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Abstract: This paper deals with Unisa's transformation during the years 2004-2010 in line with a range of government education recommendations and laws.
The legislation calling for transformation includes the 1997 Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997). This identifies the requirements for higher education (HE) to meet both individual education and societal developmental needs towards a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society. The Act asks HE institutions to pull together seemingly contradictory ideas: the transformed higher education must be simultaneously driven by people's needs yet restructured in a fashion that responds to the demands of globalization. This study maps the major aspects of change at Unisa under the Principal and Vice Chancellor Barney Pityana over the period 2004 - 2010. It looks at the highly successful merger process with two other HE institutions, and at the merged institution's subsequent metamorphosis from being a bland South African correspondence university whose standards were never challenged, into an African university matching itself against world standards within an open and distance learning (ODL) business model.

Keywords: ODL, Africanisation, developmental HE institution

Introduction

Unisa has walked a long road from its birth to the age of 50 as a British colonial institution and its following 70 years which saw the university begin its life as a teaching university as a special project of DF Malan's apartheid government.

Now, as one of the higher education institutions whose identities were formerly closely tied up with the apartheid state, Unisa is in the process of rethinking its relationship with its client base, its students, as well as with both state and civil society in order to serve a society whose educational needs have historically been skewed in favour of elites.

The Principal and Vice Chancellor at the time of writing, Barney Pityana, has been the individual driving the transformation process. His involvement with the structures looking into higher education set up by the post-apartheid government dates from the years immediately after South African independence. However as an activist and academic he has played a dignified and leading role in the struggle against apartheid, and specifically against Bantu Education, for decades before tackling the Unisa project.

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Paper: Settling Scores

The initial stage in Unisa's reinvention as an expanded and transformed African university was the merger process in 2004 that converted it into the only dedicated comprehensive open and distance learning (ODL) institution in South Africa.

The National Plan for Higher Education called for the mergers of well-funded institutions with others battling for survival. This was in order to provide better national facilities for the majority of South Africa's scholars, who still battle in many instances with apartheid-style institutions run by apartheid-educated teachers in a post-apartheid period. As Barney Pityana later explained it:

'The first indelible imprint on the new higher education landscape was a series of mergers that would reduce the number of institutions from 36 to 23, the main aims being to ensure a more equitable distribution of higher education facilities and resources, create a greater critical mass of personnel and capacities, and to introduce a new institutional type—comprehensives.' (Pityana circa 2008)[1]

The term 'comprehensive' refers to the ability of the merged bodies to offer both vocational and academic qualifications. Previously the technikons offered training in trades and universities offered the qualifications for professions. While societies undeniably need both trades and professions, in South Africa the education system was so skewed under apartheid that it was extremely difficult for a black person to get a reasonable tertiary education.

The emergence of the technikons in the 1970s and 1980s was a hasty attempt by the apartheid government to meet a skills shortage through the provision of tertiary training for black people without compromising white privileges at universities. To have continued in this fashion would merely have continued what Bourdieu has defined elsewhere as the social divisions inscribed within the Academe. (Bourdieu 1977: 196; 1980: 225-254)[2]

While Bourdieu was dissecting the class-based instinct driving education in the European world, unfortunately in South Africa the discrepancies were even more extreme, with the split between vocational and academic training in the pre-independence era additionally being subjected to race-based apartheid education policies.

The Higher Education Plan's approach to mergers was not without severe criticism. Many black academics perceived the mergers as the integration of struggling black institutions into successful white ones. Sipho Seepe of Vista—later one of the signatories of the Unisa merger—was an early critic of aspects of the Higher Education Plan. One year before satisfying himself with the terms of the merger in which he participated, he wrote:

'[B]lack academics and students have been at pains to remind government of the contribution that black institutions made. That black institutions contributed to the struggle and to the

[1] Op cit.
[2] Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Outline of a Theory in Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and (1980) 'The Aristocracy of Culture' in Media, Culture and Society Vol.2 Part 3 1980: 225-254.

professional and intellectual life of this country. That black institutions continue to serve the poorest of the poor and to accommodate academically under-prepared students.' (Seepe 2002)[3]

Such critics felt government should rather have invested in the black institutions and 'set them on a developmental path that would transform them into world-class African universities.' However, wrote Seepe:

'Conveniently lost in this argument is the fact that the identity and geographic locations is the endorsement of the geopolitical imagination of apartheid. They were created to prevent and to stem access to white institutions. These institutions, as the noted scholar Mahmood Mamdani reminds us, were intellectual counterparts of Bantustans…They 'were designed to function more as detention centres for black intellectuals than as centres that would nourish intellectual thought. As such, they had little tradition of intellectual freedom or institutional autonomy. They were driven by the heavy hand of bureaucracy.' (Seepe 2002, quotations in original)

'Also lost,' Seepe continued, 'is the fact that conditions in black institutions leave much to be desired. Enrolments have been declining while financial deficits have been steadily on the increase.'

The crisis of leadership and the culture of non-payment have meant ongoing student protests, he said. Because they lacked proper facilities, these institutions were not positioned to offer programmes central to the economy.

In specifying that Unisa should merge with the Technikon Southern Africa (Florida) and Vista-Vudec[4], the then education minister Kader Asmal's plan 'was to create a dedicated distance education institution in South Africa'. (Mothata 2007: 30)[5]

The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) spelt out the benefits of the new institutional type. The comprehensive higher educational institution would develop:

A clear strategy for the role of distance education in contributing to national and regional goals;

A network of centres of innovation[6], to enable the development of quality courses and learning materials for use nationally;

A national network of learning centres, to facilitate access and coordinate learner support systems.

The new institution, said the Unisa transformation report, would also enhance access and contribute to human resource development within the SADC region and the African continent. [7]

[3] Sipho Seepe (2002). Towards a critical endorsement of the National Plan on Higher Education. Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa, Volume 9 Number 2. Johannesburg: Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand.
[4] Vudec is the correspondence arm of Vista. Its full name is the Vista University Distance Education Centre.
[5] Steward Mothata (2007). Beyond expectations: the Unisa/TSA merger and the incorporation of Vista-Vudec. In Discourse, University of Johannesburg Vol 35.1 June 2007: 27-34.
[6] Sometimes referred to as 'centres of excellence'.

An interim Council appointed by the education minister appointed a large management team to oversee the merger process determined by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, align systems and create a governance framework. In the case of Unisa, Technikon South Africa (TSA) and Vista-Vudec, the three institutions identified by Kader Asmal, then national education minister, were announced in 2000.

The Unisa merger process kicked off in 2003 with the signing of two documents, a joint declaration by the three institutions and a Memo of Understanding (MoU) signed on 27 August 2003 at Johannesburg Airport.

TSA was represented by Matthews Phosa, then chair of Council and NR Mathebe in her capacity as Principal and Vice Chancellor respectively.

Unisa was represented by ATM Mokgokong, then chairperson of Council and Principal and Vice Chancellor Barney Pityana.

Vista was represented by the chairperson of its Council MR Kgaphola and its Principal and Vice Chancellor Sipho Seepe.

The MoU committed the signatories to full disclosure, joint decision making, an equal partnership, proper communication and adequate consultation.

The initial documentation consented to set up processes and time frames for integrated operations. The joint declaration stated that the new comprehensive, single dedicated open and distance learning institution would offer both university and technikon-type programmes. This institution would be committed to extending access and ensuring sustainability. The signatories were committed to a 'fair and just merger process' during which they would 'ensure the minimum of disruption to students,' and 'the stability and confidence of current and prospective students, staff and other stakeholders during the unfolding of the merger process.'

The new unitary institution would 'require appropriate transitional stages to create a single distance education institution as articulated in the National Working Group Report.' It would take account of the digital divide and build structures supporting a comprehensive programme mix and modes of training, and a variety of entry levels, outputs, and pedagogical/training approaches. The joint declaration committed signatories to:

Quality, excellence and leadership in teaching, scholarship, administration and service;

Aligning and integrating existing capacity to 'optimise the appropriate content and form of a comprehensive institution';

Contributing to the ongoing development of the public HE system;

Developing institutional and social leadership characterised by inclusiveness, transparency, fairness, decisiveness and the best traditions of scholarship; and

[7] Unisa Five Years Transformation 2004-2008: 9, Introduction.

Facilitating effective access and articulating opportunities within the institution.[8]

The declaration committed to a high level of brand equity for the new institution, and promised a cost-benefit analysis into the name and branding.[9]

Annexure B of the declaration contains the Vision and Mission of the new comprehensive institution.

The Vision:

'The new institution impacts on societal development, through optimising its comprehensive character in relation to broad Human Resource, knowledge and capacity development.'

The Mission:

'As a single merged distance education institution, encompassing different higher education philosophies which serve the developmental needs of our country and our continent, the new comprehensive institution will provide the following to its Learners.' [upper case in original]

There might have been phrases that needed a little fleshing out, but the signed mission statement shows full commitment to a 'unique general academic and career oriented programme mix'; 'affordable, comprehensive and quality learning opportunities'; 'an accessible, equitable and flexible learning system'. The new institution would develop a 'relevant research agenda', facilitate 'entrance and exit arrangements', foster 'a culture of life-long learning in higher education' and focus on producing citizens 'ready to accept their responsibilities in society'. At all levels the institution would employ 'best practices'. It would 'develop innovative and creative relationships with civil society, private and the public sectors to meet the expectations of learners and employers, and the future needs of a global and competitive society.'[10]

Annexure C is the proposed merger communication strategy, which allows for simple plans for internal and external communication to stakeholders. It is not reproduced here.

Following the signing of the MoU and joint declaration, several 'priority task teams' (PTTs) were speedily created. To begin with the PTTs included the harmonisation of rules team, a human resources team, and the VCs Forum.

The harmonisation of rules team, convened by Elsie Coertzen, had to deal with contract administration, employee disciplinary codes, employee grievance procedures, student disciplinary codes and its core task was to attempt to align procedures. This team looked at procedures from the Technikon South Africa and Unisa and Vudec and handed them to the lawyers for comments, trying to give consideration to both sets of procedures.

[8] Memorandum of Understanding of Unisa, TSA and Vista signed at Johannesburg Airport, Gauteng on 27 August 2003.
[9] Joint declaration by Unisa, TSA and Vista signed at Johannesburg Airport, Gauteng on 27 August 2003.
[10] Ibid.

By way of example of the complexity of their task: Coertzen would write to the Chairperson of the VCs Forum to say that TSA had a statement in respect of fundraising donations whereas Unisa did not, although both Unisa and TSA had registered trusts for the purposes of fundraising. This would be followed by a recommendation that a request be directed to the trustees of both the TSA Foundation and Unisa Foundation for the dissolving of the TSA Foundation and transferring its assets to the Unisa Foundation in order to establish one foundation for the new institution. The idea was that all funds obtained through fundraising, donations and sponsorships would be channeled through the trust.

A draft statement would then be drawn up for the Vice Chancellor's forum to consider and approve.[11]

'Non-availability of VUDEC policies' is frequently noted in documentation drawn up towards the final progress report on 18 November 2003 from the harmonisation of rules team, or 'VUDEC policies have now been submitted…after numerous efforts to obtain such policies'.

The 'harmonisation of rules' task team had to apply the same lengthy procedures to at least 16 sets of fiddly and diverse rules: fundraising, donations and sponsorships; secondment; a code of ethics; smoking; events management; collaborations; corporate identity; cellular phones; parking; contract administration; staff and student disciplinary codes; staff and student grievance procedures; student registration practices; call centres and practices relating to learner support.

The human resources (HR) task team, chaired by DL Mosoma, looked at secondment from the HR angle, as well as critical vacancies, vacancies advertised but not yet filled, unadvertised vacancies and 'pipeline students'. The HR team was the team responsible for proposing the establishment of an interim joint merger panel for HR. This was to comprise two representatives from each campus, union representatives, a line manager from the division in which the vacancy existed, a subject matter specialist, a provisioning officer and a chairperson.

A meeting of the TSA Rectorate on 18 November 2003 oversaw the creation of a Job Evaluation Review Committee, which would look at the status of Pension Funds and create a moratorium on post gradings; pending Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) cases; staff loans; acting allowances – Ernst and Young, in an audit report for the HR Directorate states that increases could not be approved; office space in regions; regional directors' participation in the merger; learner support; the e-learning initiative; centralisation of academic administration; progress in printing of academic material; networked printing facilities; various celebrations acknowledged by the three institutions; fraud prevention policy; salary adjustments; a decentralised photocopy system; a policy around bad debt; the restructuring of the ICT structures; tender committee procedures; Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) ratings; emergency manpower and services; core business and previous experience; price structure; company infrastructure; representation of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) on tender committee and an HIV project team.

[11] This example is drawn from documents submitted by Advocate EJS Coertzen to the VCs Forum on 30 October 2003, which I have paraphrased as they are long-winded.

That is a good bit of work for one committee.

An 'institution naming' investigation was conducted by a company known as Learning Strategies.[12] They submitted a 20-page report called 'Selecting a name for the merged entity' on 19 August 2003.

Learning Strategies had conducted more than 300 interviews with staff and students of the institutions being merged and provided a list of names that cropped up as possible alternative names for the merged Unisa:

Rainbow University of South Africa, All Access Tertiary of South Africa, Combined University of South Africa, Global Unviersity, and Independent University of South Africa are among the name options from respondents to the questionnaire, as well as some convoluted acronyms, so beloved in South Africa—TEVISA, OLUSA, ATISA, UTISA, OLISA.

Learning Strategies noted upfront in its report that the building of a brand and the establishment can take an extended time and be a costly process; there was no guarantee of success; the name and brand were not necessarily the same thing; without changing the name it was possible to use the brand identity to manage external and internal perceptions of the institution.[13]

The company recommended the retention of both the existing name and brand governed by a 'sunset clause' and stated that Council had the right by a 76% majority to decide when to terminate the brand.

They suggested a temporary spin on Unisa as in 'the *new* Unisa' or 'the *ODL* Unisa' in order to make a difference in public perceptions between the old institution and the new post merger institution:

'It is proposed that this be done through the use of a "sunset clause" which could provide for an interim brand identity, which makes substantial use of the brand image which will be used in the longer term, together with an additional image to ensure public perception of the institution is one of "new" or "open". The "sunset clause" could be put in place for a period of no less than six months from the date of merger and no more than three or five years. It is likely that three years would be sufficient.'[14]

Appendices to the report include the survey tool—a questionnaire given to staff, students, individuals and groups at Unisa (115 interviewees), TSA (104 interviewees) and Vista (95 interviewees); detailed findings from the three institutions and the name options.

