The idea of a South African university and implications for knowledge production

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Abstract

This article looks at knowledge production in South African higher education (HE) from the point of view of how a given HE institution sees itself within the broader context of 'the idea of a university'. Within the context of the transformation agenda of HE in South Africa, three institutional types have emerged: the 'unqualified' university; the comprehensive university; and the university of technology. However, at this point, it appears as if each of these institutional types seeks to do what every other one is trying to do. It is against the apparent absence of clarity in the philosophical underpinnings of these institutional types that this article reflects on what could conceptually be the academic and professional focus of each and whether or not this is, in fact, possible. In this regard, it is hoped and envisaged that this article will contribute towards clarifying the singular and collective contribu tions, in knowledge production, of the HE institutions in the country. Accordingly, the article posits that each institutional type should determine the kind of knowledge production that society can expect from it.

INTRODUCTION

In order to characterise and contextualise a 'South African' university, it is important to briefly reflect on a few basic considerations of the education reform movement in South Africa since the early 1990's.

The espousal of outcomes-based education (OBE) by South Africa's Ministry of Education to apply to all levels of the education system has presented a number of major challenges. The term 'outcomes' has not only been used to refer to outcome statements which describe what students should learn and/or be able to do – including explicit descriptions of how students are expected to demonstrate that they have achieved such pre-specified learning outcomes and competencies, but it also 'relates to broader issues including the relationship between outcomes of higher education and the aspirations of the parents, the labour market, industry and the state in relation to accountability, autonomy and control' (Ntshoe 1999, 82).

Philosophical foundations of the South African curriculum

Presently, it is difficult, if not impossible, to categorically state what the

philosophical foundations of the South African education system, as a whole, are – and from there the philosophical foundations of the country's curriculum innovation. Typically, the philosophical foundations of the education system would be abstracted from the country's espoused political ideology – of which South Africa presently does not seem to have any in an explicit way. In a situation of mixed economic, political and ideological orientations and mixed social orders (typified by the co-existence of socialism, communism, maxism and capitalism in the country) the education system also inevitably exhibits similar characteristics. In the present circumstances, therefore, one can only indirectly dysipher what the philosophical foundations of the education system are from the various government documents published since the advent of democracy in the country.

The closest one gets to the philosophical foundations of HE in South Africa is that it should address 'the imbalances of the previous fragmented higher education system in terms of access, equity, funding, resources and quality' (Fourie and Hay 2000, 196) and thereby achieve 'a balance between the 'street value' of qualifications and their impact on the twin aims of social and economic growth' (HSRC 1995, 14 in Fourie and Hay ibid).

Gultig (2000, 41) gives a somewhat expanded version of the above points as constituting the main goals of HE transformation in South Africa:

- Increasing participation, particularly with regard to students from historically maginalised groups in terms of race and gender – the questions of redress and equity
- Being more responsive to societal interests and needs, as well as Africanising institutional cultures and curriculum content
- A greater emphasis on career-orientated qualifications and, in particular, a growth in science, engineering and technology graduates
- A more flexible teaching and qualification system – including learning and teaching approaches with multiple entry and exit points; a flexible credit system and diverse instructional delivery modes
- Expanding post-graduate enrolments to address high level skills needed locally, nationally, regionally and globaly.

The government has also been worried about what it perceives as a decline in both the quality and quantity of quality basic and applied research output over the past decade, or so. However, there has been no explicit explanation of the type of quality research the government would like to see – particularly in view of the last bullet above which positions postgraduate work within the context of addressing 'high level skills needed locally, nationally, regionally and globaly', rather than having capabilities to advance knowledge and research through high level research.

The pedagogical foundations

At the HE level in South Africa, the need for systemic change towards a unified system with an equitable distribution of access – overshadowed demands for curriculum reforms, per se (Breier 2001, ix). Instead, the urgency was placed on creating a unified HE sector, although, as Breier (2001, ix) further observes, the difference in the emphasis on different aspects of what needed to be 'transformed' at the school vis-à-vis HE levels 'was not entirely related to questions of need'.

On the question of pedagogical foundations, the government advocated – through the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the OBE approach as the pedagogical framework for the entire education system. In the eyes of government, OBE is the vehicle through which the country's educational reforms are meant to be achieved.

