Constructing engagement between a provincial government and regional consortium of HEIs in South Africa

IMHE/OECD VALENCIA, SPAIN
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National Policies

- National Plan for Higher Education (2001): tightened steering mechanisms to enhance responsiveness and equity
- New Quality Assurance regime: linked quality to transformation (personal, value for money, social justice)
Higher Education is a national competence

Cape Higher Education Consortium

- Regional consortia established to promote collaboration and regional planning
- Overtaken by process of reconfiguring apartheid higher education landscape so only 2 surviving
- CHEC: 4 institutions (3 traditional, 1 University of Technology, and recently national partner)
- Compact: promote socio-economic development in the Western Cape and engagement in the province and awareness of higher education as an asset in development

HE Participation rates by race and selected home languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th># in age interval 20-24 yrs (t)</th>
<th>HE enrolment (t)</th>
<th>Participation rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>3544656</td>
<td>360866</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured (Tvl)</td>
<td>361664</td>
<td>33541</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>391080</td>
<td>12568</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/</td>
<td>72076</td>
<td>20668</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>102244</td>
<td>43648</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Tvl)</td>
<td>264003</td>
<td>17401</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>176773</td>
<td>91663</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/</td>
<td>118760</td>
<td>54549</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4210431</td>
<td>630059</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
1. Census 2001
2. Education Statistics in SA at a glance 2001, Department of Education.
3. Gross participation rate, viz all enrolments divided by number in age cohort 20-24
Institutional interpretations of 3rd role

- Address 3rd role in their missions and strategic plans but have different interpretations of this role and structures
  1. Social responsiveness i.e engagement with development needs at national, provincial or local levels (through scholarship and voluntary community service)
  2. Community Interaction Policy & Implementation Plan – focuses on knowledge-based interactions & partnerships
  3. Industry and Community Focus
     - Work-integrated Learning and Service Learning
  4. Students-in-communities academic departure point through: Service learning & Community-based Education cultivates sense of civic engagement;
  5. Multiple structures playing different roles, specific Division, specific or distributed Executive accountability
  6. At various points with regard to the development of enabling policy environment
  7. All include in performance and institutional reviews (but in different ways)
  8. Ongoing debate about 3rd role

Provincial context

- Western Cape (1 of 9 provinces)
- About 4.5 million – second biggest economic region
- Skills gaps and mismatches
  - 41% broad unemployment (2004)
  - 52% of 15-24 year olds unable to find work (2004)
  - 52% of learners who enter in Gr 1 complete Grade 12 (huge drop outs and poor success rates)
  - 30% jobs in informal sector
- Huge backlogs with regard to access to infrastructure
  - (11.2% no electricity, 15.6% no piped water on site, 12.5% no flush toilets)
- 23% functional illiteracy
- Widening inequality in relation to income along racial lines

Moving from institutional to regional engagement

- Western Cape potential to become learning region and engine for economic growth, but HE marginalised from provincial policy and planning processes e.g. Human Resources Development Strategy
- CHEC and Premier meet
- Joint task team drafts a Prospectus for a Summit between HE and the Province
- Provincial Ministers and Vice-Chancellors approve Prospectus
- Summit convened in October 2006 (Premier and cabinet, senior politicians, top echelons of bureaucracy, senior leadership in HEIs)
- Goals: better alignment between supply of graduates and demand, establish strategic partnerships to support growth and development
- Summit presentations designed to foster debate about the role of higher education and the development strategies of the province (not narrow instrumentalism but recognition of accountability of public HEIs)
- Shared information about provincial plans and priorities and higher education educational offerings and research expertise

Building a Structured Relationship

- Joint task team designs terms of reference (short, medium and long term initiatives)
- Building trust through short term projects whilst laying the basis for longer term planning
- Information sharing e.g. schooling information and HE long term plans
- Identified areas for collaborative projects (improving retention and equity in HE, Economic Growth sectors, social cohesion, and Continuing Professional Development)
Challenges

- Political tensions in the province slow down prioritisation process
- Getting academics on board
- Very little institutional penetration of CHEC processes
- Building commitment amongst busy senior managers
- Showing results/benefits
- Multiple demands on academics and lack of recognition for social responsiveness
- Promoting awareness of assets of HE within the province
- Lack of resources (add on to jobs)
- Tensions arising from being a national competency

Impact

- Too soon to measure
- Laying foundations for collaboration
- Better understanding of opportunities, problems and priorities (both parties)
- New networks are emerging e.g. Schools Recovery Plan
- Will be organising a follow up seminar to evaluate progress in November

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