The joint management team now set in place the work that would result in a strategic plan outlining the 2015 transformation agenda, which is accompanied by an annually reviewed Institutional Operational Plan (IOP) to establish Unisa as a leading provider of world-class higher education opportunities through ODL. Unisa's current vision, 'Towards the African

[12] The then directors of Learning Strategies were: Chris Elfick, J Masuku, N Tattersall and PC Taljaard.
[13] Unisa (2003): Selecting a Name for the Merged Entity. Written by Learning Solutions.

[14] Op cit, page 18.

University in the service of humanity', thus created the filter through which the programme and qualification mix (PQM) could be assessed and re-imagined for the African continent, bringing on board programmes for the development of African indigenous knowledge systems.

The level of detail required to achieve this has got to be referred to because it was a potential minefield that was somehow averted through smart leadership.

To begin with, students and staff were informed about the changes they should expect.

'Pipeline students' were those who had some credits from either VUDEC or Technikon SA and who were going to become fully fledged Unisa students the following year, as this letter accompanying the calendar for the new year published in November 2003 explained:

Dear Student—

There have been many developments in higher education in South Africa. One of these has been the decision by the Minister of Education to merge the University of South Africa (Unisa) and Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) and to incorporate Vista University Distance Education Campus (VUDEC). The new institution will be known as Unisa. Although all the details have not yet been finalised we are making preparations to facilitate these processes.

Perhaps you are wondering what will happen to you. If you are studying for a qualification offered by VUDEC you will become a fully fledged student of Unisa as from next year. In the rest of this calendar, we will refer to you as a 'pipeline' student.'

Information about existing programmes, new programmes, where and how to register, fees and transitional structures follows in the calendar.[15]

The letter was signed by all three vice chancellors (VUDEC, TSA and Unisa).

By 4 December 2003, in his end of year address to the university assembly ('The challenge of engagement for a new university'), Pityana was upbeat about the merger, outlining the processes that had been followed to date and that would take place the following year.

An academic governance and structure proposal (December 2003 and June 2004) made recommendations for the Vice Chancellor's Forum dividing up the merged university into five component parts: institutional governance (Council); academic governance (Senate); strategic management (top management); tactical management (senior management); and operational management (junior management).

Various milestones of change management can be tracked to the 2004 Malibongwe workshop at which the new Council adopted a code of conduct prescribing 'attributes, ethical standards and dedication expected of its members,' according to the transformation report.[16] Alumni members from each of the merged institutions were consolidated and a representative Unisa Convocation was established later that year.

[15] Unisa/TSA/Vista Calendar (2004)
[16] Unisa Five Years Transformation 2004-2008.

The progress reports on the merger and integration process of June 2004, compiled by the office of the Pro Vice Chancellor for the VCs' forum reported that the merger office was relocated to Unisa, Pretoria campus, on 1 June 2004.

Staff assemblies had been held at Durban, Rustenburg, Mmabatho and Potchefstroom in June to brief staff. A follow-up workshop was held on 6-7 June to finalise college structures. It was attended by the Vice Chancellor, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Pro Vice Chancellor) and the Pro Vice Chancellor's office, members of management, executive deans, deputy deans and members of the Students' Representative Council (SRC).

The report of the Vice Principal (Academic) CF Swanepoel on the performance area of academic planning reads as follows[17]:

Establishment of key structures. An academic planner was appointed and attached to Swanepoel's office to plan the merging of the core business of the university, namely teaching, learning and research. The executive deans of the five colleges were to drive the processes. Dedicated teams consisting of key stakeholders would be formed to look at

(1) The meaning of 'comprehensive' and 'college'.

(2) The Hemis course levels and funding groups, standardisation of module credits, curriculum design and quality assurance, prescribed books, academic programmes review cycle, and admission procedures.

(3) Africanisation (the concept of Africanisation had been gaining momentum following the naming investigation August 2003 and this event, June 2004).

(4) Admission and registration procedures, including standards set by South African Qualification Accreditation (SAQA) and the National Research Fund (NRF), accreditation procedures of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and details surrounding the subsidisation of preferred learning programmes including the Department of Education (DoE) programme and qualification mix (PQM) and Hemis.

(5) Consolidation of academic process and procedures and tuition model options.

This report also speaks of measures to inform the academic community, including plans for various launches and presentations to colleges and Senate. Swanepoel reported that matters arising from academics at these events concerned: difficulty in accessing data in order to give feedback to the planning process; questions about whether the merger would be project driven and managed, and concern about which disciplines belonged to which college (page 4 of the report).

[17] I have summarised and abridged Swanepoel's report and all additional information presented to that key Vice Chancellor's forum.

Academics, said the Vice Principal (Academic), also wanted certain programmes to be identified as flagship programmes and had asked that a task team identify information needs and design a database. Academics also felt there might be sensitivity about 'technikon' type programmes versus 'university' type programmes and that the difference should be downplayed.

An academic audit was to be conducted of existing programmes, structures, staff, students and facilities before attempting to align them. The audit would enable a rethink of academic offerings and allow some reflection on plans to develop new programmes to meet student needs. Outdated or unpopular offerings that drew too few students and which were too expensive would be considered for sustainability and assessed over a period of up to three years. The process would occupy the full attention of most of the staff working in the office of the Vice Principal (Academic).

The Report from the Vice Principal (Student and Alumni affairs) RC Bodibe discussed the Harmonisation of Policies. At this date inclusive education policy for students with disabilities, students' grievance procedures and students' administration had been harmonised. There was also progress with regard to task teams. The student governance team had met and had been invited to another meeting to discuss the college system. In other matters: the director of the Financial Aid Bureau had been recommended for placement; offices were being prepared for relocation. Recommendations for portfolio organisation would be put before the Pro Vice Chancellor; meetings for Alumni regional meetings were being organised; an interim Students' Representative Council (SRC) was in place and the Unisa legal section was helping to provide the SRC with constitution drawing-up expertise; the SRC elections were on course; an HIV/Aids task team had been set up under the convenorship of V Malefo and a letter clarifying that Unisa bursary allocation also included R98 000 for Vudec would be drawn up.

A short report from the Vice Principal (Operations) DL Mosoma noted that new performance areas needed to be added as process unfolded. He felt timelines might be difficult to determine in advance and would have to be adjusted as the process unfolded; and that decisions should be approved by the executive management and Council committee and HR and thereafter negotiated with unions, which could be a lengthy process.

A report from the Vice Principal (Learner support and ICT) HA Louw stated that all previous duplications in structures were now single operations. In some cases duplicated structures were aligned to combine the use of infrastructure and support services of potential complementary functions such as the combination of Experiential Learning and Tutorial Services. Leaders of the new single operations had been appointed. An extended breakaway had agreed on basic cross-functional relations and was consolidating plans.

There was progress on the migration of the old TSA IT system into the old Unisa system. The process was IT supported and not IT driven. Workshops were being held to speed up the process. Regional processes concerning integrated planning were progressing well and were underway in Limpopo, Western Cape, Pretoria, KZN and Johannesburg. The process had not yet stretched to Mmabatho, Port Elizabeth and East London. As far as 'throughput' initiatives were concerned—'throughput' is the opposite of 'dropout' and is the word used at Unisa to describe those who

complete courses as opposed to those who register and begin them—the transition from correspondence education to ODL was more complex than expected and was taking longer. Processes noted within the document included the following components in relation to old TSA learners: There had been limited pre-registration assessment.

Orientation sessions had been held at selected venues. A programme had been set up at selected venues to prepare learners for the Distance Learning environment. There had been tutorials in a number of subjects. A peer collaborative learning initiative was underway in Gauteng. Career guidance and job readiness initiatives were underway. Access to decentralised library services in collaboration with provincial libraries had been arranged as well as decentralised access to generic services like administration and financial assistance, and telephone access of academics. An electronic learner management system had been set up, providing email, a chat-room, and frequently asked questions. As yet there was limited use of teleconference facilities, access to computers and of videos and SMS services.

When it came to old Unisa learners, there had been progress in initiatives in a number of disciplines, access programmes, career guidance, a general orientation booklet, an electronic learning management system, tutorial classes in specific courses, the promotion of study groups, decentralised library access and decentralised generic services although there was still limited access to computers.

Vudec students were continuing with contact sessions at decentralised venues.

The Report from then Vice Principal (Research and Planning) Narend Baijnath reported positively on all aspects of policy integration and alignment. The harmonisation activities were advanced. Drafts of all key research committee terms of reference had been developed and were in the consultative phase. The conceptual phase of the policy alignment exercise and integration of structures was completed and a consultative process was underway.

In addition, substantial consensus had been reached at a workshop held on 26 May 2004 to develop a comprehensive institutional research strategy for the short to medium term. This workshop had considered structures and terms of reference for the management of research at Senate and college level. Alignment and integration of former Unisa and TSA policies was complete, and the drafts were under review.

Baijnath reported that in relation to the research management system, a benchmarking exercise had been conducted at selected institutions. After an evaluation of this exercise an integrated web-based system was settled upon. A proposal was in preparation to take to management for the purchase of a specific system.

Regarding structures: unitary structures were in place with integrated research offices and personnel. The management system still needed developing and to have people put into the structures.

An integrated planning committee proposed to integrate strategic, financial, institutional, academic and IT planning in a coherent framework. The terms of reference for this had already been drafted and consonant structures were ready for management consideration.

In addition an extensive national student survey had been planned to develop baseline data on student profile of merged institutions. This survey would be undertaken by Unisa's Bureau of Market Research.

The Report of the Registrar Governance TH Links spoke about adherence to all the statutory requirements and acceptable corporate practices as per the King Report.

It also lists the members of the agreed structures including the new Council and Institutional Forum.

Following that meeting, the Pro Vice Chancellor's checklist of what she had to attend to read like this:

Legal and statutory compliance of structures;

Funding issues;

Career choice tendencies and implications for responsive college structures;

College transdisciplinarity;

Balance between centralisation and decentralisation;

Reflection of comprehensiveness.

One by one these matters were ticked off the list. The college system was ready to run in 2005 following an extensive process. In June 2004 the merger structures had looked at different models for the new university. The preferred type was 'comprehensive' university and 'college' model within the context of a comprehensive unit.

More teams looked at every aspect of the college model—how learning might be enhanced by a college model; what was different from the existing model; benefits and negative aspects of changing the type of institution; the focus, number and location of colleges; criteria for deciding on allocation and combination of disciplines; subjects and programmes; multidisciplinary units; and the level of autonomy of colleges and relation to senate. Different models of college systems were proposed and discussed at a breakaway held at Misty Hills Country Hotel on 25 February 2004.

The interim academic governance structures agreed upon some name changes which saw the collapse of 10 faculties into five colleges.

The College of Human Sciences;

The College of Law;

The College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences;

The College of Economic and Management Sciences; and

The College of Science, Engineering and Technology.

Unisa's institutional strategy, *Unisa 2015: An agenda for transformation* was adopted in 2005. What remained for the university to do was align its annual operational plans with that document. The process of doing this is outlined below.

The major event in 2006 was the Service Charter Workshop, held in October 2006. This was planned, organised and managed by Thandi Sidzumo-Mazibuko.

Unisa's senior structures committed the university to a 'service culture' to establish the university as a 'leading provider of quality distance education in the service of humanity'.

The Service Charter pledges that the Council, Management and Staff of Unisa will strive to provide 'relevant, quality services in an efficient professional and courteous manner.' It will uphold the values of 'social justice and fairness'; 'the promotion of equity of access and opportunity' and integrity and excellence.

The core principles guiding the Service Charter are student-centredness, collegiality, sound education principles and practices and service to humanity.

The Charter declares that Unisa staff will not compromise on providing excellent quality service; fostering a culture of caring; taking pride in being a member of the Unisa community; ensuring availability of staff for student support and assistance; providing correct and relevant information to staff and students; giving timeous responses; holding people accountable for their responsibilities and services; inspiring motivation in the university community; allocating adequate resources strategically; and engaging in strategic partnerships.The Charter vows to align the institution's resources to strategic priorities and to consistently review and evaluate research priorities, curriculum and teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

The Service Charter began to be implemented in 2007, along with a Responsible Open Admissions Programme (ROAP) to more speedily and efficiently meet the enrolment and output targets. The same year Unisa management realised that operational effectiveness was threatened by a 15% increase in student registrations.

In 2007, Unisa created strategic and operational plans to align itself with the Department of Education's budgeting processes.

A 2009 survey undertaken by Hemis into the institutional profile shows dramatic changes since the merger.

Student enrolments had increased by nearly 27% from 205 811 in 2004 to 261 673 in 2008. The enrolments were fairly evenly spread across all disciplines except for Law. The most popular college was Economic and Management Sciences, which swallowed up 49% of the new intake of students in 2008, followed by Human Sciences, which absorbed more than 26%.

The proportion of African students rose from 55% to 64%. White student numbers dropped from over 28% to 21%, while figures of Indian and Coloured students remained constant. The

numbers of women students also increased from nearly 54% in 2004 to more than 58% in 2008. (Hemis 2009) On almost every level, Unisa had succeeded in meeting the challenges of both the 1997 Higher Education Act, and the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education, to increase the rate of student participation and graduation output, to broaden the social base of students and to increase equity in access and success rates. The achievements could partly be attributed to the institution's Learner Support policy, which is discussed in a separate section below.

On the staff side, the patterns of transformation revealed in the 2009 survey were not as exciting as the student figures. Because of what the Hemis survey writers call 'inherited racial inequalities'—presumably not current biased practices—white staff continued to dominate in the professional category at 71% (compared to 22% of African staff), with only 37% of the total executive/administrative/management jobs being held by women.

White men also dominated at the professor and associate professor levels, holding nearly 67% of full professor jobs and 58% of associate professor positions.

There was only a marginal shift in the increased proportion of African professors from 2004 to 2008 from 7% to -10%. However, the number of African associate professors had doubled in the period from 11% to 22% while the number of African senior lecturers had increased from 15% to 24%. (Hemis 2009)

Institutionally, there is reason to celebrate. The Unisa-Technikon-Vista merger is a major success story. The organisational design for the merger was clearly realistic and affordable, and met the needs of the three bodies being merged. Proper business models were adopted along the principles of client/contractor roles and the definition of core versus support services.

Not all the other mergers in the rest of the country imagined by Kader Asmal were as successful because beyond politics, there were factors like distance, weak leadership or personality clashes, vested interests, or having no external monitoring mechanism to create equitable changes. It is possible that some of these mergers might even be reversed in the future.