The main pedagogical attributes of OBE are:

- To promote active learning (physically and mentally)
- Learners to be assessed on an on-going basis
- To promote development of critical thinking, reasoning, reflection and action
- To promote integration of knowledge (of education and training)
- Learning to be made relevant and connected to real life situations
- Learning to be learner-centred; teacher to function as facilitator (use of group work, team work and other active learning approaches emphasized)
- Learning programmes to serve as guides that allow teachers to be innovative and creative in planning lessons and other learning activities
- Learners to be afforded an opportunity to take responsibility for their learning; and should be motivated by constant feedback and affirmation of their worth
- Emphasis to be placed on outcomes in terms of what the learner becomes and understands
- Curriculum implementation should allow for flexible time frames which provide for learners to work at their own pace
- Curriculum implementation should allow for inputs from the wider community.

The compelling emphasis on the importance of outcomes, coupled with the whole notion of recognition of prior learning (RPL), initially gave the impression to education practitioners that the quality of the process of learning itself was of little consequence to SAQA and the Ministry of Education, as long as an individual could 'demonstrate' when assessed that s/he possessed certain desired educational outcomes. This, of course, was deceptive in that the CHE came up with prescriptions regarding the quality of the process. In this regard, both SAQA and the CHE gave out templates to HE institutions for the purposes of registration of qualifications on the NQF and accreditation by the CHE, in terms of which unless the quality of the process could be proven with respect to instructional resources, adequacy and appropriateness of the staff's qualifications, possession of financial resources, facilities and adequate infrastructure, specified content, etc. a

particular institution would not be allowed to be registered as a provider of the proposed qualification. These are issues related to the process and inputs which, in terms of RPL, one cannot ascertain and guarantee as having been complied with.

In the history of curriculum development, the following perspectives, in terms of emphasis, may be cited: an inputs perspective; a process perspective; and an output/outcomes perspective. The inputs perspective was emphasised in curricula that were developed in the 1950's and 1960's. However, it was soon realised that even where all the physical, financial and material requirements had been provided to schools, the desired implementation did not necessarily occur. This led to the emphasis on the process of curriculum development and implementation coupled with notions of learner-centredness in instructional delivery. On the part of the curriculum reforms in South Africa, the espoused emphasis is on the outcomes – hence, the notion of OBE.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that there is a danger of over-emphasizing the inputs and processes of teaching and learning, at the expense of the substance/knowledge to be learned. Living in the knowledge society, it is important that the teaching/learning inputs and processes adequately cover the conceptual development of the requisite knowledge and understanding at every level of education. Such knowledge and understanding may be 'discovered' or 'conceptualised' by the learner/student, or it may also be effectively and efficiently communicated/demostrated/mediated by competent educational practitioners in ways which may be authentic from the point of view of the learners/students. An over-kill on the process could lead to shallow, superficial and/or cursory learning not useful for any purpose – including the academic purpose.

Sociological foundations

The educational reforms in South Africa seem to rest on three sociological foundations:

- Promoting diversity of access routes sensitive to different educational (not only schooling) backgrounds of individuals, as well as providing for different types of curricula and qualifications – thereby addressing issues of access, redress and equity
- Getting involved with communities outside the physical boundaries of HE institutions – thereby not only showing sensitivity to issues of access, redress and equity, but also ensure relevance and appropriateness of qualifications.
- Defining and meeting key social relations demanded by the 'new' educational instructional delivery modes – after all, educational transformation refers to actual role performance changes in the processes of 'teaching' and learning. In this regard, the government encourages that education takes place at various sites – and in formal, non-formal and even informal settings; in and out of school environments.

What is noteworthy here are the social relations implications of these three requirements. At the planning and implementation levels, the curriculum must integrate these elements into the curricular materials and activities. Quite importantly, all the major role players in the implementation of the reforms in South Africa (i.e. educators, learners, education officials and school administrators) should understand, learn and be able to perform their espoused roles within the reforms. This is a critical aspect of any educational reforms. If there is no role performance change, there is no educational reform taking place.