There has to be acknowledgement that there is a way to go before Unisa can claim to show a senior staff more representative of South Africa, and indeed Africa, through race and gender. However Unisa has entered a time when senior academics can be appointed with genuine tertiary degrees and where standards are constantly being raised. This was most certainly not the case in the apartheid past, when Afrikaner nationalists liberally handed each other honorary doctorates.

In this regard, Principal Barney Pityana's 2009 State of the Institution address to academics (5 March 2009) promisingly expressed Unisa's plans to increase the number of staff with doctorates from between 50%-75% within five years.

This is surely the most stunning achievement of Unisa's post apartheid history. These doctorates were legitimately earned, at university institutions including Unisa, hence they represent a major benchmark in rising standards of teaching staff and in turn, create the possibility of another benchmark figure for the rate of student passes ('throughput').

Forging an African university

Unisa's changing identity should be seen within the context of broader changes. South Africa, excluded from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) under the apartheid years, joined the organisation after independence.

Ironically for the man himself, Thabo Mbeki's 'African Renaissance' brought about, in addition to close African Union ties, discussions about more responsive forms of governance in which words like 'accountability', 'transparency' and 'developmental' feature strongly.

South Africa, no longer a pariah, became part of Africa and got involved in regional initiatives to attract trade and create sustainable development. In due course Unisa realigned its vision with that of the government**.**

It was no longer simply a South African university but had set its sights on becoming 'the African university in the service of humanity'.

'Africanisation' has meant more than simply having an African intellectual leadership at the university,[18] modules dealing with contemporary African political and economic issues and the offer of indigenous language courses. There are two major thrusts to the African University that Principal and Vice Chancellor Barney Pityana has nurtured: the first relates to the work Unisa has been doing within Africa to address Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and the second concerns a collectively imagined philosophy of higher education, including an African syllabus situated within an indigenous ODL model. It is 'indigenous' because many African countries could not afford to upgrade computer technology at the rate that is the norm in the west. Hence Africa would pick out the ODL models that are sustainable and meet requirements, and adapt or supplement those models with a range of tried-and-tested methods from within our own societies.

Unisa had participated in a range of UNESCO initiatives, in line with NEPAD, Southern African Development Community (SADC), Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and African Union (AU)[19] proposals, to discuss open and distance learning from as early as 2002.

Unisa also participated in the All-African Ministers Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education in Cape Town in February 2004. Here the then education minister Kader Asmal stressed the dependence for sustainable development on a growing skills and knowledge base. The conference was part of the activities during 1997 – 2006, a period the OAU had declared as 'The First Decade of Education for Africa'.

The conference adopted 'The Cape Town Declaration', which promised co-operation and partnership between policy makers and distance education providers. According to Pityana:

[18] Unisa's first black chancellor, after nearly 130 years of existence, was Justice President Bernard Ngoepe, Judge President of the Transvaal Division of the High Court of South Africa, who was inaugurated as Chancellor in 2001. Barney Pityana was appointed Principal and Vice Chancellor of the old pre-merger Unisa the same year and was appointed into the same posts in the new University of South Africa on 5 January 2004.

[19] NEPAD's Dakar Statement (date) called for 'Education for all in Africa', SADC adopted a protocol on education and training in DATE and the African Union has a 2015 Strategic Framework on Education and Human Resources.

'The impetus towards such cooperation and partnership was driven by the huge need for human capacity development across the continent, and the acknowledgement that decades of neglect and lack of investment in higher education had resulted in a situation where no single country in Africa could be expected to marshal the necessary wherewithal for the massive resources that would be needed for higher education.' (Pityana undated, Maputo)[20]

One of the earliest initiatives in the period of transition to an African university was the establishment in 2003 of the inter-disciplinary Centre for African Renaissance Studies (CARS) headed by Constitutional law expert Shadrack Gutto.

The following year, 2004, saw the launch of the African Council on Distance Education (ACDE) in Egerton University in Njoro, Kenya as well as the cementing of high-level partnerships with the African Union and projects with several individual African countries.

The ACDE was the brainchild of the Standing Committee of Presidents and Vice Chancellors (SCOP), in discussion with the International Council on Distance Education (ICDE) at a Unisa-hosted conference in 2002. The 2004 founding conference was followed by the first ACDE conference at Unisa in 2005.

The ACDE, based in Kenya, set out to co-ordinate African ODL activities, bringing partners together regularly towards three initiatives: one, the formation of a Pan African Consortium of Open Univesities;[21] two, the establishment of an African agency to oversee accreditation and quality assurance; and three, the publication of an African Journal of Distance Education.

The ACDE processes highlighted worrying higher education statistics in Africa. While higher education has a participation rate of less than 45%, 'the enrolment rate of 2% in sub-Saharan Africa is by far the lowest in the world' according to Unisawise. African institutions participating in the 2005 ACDE conference 'agreed that it was necessary to build capacity, share resources and have structured collaborations between institutions.' (ibid) Unisa immediately threw itself into African partnerships. For example, in Sudan, Unisa became involved in a South African government initiative in education and skills development ('African Union Committee on the Reconstruction of the Sudan'). In this instance responsibilities were shared between Unisa's Centre for African Renaissance Studies (CARS) and the Africa Directorate.

In the cases of Nigeria, Angola and Mozambique, Unisa has agreed to various sets of training, including teacher training. In other instances—Ethiopia and DRC—Unisa began to explore possibilities of opening learning centres. Ethiopia's Unisa campus opened in 2006. (Unisa undated)[22]

[20] Barney Pityana (undated) 'The history of distance education', inaugural lecture delivered on the occasion of the launch of the distance course in Bachelor of Business Management at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo.

[21] Unisawise Spring 2008:3.

[22] Unisa (undated). A six-month merger review of the new comprehensive University of South Africa 56-58.

A second conference of African Ministers of Education in Algiers in April 2005 committed the OAU to the development of an action plan for the Second Decade for Education in Africa, starting from 2006.

Where the First Decade for Education in Africa had focused on equity, access and capacity building, the Second Decade for Education, according to Pityana, the first inaugural chairperson of the ACDE board:

'[P]rioritised gender and culture; education management systems; teacher development; tertiary education; technical and vocational education and training; curriculum, and teaching and learning materials and quality management' (Pityana undated, Maputo).

The second ACDE conference in Lagos, Nigeria in July 2008 stressed the importance of ODL for Africa.

Pityana has explained that the significance of adopting a uniform approach to ODL in Africa through ACDE is that it has previously had diverse drivers, often from outside the continent, that were often competing (Unisawise Spring 2008:5). The advantages he sees of an African-driven ODL initiative are: removal of the key barriers to tertiary education, namely lack of funds and location; cost-effectiveness, as institutions can increase enrolments without increasing staff; development and provision of learning resources for teachers, regardless of their location; facilitation and promotion of lifelong learning and ongoing professional development; a means for Africa to advance its developmental goals and fulfil its social mandate (Unisawise Spring 2008: 4).

In his speech to Senate on 24 October 2008, Pityana explained that international relations and partnerships were an essential part of the academic reputation of a university. Higher education was:

'[A] major industry, a foreign exchange earner and a means of marketing the country concerned… The importance of this lies not so much in the number of students that are attracted to study at universities away from home (although that in itself is a remarkable phenomenon), as much as it lies in the exchanges and traffic among academics and researchers – the sharing of knowledge, participation in research undertakings, the standardisation of qualifications, the development of technical expertise in educational technology, and learning development. Interchanges among scholars have become a standard format by which higher education spreads across borders.'

Pityana quoted a recent UNESCO report showing that one out of 16 tertiary students from Sub-Saharan Africa studied abroad. Nine out of ten students studying abroad went to South Africa, which came second to the USA as the most preferred destination for mobile students from Anglophone Africa. Zimbabwe had the largest number of students studying abroad (17,000) followed by Nigeria (15,000) Cameroon (15,000) and Kenya (14,000). 'And yet', said the Principal,

'[W]e share with the South African government, resistance to the developing ideology that higher education is merely another good or service in the international market that must be subjected to international trade rules like GATS.'

Pityana spoke about the dedicated directorate, the International Relations and Partnerships Directorate, established in 2006 to coordinate Unisa's diplomatic activities under the Portfolio Strategy, Planning and Partnerships. He said Unisa was an 'international brand' in its own right:

'Some 10% of our students are drawn from countries outside South Africa… Cross-border education has become a powerful driver for international trade. Unisa is sought after as a partner by many countries in the Continent, for advice and partnership in the establishment of ODL policy and institutions. Furthermore, we are active in academic conferences on higher education and ODL, a growing number of our academic staff are attracted to Unisa from across the Continent, and many African scholars in the Diaspora see Unisa as a means of being connected to Africa.'

The international organisations to which Unisa links include the Association of African Universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth of Learning, the International Council for Distance Education, the Global Reporting Initiative, UNESCO and the International Association of Universities.

Not every African opportunity was beneficial to Unisa, the Principal told the Senate, estimating that the university has lost revenue in excess of R100m in its operations in Zimbabwe:

'We are confronted with the reality that educational activities are no longer possible in such an environment: studies are beyond what students can afford; travel is difficult where petrol is a scarce commodity; our providers there are cashing in on the situation and we find for example, that examination venues have become far too exorbitant; and study materials couriered to our students never reach their destination. It's hard not to ask the question: what are we doing there?' (Pityana, Speech to Senate 24 October 2008)

Pityana believes that the combination of ODL and e-learning and a different education model are the means for Africa to advance its development goals by reaching 'the non-traditional learners, especially women at home, the unemployed, the second opportunity learners, the disadvantaged'. ODL, he says:

'[P]rovides options for new forms of learning that take account of indigenous knowledge and culture-specific advancement of learning, creative and innovative means of assessment and an opportunity for relevance in education. This would be more affirming of people's prior knowledge and skills, and affirming of their culture, identity and human dignity, that draws from their history as a positive value and that cuts to size the prevalent hegemonies that have for far too long denied or undermined Africa's humanity.' (Pityana, undated, lecture at Eduardo Mondlane University)

The practical implications of what Pityana has alluded to when he speaks about 'new forms of learning' have yet to be fully realised but an exploratory process is currently underway at Unisa.

The notion of the African syllabus also includes the development of a curriculum incorporating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and an African epistemology. From the annual Founders' lectures to think tanks organised by the Pro Vice Chancellor and research seminars and colloquia about Africanisation taking place at various campuses, there is clearly an intention that the African syllabus should be thoroughly discussed both internally and with visiting African scholars, towards whose travel costs a fund has been established.

Rebirth, Revision and Rehabilitation (2008), the document produced at the Pro Vice Chancellor's summit 27-30 July 2008, explains that Unisa's approach will go beyond mere partnerships with African bodies to the promotion of African scholarship and inclusion of curriculum content embedded within African IKS yet relevant to the global context. Unisa would engage with:

'African thought philosophy, interest and epistemology through inquiry, scholarship and partnership… draw from African knowledge resources… interrogate received wisdom in the light of our African experiences and … construct knowledge afresh to reflect our African intellectual and scientific aspirations, and this needs to be done keeping in mind Unisa's role as a dedicated ODL and comprehensive institution.' (Unisa Rebirth 2008: 3) [23]
The document makes the following points:

- Currently western knowledge and application is used throughout African education systems;
- It is time that this is changed; the continent will benefit from African knowledge and insights, which will 'uniquely enhance and ensure growth and sustainable development'. The last part is linked to the idea that governance of the continent is becoming more democratic; also that it makes sense economically to use African resources and commodities;
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are grounded in 'cultural heritage'; Unisa's approach should advance, promote and systematise IKS, with a strong focus on research and the practical application of knowledge through the utilisation of various approaches interrogating multi, inter and trans-disciplinary approaches in all their applications and their relevance and applicability in Unisa. (Unisa Rebirth 2008)

The IKS imagined by Unisa is not intended to be a confusing competing discourse for the other challenges the institution has stated it is trying to address, such as the needs of the economy and the impact of globalization. It is rather, as I understand it, a humanist intervention, attempting to produce theory and research and documentation around aspects of societal knowledge within Africa that accompanies the economic intervention of the breaking down of technological and geographic barriers to access, particularly through the use of e-learning.

The summit discussed the possibility of making major changes in content and structure of the curriculum. It noted:

[23] Unisa (2008). Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor, *Rebirth, Revision and Rehabilitation page* 3.

'An example of the kind of decision that would need to be made was proffered in the form of the contentious possible introduction of the four-year undergraduate degree as mooted by Prof Pityana at the Founder's Lecture last year. It is felt that a four-year undergraduate degree will not only ameliorate the problems currently being experienced with access, assessment and throughput, but it will also facilitate a more effective expression of our African-ness, produce the type of graduate we envisage and align Unisa with the rest of the continent, thus offering better access and articulation for our students on the continent.' (Unisa Rebirth 2008: 3)

The summit also discussed the importance of 'innovations' such as the Theory of Knowledge and the need for the creation of a delicate balance within the three domains of scholarship (teaching and learning, research and community engagement); the role of languages; the introduction of cultural studies; new approaches to mathematics; a number of industry-responsive programmes; and how to produce 'socially relevant graduates who are critical thinkers, able to challenge society'. It was agreed that:

'Unisa's new identity would be unique in its academic offerings since the Unisa qualification would be integrative, holistic, Africanised and relevant to society. The transformation process would be driven by ODL and supported by an academic workforce that is amenable to new ways of teaching, learning, research and learner support. There would have to be closer interaction between the various stakeholders including the Department of Education.' (Unisa Rebirth 2008: 3)

In addition to IKS, Unisa will hopefully begin to look at popular culture as a source of information/ knowledge so that the focus is not on traditional knowledge systems only but also on emerging or changing ones managed by communities.

In time, as the results of the IKS work co-ordinated the NRF chair in educational development Catherine Odora Hoppers filter through, Unisa will see 'Africanisation' entering all disciplines.

Meanwhile academics continue to give their input to the debate. At a colloquium called *Africanisation of the curriculum: beyond debate*, held at Unisa on 26 September 2008, Unisa's executive director of Research Tinyiko Maluleke made a few broad opening observations about the concept of Africanisation.

Africanisation should not be a problem, he said, but it is. The term is used negatively. He gave as examples terms like 'Africanisation of the Balkans' and the 'Africanisation of Spain'—one of which referred to a desert and the other to a war. In addition, Africanisation tended to be associated with soft ephemeral issues such as culture, not with Science and Economics—the 'hard' issues. Maluleke also spoke about the superficial aspects of Africanisation—linked to the changing of names, or notions of reclaiming roots.

According to Sipho Seepe, now of the Institute of Race Relations but heading Vista at the time of merger, if you mapped the world according to Science and Maths research, research and development, new patents and even books borrowed, Africa virtually disappears while countries like Japan loom large. With tuberculosis, HIV, malaria and other illnesses, Africa's size in

relation to the other countries in the world is vastly inflated. Citing Richard Shaull in Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Seepe said there was no such thing as a 'neutral' education system. He raised the impact of colonialism on African development. This led to mimicry at some universities of western or of other universities viewed as superior.

Seepe quoted extensively from the work of MB Ramose, Unisa's former chair of Philosophy. He asked what there was in Africa that was worthy of rebirth, and if a renaissance would be a going back to primitivism? The answer was no, he said, it was about enhancing African renewal; it was about getting Africa into a global dialogue; it was about reopening crucial files closed in the chaos and violence of colonialism; it was about ethno-science, ethno-mathematics, ethno-botany; the academic challenge of unravelling skills and knowledge embedded in indigenous knowledge systems (IKS); and using IKS as a platform to negotiate new situations and unfamiliar terrain. Seepe also made a point about the need for the re-establishment of African confidence in scientific and technological capability, so that Africans could confidently manipulate and recreate the tools and symbols of the global discourse.

For senior researcher Raymond Suttner, the colonial and apartheid orders were not simply political and military conquests and systems of governance, 'but knowledge projects, displacing notions of sciences, religion, morality and a range of other elements of the local order.' [24] Suttner spoke about the apartheid political, cultural and knowledge project which was simultaneously 'a denial of oneness of black and white' and a 'denial of oneness of black people in general and African people in particular'.

Against this came the idea of national unity, for example Pixley ka Isaka Seme's assertion on the eve of the formation of the ANC, that 'we are one people'. Except, said Suttner, 'we are not one people but many people, though there might be common purpose'. He looked at the racism inherent in the fear of, or linked to, Africanisation. One example was the fear of people within one community that another community would swamp them and take over aspects of their culture. There was a tenency to essentialise for example in the notion of 'a Xhosa people', whereas argued Suttner, there 'is no such thing'. There were instead a number of diverse communities who speak Xhosa. That there were many segments of the African people should make those who feared Africanisation realise that being African was not one phenomenon now or in the past.

Suttner alluded to arguments from a body of literature suggesting that beliefs from the past were transmitted in unchanged form to the present, often romanticised in contrast to the present and another body that discussed the way in which the past was glorified. He suggested that pre-colonial unanimity is nonsense—'I want to know about the consensus in Shaka's wars,' he said, in reference to Hountondji's notion of an 'imaginary consensus'.

Suttner felt the word 'indigenous' was inadequate for what it had to describe; he opted instead for Hountondji's term, 'endogenous'. Suttner said he believed knowledge systems were linked. He rejected notions of purity as 'a misleading abstraction that flies in the face of experience'.

[24] Raymond Suttner's 2008 paper was called *Africanisation, African identity and emancipation*. Permission is required before citing it, in the event of publication of this research.

The debate around Africanisation is thus lively and thought-provoking, suggesting universes of knowledge we have yet to access.

ODL is the business model through which Africanisation will be achieved. Several presentations on the ODL model took place at the principal's lekgotla in 2008, of which the main one was *Unisa's ODL identity, interrogating the ODL strategic plan.*

The presentations at the principal's lekgotla identified power courses as a driver of the new model. The ODL model was the subject of a specific task team led by Pro Vice Chancellor Mandla Makhanya, who was responsible for the drawing up of the policy that was approved by Council in 2009.

The principal announced to an academic assembly in January 2009 that the Minister of Education had prioritised the completion of an ODL policy, which would provide a regulatory framework. An undergraduate tuition model, approved by Senate, is to be phased in over three years and five postgraduate courses at Honours and Master's level will be fully online by 2011/12.

Until November 2009 seven task teams dealing with aspects of ODL reported to the Pro Vice Chancellor's office. The task teams covered capacity development, ICT infrastructure and systems, registration, student support, communication, assessment, and power/pilot courses.

In his keynote address to mark the academic closing of 2009, Mandla Makhanya heaped praise on aspects of the work done by the task teams, particularly the work of the communications team, which he said 'outdid' itself with its extensive and inspired ODL marketing campaign, including the 'ODL walk' in which 2500 staff members participated. In addition Makhanya noted the roadshows and workshops held at Unisa and its Regions by staff from the Institute of Open and Distance Learning; the online admissions processes established by the Admissions and Registrations team and the tutor scheme for the power courses that had been recommended by the Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committee and approved by Senate.

'These are real achievements which are matched by the work done in the Colleges who played their part in spreading the ODL philosophy, even setting up College ODL offices, arranging workshops and organising guest speakers on ODL. But it was also obvious that there was some systemic incoherence resulting in a slower rate of delivery than we had hoped for.' (Makhanya 2009: 5)[25]

The ODL project had subsequently been relocated to the office of the Vice Principal Academic and Research Rita Mare, Makhanya announced.

As part of Unisa's academic transformation to become a fully Africanised university with strong core values, there have been a spate of seminars on racism and xenophobia at the university. On face value, we know that xenophobia has been topical since the attacks on 'foreign' Africans in 2008 that led to the removal of entire communities from their South African homes and drew

[25] Mandla Makhanya, Keynote Address: Academic Closing 2009 in ZK Matthews Hall, Muckleneuk campus. 11 December 2009.

attention to the ongoing xenophobia in South Africa. A second factor is that Unisa as an African university has to ensure that different Unisa constituencies—students, administrative staff, academic staff, management at different levels—get to grips with both racism and xenophobia.

A unique document squares up to the existence of racism and the 'subtle and subliminal forms' in which it mutates. The shocking event that precipitated the release of this document was the humiliation of black staff by white students at the Reitz Hostel of the University of the Free State, which institution might do itself a favour to consider a document similar to the Unisa document, which states:

'Higher education institutions were remarkably left out of the process driven by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission even though academic institutions were, to various degrees, part of the formation and intellectual sustenance of apartheid. The cost may have been that higher education institutions were never challenged to introspect and to examine the challenge of transformation in a democratic future founded on constitutional values and human rights…'

It continues: '… In our endeavour to enhance racial understanding, the university will along with all other forms of discrimination and intolerance, forthwith eschew all forms of racism and racial discrimination, create an academic and learning environment that is not alienating of the 'other' but that is affirming and valuing diversity as well as the humanity of the "other". This is an inescapable academic and moral imperative. Towards this end, the university will develop its training and development programmes to incorporate training in racism awareness, as well as adopt an Anti Racism and Racist Harassment policy.' (Unisa 2008)[26]

The xenophobia seminars thus serve the triple purposes of reflecting on racism in general, of conscientising different communities within the university towards xenophobia and of contributing to a culture of debate. Hopefully in this way xenophobia becomes noticed and ceases to be invisible within an institution.

One of the more successful events in October 2008 was addressed by the South African Research Chairs Initiative Chair in educational development Catherine Odora Hoppers, 'Towards problematising xenophobia: confronting the inhuman face of humanism'. The event followed the May 2008 violence by South Africans towards people of other nationalities living and working in South Africa. Hoppers said it was important to distinguish between conflict and violence, and that South Africa did not have the nomenclature to look at 'black on black' intolerance. White and black issues had so overshadowed other forms of intolerance that she calls apartheid 'the cobra syndrome' because researchers were not able to get away from it.

If Unisa's merger follows the usual patterns of transforming institutions, the next period of planning will see the sifting through the governance structures to rein in levels of hierarchy, duplication and overlap of functions. There are already moves to simplify processes, increase efficiency and lessen costs with certain functions.

[26] Unisa statement on racism, racial discrimination and all forms of intolerance. 26 March 2008

The first stage, already begun, is the creation of a joint office staff for the offices of the principal and pro vice chancellor. This office manages most of the strategic projects and spearheads the transformation process.

Unisa is currently participating in a range of monitoring exercises to establish world academic standards. One of these initiatives, run by the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development, now called the Directorate for Curriculum and Learning Development (DCDL), has pioneered some prototype 'power' courses to implement ODL as well as a project to establish a comprehensive tutor system.

Part of the Pro Vice Chancellor's change management strategy is to source individuals with state-of-the-art knowledge of developing curricula as well as research programmes. These experts will visit Unisa for six-month-residency or longer stints a programme established through Unisa and the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES). CIES is a division of the Institute of International Education (IIE). Iniativies already identified by CIES and Unisa at a three-day breakaway in 2009 include the identification of signature transformation courses; a rethinking of the process and systems in curriculum development; the sharing of social and economic databases; increased partnerships and establishement of social networks. (Makhanya 2009: 21-22)[27] After their residencies have ended, CIES scholars will stay in touch with the university to ensure follow-through on their initiatives.

Unisa is currently trying to raise its research profile. In 2008 it launched a successful Young Academics Programme. Unisa encourages its researchers to seek National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings. According to principal Pityana, the research culture taking root at Unisa has seen 43 academics applying for NRF ratings in 2008.[28] Another major research initiative is the establishment of 'centres of excellence'. These centres represent aspects of academic transformation at Unisa. Most of these projects are overseen from the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor. The new projects include:

The establishment of an Institute for Science and Technology, an indicator that Unisa is cogniscent of poor national results in Maths and Science subjects. According to Bloch (2009: 11) South African Maths, Science and Literacy results are among the worst in the world. This is partly attributed to a period of 'education policy confusion'—possibly existing more at the level of basic education, where there has been an unsuccessful universal implementation and subsequent reassessment of Outcomes-based education in high schools. This 'education policy confusion', according to Onkgopotse Tabane, 'has so far produced what Dr Theuns Eloff, head of Higher Education South Africa, calls functionally illiterate matriculants'. (Tabane 2010)[29]

The In-service Teacher Training Centre (INSET). This centre is reviewing national education training policies and researching and developing a policy on in-service training for Unisa as well

[27] Mandla Makhanya (2009). Keynote address, Academic Closing 2009, ZK Matthews Hall, Muckleneuk Campus, 11 December 2009.
[28] Barney Pityana (2009). Principal's state of the institution address to academics, 28 January 2009.

[29] Onkgopotse Tabane (2010). Angie, you cry crocodile tears. Op-ed comment in The Star Tuesday January 12, 2010: 12.

as a database of individuals who would like to be involved with the training. At the time of writing, INSET had successfully tendered to run teacher training programmes on behalf of several provinces including North West, which was scheduled to begin its teacher training in January 2010. The national budget in 2008/9 was R22.8 billion of which about seven-eighths is allocated to the provincial governments. Accordingly INSET's project leader Soane Mohapi has met with the MECs of several provinces including North West, Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

An 'Africa Centre'—the Unisa Graduate School—in Sunnyside. The Unisa Graduate School is located withing a commercial development known as the Sunnytown precinct being developed for commercial, residential and academic purposes by Zenprop on Unisa-owned land. Each level of the 'Green Building' will have a different usage, with one floor being for information or research purposes including high-tech digital and wireless technology, a second for conferences, another designated for residences for visiting scholars and a fourth for offices for Unisa's inter-disciplinary academic departments. Those departments that will be housed in the 'Green Building' include the Centre for the African Renaissance (CARS), the Science and Technology Institute, the Open and Distance Learning Initiative, the Developmental Education Project, the Centre for Genocide and the Thabo Mbeki Leadership Institute (TMLI). The Unisa Graduate School was launched at the Chancellor's dinner in late 2009 and opened its doors in January 2010 with historian Greg Cuthbertson as its first director. In the words of Mandla Makhanya at the end of academic year address (2009):

'The School will continue the work done in the College for Human Sciences but with a broader orbit, serving all five Colleges. The School will promote and collate multi/trans/interdisciplinary research with a strong African focus. In addition the School will support master's and doctoral students in a rich research environment... Unisa has set an objective to promote research and to increase capacity and productivity aligned with national priorities for knowledge development, and this is ably co-ordinated by Professor Maluleke and his team in the Research Directorate, so it is anticipated that Unisa's new School will contribute proactively in aligning itself with this objective. In 2009 alone, Unisa received 441 applications for master's and doctoral programmes from students living in Ethiopia.' (Makhanya 2009)

The Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Social Policy on Poverty and the Family. The Archie Mafeje Institute was named in honour of the late social scientist, who was based at Unisa when he passed away in 2007.

The Institute is planned as an inter and multidisciplinary centre for research in economic and social policy, particularly related to family units and the poor. 'In addition it will create a safe environment in the form of a clinic for those who have experienced economic hardship,' Mandla Makhanya has promised. (Makhanya 2009: 9) 'The unit will attract expertise in the various Colleges and create a valuable platform from which knowledge can be generated and applied to improve the conditions of South African families. Collaborative partners, such as SANPAD, will assist in providing knowledge experts and financial resources.' (Ibid) At the time of writing a project leader for this institute had not been appointed.

A partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Leadership Institute. A project leader, Maureen Tong, has been appointed who is busy establishing a project plan for leadership training, a public library of texts dealing with African leadership and post-graduate research. 'The idea is that the TMLI will present appropriately accredited programmes in African leadership… It will undertake research and publish. It appears that the project will also be in partnership with other universities in this country that have indicated interest,' states the Annual Report.[30]

The establishment of an Annual Summer School. The project leader of this is Genevieve James. The intention is to launch the Summer School sometime after the 2010 Fifa World Cup although it will initiate a few activities before that, says James. Among these is the Campaign for Learning, which encouragingly offers programmes not only for 'young minds'—usually the targets of universities—but for all. 'Study *whoever* you are' is the slogan James has come up with for her learning campaign.