Another sociological feature of the educational reforms is that the environment, at large, could be seen as the 'classroom'. This embraces the notion of multi-delivery sites and methodologies. This, in iteself, defines the social and sociological relations which need to be put in place, i.e. a very active inter-relationship between the learning and real-world environments – an integrated approach to learning and teaching.

THE ESSENCE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

According to Lowe (not dated), Plato envisioned the purposes of education as being (a) vocational and technical – committed to achieving a country's economic goals through skills development and programmes of study specifically tailored to the needs of commerce and industry; (b) professional and managerial – producing professionals and managers to run administrative systems of government – hence, mainly holding the 'political and ideological' power needed to run a country, usually in support and preservation of the status quo; and (c) philosophical – primarily seeking to pursue 'knowledge for its own sake', and does not concern itself with the immediate utilisation or application of such knowledge, and seeking to develop the individual's mind (hence liberal) so that s/he can think for her/himself – be it in the arts or sciences. Lowe (ibid) characterises these purposes as, respectively, being functional, ideological and philosophical.

In terms of HE, the extension of this thinking has led to the notion of universities as constituting four models, namely: the Athens, Berlin, New York and Calcutta models (Botha 2004). In line with Plato's classification of educational purposes, the primary focus of the Athens model university is to pursue knowledge for its own sake; that of the Berlin model is to champion the integration of research and teaching, within an environment of academic freedom. The New York model, on the other hand, has been characterised as entrepreneurial and driven by market forces, that is, university qualification must have a market-related value. The fourth category, that is, the Calcutta model, emphasises the relevance of university education to real life societal problems which the university must address and solve.

From the above, it is evident that it is largely in the way that knowledge may be 'used' that the purpose of education is defined, and which determines the differentiation in the type of 'university' we want to build – and hence, the types of knowledge production that takes place within a given education institution. Newman (1998, 107) makes this point in the following way:

> There are two ways of using Knowledge, and in matter of fact those who use it in one way are not likely to use it in the other, or at least in a very limited measure. You see, then, here are two methods of Education; the end of the one is to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external.

Looking at trends in Europe over the past several decades Trow (1984) characterises HE institutional types in Europe (since the second world war) as falling under three categories: (a) pre-war universities; (b) new post-war universities; and (c) the non-university institutions of higher education, also referred to as post secondary institutions (PSIs) of higher education. In terms of this classification, pre-war universities were places where much of the top scientific research was carried out; the new post-war universities were involved mainly in technical research – usually applied and orientated to regional needs; and the PSIs were mainly teaching and market orientated. Clearly, as will be seen later in this article, there are very close parallels between the reported developments in Europe and what has happened in South Africa. Certainly, European PSIs bear a very close resemblance to colleges (e.g. nursing, education and agricultural) as well as the technikons (now universities of technology). Like in the case of the PSIs, these South African post secondary education institutions were seen as non-university institutions, and were, like in Europe, 'institutions founded by the national governments primarily to satisfy the educational demand and so, originally, they did not have any research orientation' (Geuna 1995, 6).

Commenting on Trow's classification of European HE institutions, Geuna (1995, 6) observes that although postgraduate students represent a small proportion of all students in most HE institutions, the pre-war and new post-war universities, as opposed to PSIs, still have 'a monopoly position' with regard to status within the HE sector. According to Geuna, this could be the case because 'the pre-war universities were already the place where research was carried out, and thus, due to the accumulated capabilities, they were the most suited place to develop scientific research' (ibid).

Relating this brief overview of university education elsewhere, and also considering the espoused goals and purposes of HE in South Africa outlined above, one may say that the underlying philosophy of HE transformation in the country is something akin to technocratic liberalism, with emphasis on the utility of knowledge, skills and qualifications (Lungwangwa July 23 2002, personal communication). Traditionally, liberal education aimed to give an individual a 'liberating experience so that s/he would find her/his bearing in society, and be able to contribute towards the shaping of that society' (Lungwangwa ibid). In line with this, the thrust of education within the philosophy of technocratic liberalism is on developing the individual with regard to functional knowledge, skills, careers, business-related value systems and entrepreneurship – to enable her/him to effectively participate in, and adjust to, the ever-changing demands of an economy

which is in a state of transition. In this regard, the central purpose of South African higher education appears to revolve around the notion of liberating the individual from unemployment by being imbued with specific job and real-world related skills by the time of graduation. Such skills may be used in specific job situations and/or in an entrepreneurial way through self employment. This philosophy should then guide and direct curriculum planning and implementation of HE in the country. The implication of this is that the quality of education programmes should also be defined in terms of which they achieve, or at least address, these general purposes of higher education.