The Academy of African Languages and Science (AALS). This too is well beyond the concept phase and has entered the consultation stage—with numerous stakeholders who will include government departments and continental language policy planners, since at stake is the consistent empowerment, development and promotion of African languages in place of the currently uneven status quo. The AALS driving team are Rosalie Finlayson and Samba Buri Mboup. According to the concept documentation written by Finlayson and Mboup:

'The project for the establishment of an Academy of African Languages and Science (AALS) is driven by the need to position African languages as languages of science and education within UNISA and beyond. The intellectualisation and modernisation of [South African Indigenous Languages] SAIL and their introduction in the curricula as mediums of tuition including research, will constitute AALS' top priority. The option is clearly a developmental approach. Through research, language planning and policy implementation, this approach aims to create conditions for greater social integration and citizenship as well as cultural self-assertiveness for mother-tongue speakers (both learners and teachers) of the African languages at the University and beyond. If implemented, this goal has the potential to become a major driver for the overall process of development and promotion of [African languages] AL within, around and beyond UNISA.' (Finlayson and Mboup, Conceptual Framework for the Establishement of an Academy of African Language and Science: Project's overview and outline of the priliminary research, March 2009: 8)

The value of this planned academy is immeasurable. At the launch of Traditions 1, an annual conference to be held in the form of a travelling 'pitso'—discussion forum—and launched by the Unisa Institute for Social and Health Sciences at Soweto Hotel, Soweto 18-19 November 2009, several young psychotherapists spoke about the difficulties of working with concepts that had not yet been translated into isiZulu and SeSotho, and having to cater for clients to whom they had no means to explain the terms adequately. Such scholars might well find a great deal of help and guidance from the AALS, which plans to position itself as a PanAfrican '*catalyst* and an *inspirational body* that will provide decision-makers with high-level *expertise* and *advisory services* and well crafted argument'. (Finlayson and Mboup 2009:13)

[30] Unisa Annual Report 2008: 13

For AALS, Science is the key focus:

'The technical equipping of all nine South African indigenous idioms with required terminologies, conceptual tools and technical services to transform them into working languages for science, technology and tuition, will be the driving force in the agenda and mission of the Academy. The stake is about creating an enabling environment "where we are going to build new knowledge in a sophisticated way" (PVC's Memo…).' (Finlayson and Mboup 2009: 14)[31]

It is fair to say that nearly nine out of the ten objectives of the institutional operational plan for 2009 to 2010, reproduced below, have been met or are on track.

Objective 1: Institutionalise ODL as an effective business model to give expression to Unisa's institutional identity;

Objective 2: Foster institutional change and transformation. Within this objective is clause 2.3, to advance employment equity;

Objective 3: Align a relevant range of formal and non-formal qualification and course offerings, an appropriate delivery model and learner support framework to enhance student success and throughput and to ensure learner support;

Objective 4: Establish a culture of scholarship and enhance research activities;

Objective 5: Promote community engagement (CE), academic citizenship and corporate social responsibility programmes;

Objective 6: Institutionalise enrolment planning;

Objective 7: Offer effective student services to improve the total student experience;

Objective 8: Align systems, structures, processes and resources with Unisa's business model;

Objective 9: Identify and develop leaders and managers and improve staff capacity; (note though that Clause 9.1 relates to recruiting and retaining high-quality staff in accordance with EE policy and targets.)

Objective 10: Develop, deploy and maintain a quality regime in the Institution.

If one reads these objectives against the Hemis findings, it is clear that the institution has yet to meet its objectives in 2.3 and 9.1. And Unisa management has announced, through Mandla Makhanya's 2009 year-end speech, that it wants to see more of an operational focus in ODL (suggesting that management believed Objective 1 had not been fully realised by late 2009). Incoming innovations like the CIES initiative and the new research programmes will similarly impact positively upon Objectives 3-5.

[31] The memo referred to by the authors is referenced in their work as Makhanya, Mandla (Aug. 2008): Memorandum on the Establishment of an Academy of African Languages and Science (Orientation Letter)

Unisa's top management is clearly boldly attempting to remove any remaining bottlenecks in order to meet all ten of its objectives, but all aspects of clauses relating to management practice will naturally keep developing and absorbing brand new innovations—such as, for example, user-level assessment of management. At present within Unisa as in virtually all top corporations in South Africa, performance reviews are measured by the performing individual and his or her immediate manager. These practices are changing in countries like the UK. Workplace stress costs the National Health and private health care programmes a whopping $45 billion a year, so 2010 in the UK has seen the launch in Britain of trials of a 'Rate the boss' programme in which occupational business psychologists work with employees to assess their manager, providing a a 'user-level' component of the performance review. This is hoped to provide a more nuanced aspect of workplace relations and flush out problematic aspects, some of which might not arise through conscious behaviour, of managerial working styles, as opposed to simply employee productivity. Management is a developing science. Subsequently assessments, audits, organisational reviews and the introduction of new managerial tools (affecting Objectives 8, 9 and 10) cannot be seen as once-off events. The list of Objectives cannot simply be ticked off as they are 'done'. The word 'maintain' in Objective 10 suggests ongoing commitment to upholding best practices in the workplace.

In the case of an institution wishing to fast-track specific aspects of its IOP, such as employment equity, there are several options depending on budget available to the organisation, what resources it already has in place, versus the scale at which it needs changes. Some organisations combine a range of methods. One option would be to upgrade, expand or change the existing team running with the portfolio responsible for employment equity and recruitment of staff. A second involves employing a high-powered change consultant to oversee the process. This person would be given the mandate to call for necessary changes, would need immediate access to top management, and would expect to enjoy the support of the current team. A third option would be the short-term employment of a team of change experts, as opposed to a single consultant, to guide management more broadly and train the existing team. A fourth option would be to split up the governance structure and hence the management of the work relating to employment equity into four parts representing four different communities (students, staff, societal needs, governance) for whom four different departments could be responsible. This is a creative way of spreading the tasks of creating employment equity the way the University of Port Elizabeth and Pentech have done. The ideas are reproduced here to explain the concept more fully:

CHET's Twelve indicators to evaluate transformation at UPE and PENTECH

Students

1. The access of historically disadvantaged and under-representative groups must be increased, particularly to professional fields of study in science, engineering and technology (SET) and in business, commerce and management.
2. The success rates and graduation rates of historically disadvantaged and under-represented groups at institutions of higher education must improve. No significant differences should exist between the success and graduation rates of advantaged and disadvantaged students.

3. The numbers of historically disadvantaged students at postgraduate level must increase.
4. The institutional climate must be improved to ensure the retention and ultimately the graduation of historically disadvantaged students, particularly in the SET and business/commerce fields.

Staff

5. The access and retention rates of historically disadvantaged and under-represented groups (including women) to the staff of the institution must be improved. Staff development programmes must be implemented.

Responsiveness to societal needs

6. Qualifications, programmes and courses must be restructured in response to broader changes in teaching and learning paradigms.
7. The graduates/ diplomats produced by the institution must satisfy society needs.
8. Research outputs must increase.
9. Partnerships and other collaborative ventures must be formed with industry, communities and other tertiary institutions.

Governance

10. The composition of all governance structures must be representative with regard to race and gender, and must reflect the communities and constituencies which the institution serves.
11. Existing governance structures must be restructured and new ones established in line with the principles of co-operative governance.
12. The new governance structures must include an executive leadership which must ensure that the institution operates efficiently and effectively. (Cloete, Bunting and Bunting 2002)[32]

By the end of his term, Barney Pityana and others who signed the original MoU and merger documents with him might find the time to revisit clauses adopted within the first merger declaration about ensuring 'the minimum of disruption to students,' and 'the stability and confidence of current and prospective students, staff and other stakeholders during the unfolding of the merger process.'

In retrospect, how did the clauses relating to ensuring the stability of staff and students for an unspecified transition travel in time and is their end result compatible with the original intention? If these clauses were imagined to protect the jobs of senior management from the apartheid era, in order to keep them committed to the process, that is one thing. If however, through the transformation processes individuals from the old order somehow prevented the meeting of even

[32] (Nico Cloete, Lisa Bunting and Ian Bunting (Eds.) Transformation Indicators Applied to Two South African Higher Education Institutions. Sunnyside: CHET 2002: 8-9)

a tiny fraction of IOP objectives precisely because the individuals in question were protected and virtually untouchable even when they failed to move sufficiently out of their comfort zones to meet objectives, then hopefully this document will draw attention to this. In South Africa inevitably those trusted with the most sensitive and strategic jobs of the new era—ensuring employment equity—tend to come from that section of the population least served by employment equity. Although there is jumpiness whenever a race card is played, it should not have to be spelt out that there are very few white men in existence who will happily implement policies which they might perceive as putting them out of business.

We have seen at every level of South African society that historically advantaged institutions are chock-a-block with individuals who never thought it necessary to question their own privileged status, much less interrogate their own working methods. Many old-style administrators keep an active presence in all the transformation processes, and indeed can be the first to present their reports at governance meetings, although their working styles are not 'best practice' at all, and can indeed create obstacles to the creation of a new cadreship of senior management. This point is made as a general observation about South African institutions trying to transform from an apartheid past.[33] Unreconstructed old-style managers manage to trudge on universally within South African institutions, particularly it seems within HR structures, with some not even bothering to pay lip service to new rules when they are among their own staff and not in meetings with the top change leaders.

In order to understand how significant the transformation vision is at Unisa one must ponder what there was before transformation. A quick reflection on past practices highlights the necessity of having a change leader who has welcomed having his own and the institution's ideas challenged instead of maintaining Unisa as an inscrutable laager.

The intrepid historian Albert Grundlingh wrote about Unisa's 'lack of visibility' and 'corporate blandness' from the 1970s, declaring Unisa a 'no-name brand'. (Grundlingh 2006: 134)[34]

At the helm of this bland and unremarkable laager was Theo van Wijk—the man credited with turning Unisa into a modern correspondence university.

'Quality education' was a term claimed from the time of Theo van Wijk (1972-1988), although he resisted testing Unisa against other institutions. He stated, at the naming of the Old Mutual concert hall in 1974:

'Die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika het nog nooit en sal ook nooit in mededinging met ander unversiteite tree nie. Sy selfopgelegde opdrag is eiesoortig en andersoortig. Eie aard en ander aard kenmerk die Universiteit. He gee onderrig aan dié wat 'n universiteit nie voltyds of deeltyds kan bywoon nie. Maar juis daarom is die trefgebied en die trefkrag van sy onderrig miskien groter. In menslike sowel as geografiese sin is die trefwydte onbeperk. Hy bereik nie net

[33] Subjectively focalised, following my earlier experiences within transforming institutions, in two national government ministries in 1994/5 and as an executive director in local government with academic training in change management between 1996-2000.
[34] Albert Grundlingh (2006), 'History on the hill: Aspects of scholarship and scholarly life at the Unisa History Department, 1968-2000'

enkelinge nie, maar gesinne, gemeenskappe, volkere…Hy wil die persoonlike drang na geestelike verruiming bevredig, maar ook die behoefte aan intellektuele vernuwing en uitbouing, aan die versterking en verhoging, in nasionale belang, van die peil van kennis en kundigheid.' (Van Wijk 1974, cited in Liebenberg 1988: 48)

My rough translation: 'Unisa has never and will never engage in competition with other universities. Its upstanding conduct is unique and differentiates it. The university is distinguished as a world apart [from others]. It gives tuition in that which no university full time or part time could ever witness. For perhaps the range of its command and range of the strength of its tuition is greater [than others]. In both human and geographical terms the terrain is unlimited. It reaches not just individuals, but families, communities, nations… It satisfies the personal craving for spiritual enlargement, but also the demands for academic renewal and expansion, towards the strengthening and elevation, in the national interests, of the standard of learning and expertise.'

Who was the man who declared Unisa *nonpareil*, although he was not prepared to put it to any test?

Theo van Wijk was 'not an academic' according to historian Albert Grundlingh[35] although if one looks at the biography by Ben Liebenberg[36], he was clearly revered with something approaching North Korean idolization of a leader by senior staff who did not hesitate to write and publish paeans in his praise.[37] Van Wijk had an MA from Rhodes University. It would be a worthwhile exercise in changing academic standards to see whether either Rhodes University or Unisa's History department would allow it to go through today.

Theo van Wijk's honorary doctorate came courtesy of Unisa. Van Wijk's considerable oeuvre was compiled courtesy of Unisa. This includes various co-edited published histories of Europe[38] with his employees Maurice Boucher and SB Spies, both of whom were employed to write the History of Unisa—Boucher produced Spes in Arduis but Spies left no published product on Unisa.

However, Theo van Wijk had 'the gift of the gab' according to Grundlingh.[39] It was the 'gift of the gab' and the culture of the day that allowed him to get away with steering a 'no-name brand' of a university for the better part of twenty years. He has been such a sacred cow at Unisa that no one has pointed out before now that Van Wijk named a building after himself during his own tenure. Furthermore, that although Barney Pityana paid generous homage to Theo van Wijk when he died, those views are not uniformly shared by academics prepared to speak on and off the record about Van Wijk. There is a clear perception among some of his former colleagues, including the head of Unisa's Graduate School Greg Cuthbertson, that the production of a

[35] Albert Grundlingh was interviewed by Muff Andersson in Stellenbosch on 11 September 2009.
[36] BJ Liebenberg (Ed.) (1988). Professor Theo van Wijk. Pretoria: Unisa.

[37] See for example Ridley Beeton's 1988 'Term of Office' in BJ Liebenberg (Ed.) Professor Theo van Wijk.
[38] Western Europe from the decline of Rome to the Reformation (co-edited with SB Spies); Europe, 1555-1848 (co-edited with MC van Zyl) and Europe, 1848-1980 (co-edited with Maurice Boucher). 1988, Pretoria: Academica.
[39] Interview with Andersson, 2009.

'Collected Works' of Theo van Wijk's speeches and writings at Unisa expense involved a degree of vanity on the part of Van Wijk.[40]

So although the claims to Unisa's greatness, uniqueness and excellence were made by Theo van Wijk, who was among other principals in the apartheid era to declare the institution too unique or incomparable for scrutiny, these claims were paradoxically *never* put up for testing until the post-apartheid era.

By contrast, Barney Pityana had a formidable reputation as an academic from before he entered the institution. Pityana's challenge was to find ways of improving Unisa's academic reputation and raising standards against world measures; to create equity within staff and student structures; and to attune the vast, slumbering institution to factors like transparency and other features of democracy previously simply ignored—for example there has been a rethinking about meeting the needs of the student body even to the extent of empowering students to create an SRC and making provision for a Dean of Students. Unisa has finally shown, under Pityana, that it not only does not mind being assessed, but that it sees the need for it. Makhanya, in his 2009 end-of-year address stated that:

'We need to be brave enough to begin a radical renovation, one that will re-shape our institution. And why is this necessary?...From the inception of the 2015 Strategic Plan which is our Agenda for Transformation, it was clear that we needed to make a critical appraisal of our academic offerings to ensure that the university commits to its social mandate to produce graduates who bear, to use a term from the Council of International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) Unisa's *signature*.' (Makhanya 2009: 12)

Within the transformation programme escalated within 2004-2010, Unisa's Institute for Curriculum Development (ICDL) began a series of initiatives to establish world academic standards. These included the Commonwealth of Open Learning (COL) audit of 2007 and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) audit of 2008. While there was a degree of excitement and nervousness about them before they took place, some academics have subsequently queried the value of the CoL audit, whether it was tough enough and suggest there might still be the need for a stricter external audit . George King, who was a head of department (Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology) at the time it was conducted, has explained the CoL felt like 'a gentle discussion, an internal audit..not an external audit. It was a one-on-one between me and one other person who asked me to talk about the department. I could have said whatever I liked. It was based on my word. ' (George King, comments to Andersson, December 2009)

There is no reason for the institution to fear a rigorous external audit of any of its programmes or functioning since it is determined to undertake 'radical renovation'.

Under Pityana, Unisa finally achieved financial accountability that could stand up to public scrutiny—the finances are up on the website for all to see and the Council has praised the financial management of the institution.

[40] Taped discussion with Andersson, August 2008.

This is a dramatically different situation from what happened during the apartheid period, particularly in the era 1939 – 1970 when many senior Unisa appointees had direct links to the Broederbond or to the apartheid government. Unisa's head of finance during the late 1930s and 1940s, AA Roberts, was simultaneously secretary for education in government. He applied for funds from the Unisa position, and granted them from his senior government position. AA Roberts ensured thousands of pounds were channelled to special projects in Unisa for unknown purposes.

Luckily for history, the South African Association of Correspondence Colleges (SAACC), which was hostile to Unisa's attempts to begin its own teaching division, kept an eye on the Hansard records. The SAACC complained bitterly about how money was illegally steered to the Division of External Studies through a range of accounts in several government departments including Native Affairs and Foreign Affairs, besides the national education department.

AA Roberts ensured that within Unisa no records of expenditure entered the public domain. Neither the Rector of the day Langham Murray, nor the Council, knew about these financial wheeling dealings. (Andersson 2009 Cross Correspondence)

Ensuring that every cent is accounted for is no mean feat. That Unisa's financial management has been highly praised by Council is a real achievement.

Turning Unisa into one of South Africa's top five academic institutions—not only the largest university—might take a lot longer to achieve. This is partly because in the past Unisa made claims about itself that are not true while refusing to open itself to either competition or any form of regulation.

To discover, as late in the game as 2006, that academically Unisa was not on the list of the top one hundred most highly regarded universities in the world was obviously a blow to the institution. However knowing its strengths and weaknesses now enables Unisa to be able to map out, for the first time, the roads to follow to improve its status. Presumably too the world measurement systems will reveal, beyond what must be done, that which must be undone.

The major practice that must be 'undone' is one which allowed Unisa to exist in the past as a top-heavy administrative institution with senior academics writing odes to super-powerful managers or ho-ho-hoing over their quips while paying scant attention to the needs of the enormous student body.

'Student-centreness' is central to Unisa's ODL policy. Another matter to get attention at both the Principal's lekgotla at the Intundla game lodge (11-15 May 2008) and at the Pro Vice Chancellor's breakaway at Kievietskroon two months later, concerned learner support and responsiveness to students. Student support now includes interventions such as the opening of more learning centres in the regions;[41] a tutorial system and expanded seminar and lecture programmes; assistance with 'academic literacies'; a 'peer collaborative learning' (PLC) programme in which senior students guide first-years; 'work integrated learning' which helps

[41] There were only six learning centres in 2004. By June 2009 there were 24.

students get internships and ultimately jobs; ICT support; and counselling services in addition to a number of student-run support services including financial aid.

The Vice Chancellor and Pro Vice Chancellor summits of 2008 tackled lack of coordination between regions and the main campus[42]; lack of progress on initiatives such as tutorial support and 'the smart card system', which were given time frames to keep them on track, as well as the need for a report from the Unisa Call Centre.

The documentation for the Intundla meeting in May 2008 states that 'one of the thorniest issues remained the registration process and the delivery of study materials at Florida.' Delivery was frequently late, the meeting was told. The reasons included staffing shortages, lack of capacity and space and facility problems.

By September 2008 there was unrest around registration and study materials at one of the KZN campuses. On one campus a student died of asthma while protesting—note, not as a result of protesting—but none the less leading to a media frenzy probably disproportionate to the general problem of registration.

Undoubtedly the higher student figures had stretched institutional capacity to near breaking point, leading to delays in registration that had grown rather than lessened in every year since the merger.

The single institutional body responsible for addressing this, the Directorate of Student Admissions and Registrations developed, and implemented, a technology-driven registrations process. This included a self-help online system for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to register themselves with the help of an advisor; a dedicated registrations facility at Sunnyside campus, and a performance management system to audit and monitor staff. However in February 2009, these systems were brand new and were not yet running quickly as both staff and students acclimatised to them under the unrelenting gaze of the principal, the pro vice principal and the media.

Unisa, in 2010 is trying to bridge the divide between the technikons and the regular universities. One of its aims was to offer programmes at 'levels lower than the prescribed Level 5, which is the entry level of other universities,' according to pro Vice Chancellor Mandla Makhanya in an interview with one of the internal publications (Unisawise Spring 2008:6).

It would be a milestone moment to be captured within Unisa's history if the Department of Education agrees to this. Allowing a lower level of education will indeed revolutionise the curriculum and put in place thousands of possibilities for both post-school youth and adults struggling to catch up with education lost through wars or forced displacement. Bridging training, regulated throughout Africa, is probably the single most important initiative towards picking up the popular vote for an African institution. Beyond it lie limitless possibilities for advancing community training and education and creatively straddling 'distance'.

[42] Unisa operates in six regions, five of which are in South Africa. These are Cape Coastal, Gauteng, KZN, Midlands and North Eastern. The sixth region is Ethiopia.

Change management and organisational culture

The 2008-2010 Institutional Operational Plan was drawn up cogniscent of, inter alia, a review of the 2007 operational plan and reports of the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL) trial quality audit of Unisa as an ODL institution. It also included the Accenture Business Architecture initiative, which suggested different organisational architectural designs and ways of making and implementing speedier management decisions.

The changes at institutional level included performance agreements for each individual, while departments not attracting sufficient student numbers or not serving strategic purposes have been trimmed down, making room for new academic endeavours.

Initiatives belonging to the future for Unisa include the production of Business Intelligence and the creation of an 'ops room' to coordinate processes between various departments.[43]

There was a shift, in the 2008-2010 operational plan, in the previous way of speaking about 'becoming' to the event of 'being', of actualisation. Pam Ryan remembers: 'An interesting discussion was held at Kloofzicht in September around this notion. It was agreed that a vision statement implied always that one is aspiring to something; that we haven't arrived.'

Like so many other good intentions of the post-apartheid government in relation to transforming institutions, the lofty managerial ideals waft like smoke above the realities of finding the costs to achieve them and the difficulties of creating appropriate balances between anxious old-style managements inherited along with the institutions, the logistics required for running enormous new change programmes, promotion of race and gender equity and the encouragement of innovative and creative teaching.

The Principal's 2008 lekgotla identified the need for communication 'to all staff…the rationale and imperatives for a new institutional identity and focus'.[44].

A mistake frequently made by communications teams within transforming institutions is to focus on external communications at the expense of internal. The Department of Corporate Communications (CCM) has done an exceptional job in 'selling' Unisa through the design and marketing of its current brand imagery and ongoing high-profile events to consolidate its corporate identity. Unisa, for example, had a stand at the Homecoming Revolution Fair in London to attract South Africans who want to return to the country. But the business of communication should not reside entirely within the top levels of management, even though it is correctly situated there.

At Unisa, while top management is always entirely ready to speak eloquently about or if necessary brief the media or any audience about new developments, it is clear that in cases the message to communicate has not filtered down to managers at levels four and below.

[43] Information about the Ops room is taken from the report on the Principal's lekgotla, 11-15 May 2008.
[44] Unisa: Report on the Principal's lekgotla, 11-15 May 2008: 3.

The department of Corporate Communications and Marketing (CCM) is trying to create a more dynamic internal communications training for managers and officials at levels four, five and six because this is where the bottleneck occurs.

The problem is not with top management itself but the way information is passed on to the rest of the organisation. Practically every speech made at Unisa is pinned up on the website. Ordinary staff can now also read what senior staff are paid, how money is spent and what management breakaways took place. However it is all top-down. Transformation appears to be a done deal. Every development firsts targets management and from there it is presumably supposed to be creatively interpreted to the rest of the organisation but for whatever reason there is often no briefing except the formal speeches posted on the website and lively coverage of events some days after the fact.

While HR's Capacity Development & Renewal Programme being facilitated by Rosalie Finlayson to keep staff abreast of the scale of new ideas and policies at Unisa will go some way towards answering this very need, it has not yet got beyond a first round of programmes for staff already working at management level. In this sense those who have benefitted from the programme are those who are already converted. The same people asked to attend each and every event are precisely the same managers who sit on information, possibly because they are so busy going to briefing events that they become over-stretched and can barely find the time to brief those working under them. Hence the challenge for management is to locate an internal mechanism to keep non-management—and those working on specific projects—posted on the new developments, including how individuals may participate in them.

Failure to share organisational information leads to misunderstandings and subsequently tense stand-offs, from time to time, between individual staff members and their manager, and ultimately between a workforce represented by the recognised union, the Cosatu-affiliated National Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) and senior management. In the end, like the business of promoting employment equity, responsibility for fast-tracking change management lies at the door of HR. Meanwhile CCM has to find cunning ways to reach out to ordinary staff within a reasonable time frame, so that when managers disappear on a breakaway at which miraculous findings take place and statements of intent are drawn up, ordinary staff can find out the details of the breakaway almost immediately and not only at the next staff assembly many moons later.

Since the major negotiation with labour in 2009, CCM has been speeding up its internal communications messages. But the information it puts out is not always accurate. CCM in tackling perceptions, needs to consider the implications for staff of false middle management claims that Unisa is more or less the same as it was in the past, and even that it was 'better' in the past. The claim that Unisa was a successfully operating correspondence university in 1948 still appears in CCM documents.

My own research has firmly disproved this.[45] AJH van der Walt's 1947/8 initiative to create a Division of External Studies was fiercely resisted by all the contact universities and colleges of education. It was seen as an attempt to dumb down the arguably already irrelevant colonial education to a point where it could be managed by a wider band of white ideologues in order to empower large numbers of fellow believers. (Andersson 2009)[46] Individuals concerned about their own power and survival contrived to manipulate a major part of South Africa's education system in their own interests. The majority of the early VCs and many of the Council members of Unisa had honorary doctorates.

In 2009 it is unimaginable that an arbitrary group of people, some without much formal education at all, but honoured with doctorates because of their commitment to a political vision of Afrikaner nationalism could possibly be expected to create a state-of-the art university, rewrite the syllabus, while establishing a government in waiting—yet that is exactly what happened in the years before DF Malan came to power. Behind the 'Prof' and 'Dr' of three out of every four members of Unisa's Council and Senate in the period 1939 to 1969 stood a rabid racist, who believed white people were superior. Some believed Afrikaners were the chosen race; some supported the Nazis. It is not by chance that this group managed to create policies that worked for the Nationalist Party up to a particular point but that were ultimately unfeasible, yet which have undermined education until the present day.

Hence in the marketing of Unisa as 'the African university' the astonishing metamorphosis can only be shown by more evidence of what was, versus what has been put in place now, instead of what appears to be the determination to present Unisa as an institution doing now what it has always done, and in the same fashion.

For example, if it were true that Unisa has been delivering world-class/excellent education for all these years, what could there possibly be to transform?

And if everything about Unisa was excellent and unique from the apartheid era, which is simply an untrue claim, what words can be used when recognised benchmarks are eventually achieved—when the institution gets onto the top 100, the top 50, the top 20, the top 10 universities in the world? Is there a superlative of 'excellence'? It would be more sensible for marketers to say: 'We believe we have almost overthrown the apartheid legacy. There are still several things to be done that we are working on night and day. We have several new initiatives to address our current limitations. From here onwards we can start benchmarking progress towards becoming a top-notch university.' Only if such an approach is adopted will staff/students/citizens believe it when Unisa does achieve excellence by world standards.

Velile Notshulwana-Mqota (2009) too points out that that words like 'excellence' and 'transformation' have assumed specific meaning within the South African higher education context: 'Excellence has been a code word for agreed high standards of academic performance'

[45] Muff Andersson (2009) Shifting HE identities: Unisa's African future from an apartheid past. Paper presented at the panel discussion, The Scourge of Bantu Education, 30 September 2009, the University of the Witwatersrand.

[46] Muff Andersson (2009) Cross Correspondence: Unisa's monopoly over distance HE from 1959 (unpublished).

and 'Transformation has then meant a spreading out of, a dilution of and a threat to those high standards'. The task of transforming higher education remains formidable, he writes, because:

'[E]xcellence in these debates is employed not so much as a mark of quality as a mark of maintaining apartheid privilege—that is, the power of the elite few to control the norms of scholarly enterprise in such a way to keep new and different individuals, new ideas, new topics and new methodologies at bay.'

On the other hand, there is 'transformation' that, according to current terminology, pushes aside 'excellence'. Velile Notshulwana-Mqota says that:

'Transformation challenges this privilege, which has been accrued mostly by a male elite that dominates hiring practices, scholarly norms, departmental and governance structures and other dimensions of university life.The operations of this privilege are embedded in structures, processes, policies, missions and standards of the academy. Privilege forms barriers through which new entrants to the academy must negotiate.'[47]

CCM has been behind several successful corporate communication exercises to discuss changes with lower levels of staff. It organised a highly successful ODL walk in 2009 attended by record numbers of staff. Participating staff were asked to fill in questionnaires about the quality of the information about ODL they were given on the walk. Although these findings had not been released at the time of writing, the walk would have enabled the dissemination of organisational information to many staff who might not otherwise have accessed it.

Another very smart exercise was the production of a DVD of the 'Unisa Inspired' events of 20-23 June called *Change Begins* (Unisa 2006). It features a play written by former library director of customer care and poet Robert Pearce. This depicts a learner attempting to get simple information from a range of Unisa centres. These centres are renamed 'The Ministry of Contact Centre', 'The Ministry of Learner Support', and 'The Ministry of Student Enquiry' and so on. The student wants to know when his assignment is due. From one of the 'ministries' he gets a diatribe about students not paying their fees on time. The 'minister' asks what (the then real life education minister) Naledi Pandor would do about it. The same 'minister' has much to say about global political events. He boasts about his own power.

A second 'minister' is dismissive of the student's queries. Her attitude abruptly changes from high-handedness to flirtatiousness when a VIP interrupts the call. A third 'minister' refers queries elsewhere. Another gets angry when the calls keep being put through to her and lays into the student for his impatience when her work load is so strenuous.

The play cleverly pits students' woes with customer care within the university against South African citizens' problems in accessing any official information. We are all familiar with the struggle to get simple information, and have experiences of getting garbled information, extraneous information, historical information, and lectures about democracy, language policy

[47] Opinion piece by Velile Notshulwana-Mqota, 'Break down barriers of privilege' in The Star, Monday 24 August 2009:12.

and transformation in general when we seek the answer to a very ordinary question whose answer is invariably not on the web pages that organisations tend to have on offer.

Students suffer, Pearce suggests, as staff slowly get their heads around new ways of doing things, questions of outsourcing, modernizing of features and democratizing institutions. Although such details obsess staff, they are usually matters of scant interest to the student who merely wants to get through his or her degree with a minimum of fuss.

Obviously the issues raised in Pearce's amusing play exist as real problems in a changing workplace environment. There have to be adequate mechanisms to address unfair labour practices if they still exist to prevent staff members unfairly taking out their woes on students.

Through this video, Pearce brings to life a feature that senior management, seeking to bring change, might not be fully aware of. The myriad of senseless and banal routines chiselled into 'the system' or 'the rules' in the days when apartheid ideology was mapping its future and its educational requirements, is exactly what the new organisational code of conduct and transformation agenda is trying to address today. Introducing a consultative management style rather than a threatening one is obviously a major challenge.

On a macro level, Unisa is the only South African university so far to become a signatory of the United Nations Global Contract (UNGC). Failure to observe human rights in the workplace, compliance with labour laws and allowing the continued functioning of the style of management described above is a direct contradiction of the UNGC's code of conduct. This provides an ongoing challenge to top management whenever their attention is drawn to misuse of power within the organisation at all levels of management.

The full-time staff of 5000 in 2004 is now around 4300. This has meant a considerable work load for the HR department, which finally under the directorship of Mala Singh showed, with the lengthy but ultimately successful wage talks with Nehawu in 2009, that it is working successfully within the new labour legislation.

The Labour Relations Act of 1995 is radically different from the previous Act. It places greater emphasis on negotiations and on the powers and functions of trade unions. In addition, Section 23 of the Constitution provides a long statement on constitutional labour relations. The Labour Relations Act, Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1998 will in due course have major implications for labour relations in institutions the size of Unisa. Although the union Nehawu was formally recognised as the sole body Unisa would negotiate with from 2007, it took until 2009 for the HR department, under Singh's capable leadership, to show that it is aware of the new legislation. The 2009 wage negotiation represents a breakthrough in change management. Prior to Singh's appointment the HR management took a hard-line approach to workers. In the case of a dispute there was little redress for individuals who fell foul of the management in their respective departments. Regardless of however unfairly the manager had behaved, he or she could be sure of protection from the HR department. That approach now fortunately appears to belong to the past.

By 2009 there appeared to be different criteria for the filling of employment equity positions than merely skin colour or gender. Certainly principal Pityana has demonstrated that he does not view employment equity in a simplistic way:

'Employment equity is designed to bring about the best possible skills, potential, knowledge and creativity which racial bigotry and gender exploitation obscured for so long. It also speaks to the necessity for any university to be able to draw from the best minds that society can offer and thereby to mirror both the society we live in but also the world we seek to create…

'We have appointed nobody here to be simply a *black* or a *woman.* It is not enough that you are black or a woman. We are all here because we have a duty to advance the academic project of the University whether we are black or white. If we were to create a culture of entitlement or exceptionalism, I believe that we would be short-changing our young black and women academics who, we hope, will remain in academia as a career choice and one of these days, as scholars of repute.' (Pityana 2009) [48]

At a staff assembly a few days later he used similar terms to speak about 'strategic value' of transformation, explaining that the transformation process was not 'just a matter of compliance'. It is really taking place, he said, because:

'[We] truly do believe that as a progressive and transforming institution we are enhancing learning and scholarship so that we do not become an institution that is simply rooted in the past without interrogation. It is, in fact, one that is reaching into the future in order to provide a better way in which scholarship can serve humanity.'[49]

Pityana used the same occasion to discuss the dispute with Nehawu. At that point a conciliation process was underway. 'It is very important for these processes to be honoured and to be respected, even when we disagree most,' he said. 'What really matters, ultimately, is the capacity of people who are rational beings to have in themselves the confidence to sit around the table in a civilized manner and debate and discuss issues as long as it takes to come to a resolution.'[50]

Possibly because of this belief in talking rationally towards resolution, Pityana could be accused of being hands off when it comes to a few hard issues within his otherwise remarkable and single-minded approach to the merger and transformation. Prior to the merger mandate, a set of NCHE documents guiding HE transformation post-apartheid had circulated in educational circles. These documents and almost all subsequent government documents relating to education, group transformation of education into three categories: 'participation' or access to education and the taking of appropriate measures to cut programmes from the cloth sought by students; 'responsiveness', which relates to the way educational institutions relate to broader societal issues; and finally 'governance', by which is meant not simply an educational institution's own 'government' but how that leadership participates in broader co-operative governance issues as a stakeholder.

[48] Barney Pityana, Statement to Senate, 25 March 2009.
[49] Barney Pityana, Address to staff in the ZK Matthews Hall, Muckleneuk Campus, 30 March 2009.
[50] Comment edited from Unisa Focus, April 2009: 1 'Unisa progressive and transforming'.

I would argue that within the perceptions of governance lie the 'hard decisions'. Unisa in January 2010 had not yet reached the historical point where it might rename all buildings that were named after Broederbonders—the details follow below. The detached observer would notice that new buildings have commendably been named for South African legends—most recently and in a memorable ceremony the Enoch Sontonga centre,[51] and a little earlier the ZK Matthews hall, the Eski'a Mphahlele registration halls, the Dr Miriam Makeba theatre[52]. Yet many of the older Unisa buildings have retained their original names.

A notable exception among the older buildings is the main administration building on the Muckleneuk campus named in the post-apartheid era for OR Tambo[53]. The two Muckleneuk campus buildings originally designed as academic were the Theo van Wijk building, launched by Unisa Prinicipal Theo van Wijk in his own lifetime and the AJH van der Walt building, named after the German-educated Broederbonder who started the External Studies Division in 1947. It was the second time AJH van der Walt was remembered through a Unisa building. An earlier building bearing his name existed in the Pretoria City Centre, also named while he was in office. The library retains the name of another Broederbonder, Samuel Pauw. Along with CAS van Vuuren, these buildings bearing the names of components of the radical white right nestle uneasily around the OR Tambo building.

As long as the apartheid names exist on the major buildings, so too does the memory of Unisa as an earlier key broker of both Christian national education and Bantu Education. Understandably it might be considered nitpicking and undiplomatic if the post-apartheid management of Unisa were to question the continued juggling of the pre and post apartheid identities in public. Clearly renaming buildings is a highly political decision to make—Pityana stated as much at the opening of the Enoch Sontonga building—and possibly it has been necessary to first tackle other priorities. The core business of the institution has indeed been the most pressing and it has been tackled. As with all organisations undergoing reviews, many practices have needed to be dissected before they can be fully dismantled and new more practical organisational models set in place. Pityana has spelt out his concerns about the 'old ways' of doing things to the Senate:

'It is my view that we were never likely to achieve any of our goals [debated at Council in July 2004 when the transformation plan was discussed] if we had doggedly stuck to the outmoded cultures and exploitative practices that characterised much of our institutional traditions: if we had remained stratified by race and gender, if we had maintained hierarchies of knowledge and ignored our African heritage, if we had shunned technology and innovation, and if we had

[51] On Sunnyside campus, named for the composer of the national anthem.
[52] ZK Matthews was the first black South African to get a degree and remains a hallowed figure for his intellectual contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle; Eski'a Mphahlele was one of South Africa's most famous writers and is considered a father of African Literature; Miriam Makeba or 'Mama Africa' was arguably South Africa's greatest female singer in the 1950s to 1970s.
[53] Oliver Reginald Tambo was the long-time leader of the African National Congress who oversaw the co-ordinated escalation of the anti-apartheid struggle on all tiers—military, diplomatic, political underground and open mass struggle—up until the time the apartheid regime had no alternative but negotiation. From 1990 he quietly prepared to take a back seat and allowed Nelson Mandela to take up the helm.

continued to pay lip service to our institutional character as an ODL and comprehensive university.' (Pityana 25 March 2009)

The principal went on to talk about going beyond change management to address the core business of the institution. He pointed out that Unisa's vision and mission refer to 'the African university *in the service of humanity*'. He said:

'Whilst we continue to build a more representative academic institution, we do well to also be alive to the fact that this University also has an historic mission: to advance learning, to mould young minds, to build the intellectual base of society, to offer society the yeast of critical thinkers and to train skilled personnel to lead in trust and to advance the needs of a modern technological society. We are now engaging with those core matters that will advance the academic reputation of this university: open distance learning, and technology, systems and processes necessary to achieve our strategic goals. Make no mistake, the objective of ODL is an expression of our transformation agenda.' (Op cit)

Although the transformation agenda attempts to tackle the behaviour of many of those people within those buildings still named after extreme right-wingers, what is painful to encounter in 2010 is the continued sense of oppression of individuals ruled over by some old-style managers who have somehow managed to survive. They may be few in number now, and on the way out through the age clauses.

Unisa might in the future benefit from an internal study to establish the exact mechanisms within the institution that prevent a moment of joyful acknowledgement by staff and students—that change is a reality! That not only has Unisa's academic reputation been greatly enhanced, and not only has Unisa met most of its operating plan objectives, but that it is well on the way to throwing off all vestiges of apartheid-style relations of abuse within its walls. The reason for the perception that Unisa is not experiencing the full-scale internal recognition of transformation and pride in the change processes might well lie in the failure by the communications structures to map the differences, rather than the similarites, with the past. For this reason one understands why Pityana has ordered the writing of the history of Unisa. A similar process is going on in many other institutions that have undergone or are undergoing transformation.

Chisholm and Morrow write (in relation to the Human Sciences Research Council):

'The last time there was a sustained debate about the HSRC was in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the imminent ending of apartheid raised questions about what to do with the institutions that had nurtured apartheid. The HSRC was in the direct firing line having given intellectual support not only to the apartheid project but also, in an earlier period, to the scientific racism that gave life to its policies. The HSRC, along with many other apartheid institutions, survived that period. Many of its former critics now work within it. The HSRC, now seeking a more independent and confident research role, has reorganised itself and its relationships with government and universities. But it does so in the shadow of a past that still shapes these

relationships in distinctive ways. Can another look at the history of the HSRC tell us anything about the challenges the institution faces today?' (Chisholm and Morrow 2007: 45)[54]

Chisholm and Morrow are primarily concerned at the way the HSRC has continued to behave like a government-identified body because it was initially funded by the Department of Education, like Unisa, and because of the policies still surrounding research that hamper independent research. However, they make the point that much of what restricts independence is the 'official knowledge' from the past prescribing present practices (Chisholm and Morrow 2007:64).

A history, they feel, would describe the genesis of 'official knowledge' within the organisation. Chisholm and Morrow have also suggested a 'study of thinking expressed in Afrikaans' relating to the HSRC (ibid) as well as the proper archiving of the institution's documents.

Their suspicion of 'official knowledge' recirculated from the past perhaps includes in some aspects the unhealthy organisational culture and the corporate blandness that I alluded to earlier.. Although institutions like the HSRC and Unisa have entered a post apartheid era, the roles of some of the most revered figures in the organisational history have never been deconstructed or looked at through modern lenses.

As mentioned earlier, Unisa's first attempts to produce correspondence modules in the late 1940s were widely criticised by correspondence colleges and contact universities at the time. Despite this, the apartheid government backed Unisa and gave it a monopoly over correspondence education in 1959. Instead of creating a framework for distance education, that government allowed Unisa itself to decide how it wanted to go about its business without any interference or criticism, including which colleges it would outsource work to.

Unisa's examinations system was implemented at the black universities in South Africa. The consequences of being the *only* allowed provider of a service in the absence of regulation, and of being in a position where all opposition could effectively be shut down on the whims of the institution providing that service was an unhealthy situation.[55]

The Christian national education project was arguably the single most undermining factor for the integrity of an institution experimenting with a system of correspondence tuition for non-resident students that would take another twenty years to implement. Unisa seemingly painlessly acclimatised to teaching students without the headaches of having them resident on campus, yet it never managed to throw off the perception that besides the 'no-name' education on offer, the bulk of senior staff members teaching it, with notable and delightful exceptions, were brought on

[54] Chisholm, Linda and Morrow Seán (2007), Government, universities and the HSRC: a perspective on the past and present in *Transformations* 63 (2007) 45- 67.

[55] See Muff Andersson (2009) Shifting HE identities: Unisa's African future from an apartheid past. Paper presented in the panel discussion, The Scourge of Bantu Education, 30 September 2009 University of the Witwatersrand.

board because of their impeccable far-right credentials, at least as far as the Broederbond and National Party agenda went.

What has never been publically or heartily scrutinised within Unisa until the 2004-2009 transformation initiative, except by Albert Grundlingh, was the level of 'reactive' scholarship at the institution in the apartheid era. He writes:

'Looking at the Unisa History Department in retrospect, one is struck by the fact that although it was the largest History department in the country, on the whole it did not assume a leading role in historiographical renewal; its responses were more reactive than proactive.' (Grundlingh 2006: 134)

Grundlingh discusses a style of academic writing that developed in Afrikaner intellectual circles and universities that was called 'objective-scientific' history and linked to the idea of the 'true Afrikaner'. It is developed, clearly, from Nazi-type approaches to 'Christian democracy', understood in South Africa as Christian national education, adapted to the work of ethnic mobilization that underpinned Nationalist Party ideology. As I understand Grundlingh's analysis (Grundlingh 1991), the style of history glorified 'die vaderland' and privileged tellings by 'die volk'. It has to be looked at within various narrative styles and theoretical models simultaneously existing with concepts of lehrfreiheit and lernfreiheit (teacher and learner 'freedom') in pre-war Germany exported to and adapted in South Africa during the formative years of Afrikaner nationalism and the Broederbond.

Grundlingh (1991) also writes about a triumvirate of Afrikaner nationalists and broederbonders pushing this style of writing and analysis. One of these is the arch Broeder, HB Thom, who headed up the so-called 'objective-scientific' historical approach. Thom was in charge of the Stellenbosch history department from 1937-1954 and became the rector at Stellenbosch, which was considered the centre of Afrikaans nationalist intellectual thought. Thom was the mentor of the Great Trek specialist, CFJ Muller, who ran Unisa's history department for 33 years.

Grundlingh's piece explains the real difficulties of moving towards a scholarship that is not biased in favour of the thinking of either previously external or internal colonizing forces but is instead African, relevant and innovative. Grundlingh's words resonate with the Chisholm and Morrow suggestion that works written in Afrikaans about their institution, the HSRC, be studied (Chisholm and Morrow 2007:64). This is to establish the way the institution was understood by those working there in the apartheid era, and to challenge certain presumptions about attitudes to the institution that have continued from the past into the present, in order to rebrand and reposition it as a developmental institution for the future.

I would like to repeat my suggestion from earlier that universities and HE institutions with an apartheid part might consider adopting a developmental constitution through which to navigate their relationship with the state in order to avoid having to be put into entirely new positions like chess pieces every time a new education minister takes over. In the absence of being able to meet its own targets, the national education ministry in 2009 expanded to attend to core areas and facilitate decision making.

There are now two national ministers, one to deal with basic education and one to deal with higher education. There are also numerous documents mapping the problem areas of higher education including a practical 10-point education plan on offer courtesy of the Development Bank (Bloch 2009). Blade Nzimande, the higher education minister, is promising to pull many rabbits out of hats to make higher education more accessible, including a plan to boost the teacher training college system.

But one year after his appointment he remained silent on some aspects of his portfolio. Unisa, in 2009, delivered what the minister might read as a 'post-it' about the need to provide an adequate legislative framework for a functioning comprehensive. The event was one of those described by Makhanya in the end-of-year address:

'[Unisa] hosted a National Conference on Comprehensiveness in June where we shared with other higher education instructions our post-merger experiences. One of the challenges highlighted by the Unisa's Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Barney Pityana, and the Director Academic Planning at the University of Johannesburg, Ms Trish Gibbon, was the need for legislative frameworks to assist comprehensive institutions in operating effectively. The engagement has created a valuable discussion platform between the various institutions and we will be looking at strategies to address the challenges and the opportunities that were presented in early 2010.'

Meanwhile there is still a crisis in education at both school and tertiary level. Key problems remain teachers' training and pay, the cost of education for students, as well as shortages of books at all levels. Nzimande has suggested that education costs should be worked out according to the incomes of caregivers who pay student fees. 'There is no reason why rich people should not pay for education,' he said in an interview on Radio 702 in 2009. This idea of taking from each according to their income and of redistributing resources to those with little or nothing has been an ongoing theme within the education sector.

These ideas are still up for discussion. Beyond the national minister's ideas there are ideas shaped within bodies such as the African Council on Distance Education (ACDE), the AU and even the annual university think tank at Davos that might or might not change Unisa's funding profile, shape and even identity in the future. Part of understanding the link between one's past history and current identity in a contested collectivity lies in the process of exploring rituals and symbolic elements that survive, year after year, and then too what is added to the old—the new logos, representative imagery and catch lines. Somewhere between the texts brought out by an institution, the words spoken and the images and rituals on display, we are able to find out, in Warner's words,

'Who are we? How do we feel about ourselves? Why are we what we are?' (Warner 1976:371).

Beyond the written words that lie in the archives, beyond the discussions with those with some oral memory of particular epochs, identity lies in regular eventing programmes: the graduation ceremonies, festivals or similar annual events that reveal something of the collective identity the institution has embraced, from within. We see constant tweaking and refining of the institution's corporate identity as it shifts from white identified and led university run on strict hierarchical

lines, to a realised national body under consultative black leadership, thence to an imagined non-racial intercontinental and global body. As scholarship produces new ideas and frontiers of knowledge, so too does the identity of an institution expounding these ideas. Identity shifts, changes shape. The shifting identity circa 2009 is well captured by pro-vice chancellor Mandla Makhanya:

'Unisa thus constructs itself as an African and global university rather than simply a national institution, drawing on a network of learning centres both inside South Africa and beyond its borders. It is profoundly committed to learner-centredness and community engagement in tandem with the other characteristics that are embedded in the notion of comprehensiveness in higher education.' (Unisawise Spring 2008: 7)

Literature Review

The expectation that tertiary institutions would play a key role in the political, economic and cultural reconstruction of South Africa was a central assumption of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) appointed in 1995.

This commission was mandated to advise the first education minister on the restructuring of higher education. Exactly how higher education (HE) plays a role in societal transformation is not yet a settled matter. As Thiven Reddy points out:

'At one end of this spectrum is the narrow conception reducing HE to the role of responding to the needs and demands of the economy. At the other is the humanist emphasis expecting universities to empower individuals to assume the identities of active agents of a democratic society.' (Reddy 2004: 35)[56]

The National Qualifications Framework, the brainchild of the NCHE, is the conceptual certification system through which the South African government will ultimately recognise educational qualifications from primary to tertiary levels.

After a year of consulting within the sector and overseeing the production of Green and White Paper processes, the Ministry of Education produced the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, which became enacted as the Higher Education Act 9 (No 101 of 1997). The 1997 Act stipulated the areas in which higher education institutions should collaborate with the state. Higher education should:

- Meet the lifelong learning needs and aspirations of individuals through developing their intellectual abilities and aptitudes;
- Address the development needs of society by locating the labour market within a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society;
- Contribute to socialisation of 'enlightened, responsible and constructively critical' citizens;

[56] Thiven Reddy (2004). Higher education and social transformation: South African case study. Cape Town: Council on Higher Education.

- Contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge.

The restructuring of higher education was intended 'to contribute towards reconstruction and development' (Reddy 2004: 34); 'ironically just when the RDP was about to be replaced.' (Reddy 2004: 37) He says:

'The universities and technikons were to be transformed so that they addressed inherited inequalities, inefficiencies, faced up to new socio-economic and cultural challenges including the 'changing skill and knowledge requirements for improved productivity and innovation, and the needs associated with the building of a new citizenry.' (Reddy 2004: 35) By March 2001 the National Plan had six major points (Table 1):

Table 1.

National Education Plan	**March 2001**
Goal	**Strategic objectives/outcomes**
Provide full range of advanced educational opportunities for growing population without discrimination	Produce graduates with skills and competencies to meet SA's needs
Promote equity of access, fair chances for success and 'advance redress' for past equalities	Reflect SA's demographic realities in student and staff composition; ensure graduates' race and gender profiles match student enrolments
Diversify missions and programme mix to meet national and regional needs	Ensure diversity through mission and programme differentiation
Secure and advance high-level research capacity to ensure intellectual enquiry and application for technological improvement and social development	Sustain research strengths and promote research required to meet national development needs and build competitive capabilities
Build new institutional and organisational identities and cultures in co-ordinated national HE system	Foster collaboration at regional level and restructure the institutional landscape.

- Adapted from CHE Annual Report (2000-2001:6

The Minister of Education Kader Asmal produced the National Plan for Higher Education in 2001. This followed an extensive debate around access to higher education begun earlier when the White Paper on Education was doing its rounds.

In analysing the role of universities in transformation, Reddy identifies two discourses of social transformation. The first, which he calls 'the realist-instrumentalist paradigm' is framed within 'a new education lexicon, part state-speak, part populist and part populist':

'The contours of the first emphasises quantitative, procedural changes to the 'HE system', the need for the 'system' to be efficiently regulated and co-ordinated by the state, [and] be more responsive to the real challenges posed by globalisation by creating a skilled workforce for the so-called 'knowledge society'.' (Reddy 2004: 7)

The second is inspired by educational demands contained within the anti-apartheid struggle and as such is a version of 'people's education', attainment of which is an indicator for the transformation of society as a whole:

'The priority of the democratic state should be to substantively redistribute resources, to assign a critical role to universities in producing educated, well-rounded, Dewey-type citizens and constantly reiterate the empowering quality for those historically marginalised.' (Reddy 2004:7)

From the tone in Unisa's in-house journals and management documents, Unisa's transformation is unquestionably modelled on the second of Reddy's paradigms although also incorporating elements of the first. In the words of Unisa's Council chairperson Matthews Phosa:

'Coming from a deeply fragmented dispensation which had deliberately sidelined generations of its own people, this new plan would not only have to redress past imbalances, but ensure that South Africa could provide world-class education to its people, within the context of a global economy.' (Phosa undated)[57]

Unisa's Principal and Vice Chancellor Barney Pityana similarly contextualises the transformation of the university within the greater changes in South Africa, the establishment of a national non-racial democracy in 1994 and new legislation enabling change within educational institutions. In Pityana's words:

'The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) set out an ambitious agenda for the restructuring of higher education in South Africa through a highly contested and quite fraught process of policy development… These past five years have borne witness to a remarkable transition. Armed only with a set of guidelines and a determination and commitment to succeed, Unisa's Executive Management have led this mega-institution through what is widely acknowledged as one of the most successful mergers in Higher Education. In 2009, five years on, the only enduring characteristic of the former Unisa is its historic edifice on the Tshwane landscape—and even that is undergoing a dramatic change.' (Pityana circa 2008)[58]

To reposition itself as an independent non-governmental organisation working within a developmental, human rights-oriented Constitution and specific laws covering Higher Education, Unisa has identified the need to strengthen its civil society hand and to increase its accessibility to its publics in service provision. Its core services are distance education and all that goes with it, such as the production of study material, increased student support, better customer care and the provision of regional centres at which students can attend seminars and lectures. Unisa has adopted an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) model as its business plan. ODL is:

'A way of providing learning opportunities that is characterised by the separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or both time and place; learning that is certified in some way by an institution or agency; the use of a variety of media including print and electronic; two-way

[57] Cited in Unisa (undated). A six-month merger review of the new comprehensive University of South Africa, page 6.
[58] Barney Pityana (circa 2008). Message from the Vice Chancellor in Unisa Five Years Transformation 2004-2008: 7

communications that allow learners and tutors to interact; the possibility of occasional face-to-face meetings; and a specialised division of labour in the production and delivery of courses.' (This is the Commonwealth of Learning's definition of ODL, cited in Jeanette Botha 2009)[59]

Unisa's ODL logo, 'Learn without limits' encapsulates several aspects of the ODL programme that distinguish it from the older correspondence-learning model. The first component of the new approach is 'open access'. Beyond the removal of geographical barriers that frequently stand in the way of learning, students may access alternative admission routes and can study wherever they are, in their own time, choose whether they would prefer their study material in electronic or printed form and pick the type of academic support they need from the range of support services on offer. 'Learn without limits' is an appealing logo for an HE institution attempting to transform itself into a developmental distance university.

There are many definitions of a 'developmental university'. It can be a university committed to working with individuals, groups and organisations to find sustainable ways to deliver education that meets the needs of the communities within the sphere of its influence. It can also refer to a university that participates in broader social and economic processes to rectify past injustices and prepare communities for the future.

Increasingly, University-Industry linkages (UILs) are being seen as one of the ways of implementing a developmental agenda. UILs are viewed as a way in which universities and industry creates public service programmes, now favoured by law. For universities, they represent a smart economical move so that aspects of what we call 'learning' is linked to real projects. We have already experienced the disaster of Bantu Education where black people were firstly denied education in the skills required for the expansion of the South African economy, and later as the economy went into crisis, were virtually marched into cram colleges and technikons. UILs could be seen as a response to that repulsive historical legacy but should not be seen as the only solution. A Latin American study into this has suggested that:

'Universities and PRI[60] linkages with the industry should not be considered a developmental goal in itself, rather under certain conditions it may be an useful tool for improving the NIS. There are other actors besides firms who could become partners of universities and PRI to solve key needs in the society.' (Orozco et al, 2009)[61]

A team of researchers working in China, India, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia[62] has come up with a formula to explain the expanding mandates expected of developmental universities:

[59] Jeanette Botha (2009). Contextualising distance education in the higher education environment and the role of the principal's office. Presentation to Young Academics, Unisa, 23 March and 6 August 2009.
[60] Public responsibility initiatives.
[61] Jeffrey Orozco, Valeria Arza, Arturo Torres and Eduardo Albuquerque (2009) Interactions between Universities and Firms: searching for paths to support the changing role of Universities in the South. HSRC Presentation, Cape Town, 5 August 2009.

[62] Keun Lee et al (2009) UILs (University-Industry Linkages) for Economic Catch-up in Asia. Presentation at the HSRC seminar, the changing role of the developmental university in the south, 5 August 2009. The Team described

Developmental Universities = teaching + research + entrepreneurial

+ Social servicing (ideological) [&] (Societal: to tackle knowledge divide) > new contribution, vs. Western concepts (Keun Lee et al)

I like this formulation because it very much applies to everything Unisa aspires to:

Teaching, research, entrepreneurial activities, working in the interests of the broader society to tackle the knowledge divide and to challenge dominant western concepts with new contributions—these surely capture Unisa's aims. And in addition, using technology effectively to ensure an efficient ODL model that can reach masses of people.

Conceptually it would be worthwhile, possibly in a later visioning exercise, for Unisa to consider the sort of relationship it wants to have with the state and with African governments regardless of funding arrangements. Reddy writes that:

'Higher education institutions are located in the sphere of civil society and due to the the nature of the transition[63] were left in relatively strong positions in relation to the state to either help reproduce inherited social relations or to help change them, perhaps somewhat more slowly than the state and the majority of South Africans who participated in the struggle against apartheid wished. (Reddy 2004: 34)

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as 'Lee Keun et al' consists of Keun Lee, Director of the Centre for Economic Catch-up at the East Asia Institute, KOREA.
Korea Team: Keun Lee (Seoul National University) and Hyundai Cho (STEPI, Korea); China Team: Guisheng Wu and Yi Wang (Tsinghua Univ. China) and J-H. Eun (Kookmin Univ. Korea); India Team: K.J Joseph (Centre for Development Studies, India); Malaysia Team: Rajah (Malay University); Thailand Team: Intarakumnerd (NSTDA) and Daniel Schiller.

[63] Reddy theorises South African democratic independence as a 'transplacement' transition, by which he means, following SP Huntington's definition, that both regime elites and opposition elites together determine the collapse of the old regime. Transplacement thus differs from Transformation, in which those in power play the decisive role, and Replacement, when the opposition overturns the regime.

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