Another dimension to this discussion is that since the early 2000's, most HE institutions in South Africa have been affected, directly or indirectly, by institutional mergers and incorporations. During institutional mergers and incorporations, a number of critical issues are addressed, and typically, the challenges of institutional transformation take unprecedented proportions with regard to both the number of issues that need to be addressed and also the depth of discussions required to settle even what would ordinarily be 'small matters'. The mergers and incorporations have necessitated the crafting of new institutional Visions and Missions, or at the least reviewing the old ones with a view to bringing them in line with the latest contextual imperatives. It is, therefore, crucial that during institutional mergers and incorporations, enough time is set aside for conceptualizing and describing the kind of new institution that is desired. Unfortunately, because these institutional mergers and incorporations have been forced on institutions by government, this has brought about a myriad of operational problems and job security issues of such proportions that the real academic debate on the essence of the new institutions is oftentimes relegated to the supplementary agenda of the institutions' priority lists. Consequently, this has resulted in the tendency to effect a mechanistic amalgamation of entities deemed to be similar and a disaggregation of those that need to be placed in different pockets of the new institution. Usually the criteria for doing so have been based on the expediency of getting the pain of a merger accomplished within reasonable timeframes so that things can continue as before. In this regard, the dominant partner in the merger often determines the ultimate image, complexion, culture and ethos of the resulting institution.

Owing to all these contextual issues, the 'South African' university has become a very complex organic entity for which to formulate vision and mission statements that are both meaningful and directive. Partly, this difficulty arises out of the diversity of conceptual elements regarding what a university is all about; the tension brought about by government expectations and prescriptions (as already explained), as well as the imminent threat (perceived or real) to institutions' continued survival through financial sanctions, should they not be seen to be towing the line; different traditions and practices not only across different institutions and institutional types, but also even within the same institution. In this vein, although Stone (2000, 1) makes the following point with reference to the University of Chicago, it is also

applicable to the present-day South African context – particularly with regard to reconciling different traditions and re-conceptualising the vital elements constituting a university during the time of a merger or incorporation.

> I have experienced first-hand the stunning breadth and diversity of our University. The ways we teach, the ways we define research, the ways we articulate our goals for students vary significantly from Physics to Music, from Economics to Ecology and Evolution, from Mathematics to the Graduate School of Business, and from the School of Social Service Administration to the Department of Surgery. What our faculty and students actually do with their time varies in remarkable ways.

With regard to the above classifications of models of universities, this suggests that the South African university's primary function canNOT be to pursue knowledge purely for its own sake – considering the philosophical, pedagogic and sociological foundations reviewed above. Accordingly, liberalisation of the mind, for its own sake, would not make a legitimate purpose of any programme of study at any university in South Africa. Rather, it is liberalisation from unemployment and poverty (on account of lack of job-related skills and entrepreneurship), as well as the removal of elitist mindsets from the world outlooks of the graduates, which are of paramount importance. In particular, the mindset issue is very important, given the emphasis on community service and relevance of qualifications to the world of work. This has resulted in almost all South African HE institutions formulating Vision and Mission statements which speak to all the above four models of a university – somewhat in line with the following observation by Gray (2001, 8):

> The new university is seen as a kind of great experiment and one in which there need be no conflict between the scientific and the humanistic, knowledge pursued for its own sake and applied knowledge, the world of the intellect and the world at large. The intellectual has priority over the utilitarian, but they are seen in harmony.

Perhaps this is the idea of the South African University. However, as already enunciated above, the philosophical and sociological foundations of the education reforms in South Africa point to such a broad-based mandate that the classical classification of universities cannot singularly be applied to the 'South African University'. Whatever the case, however, it is important that the above philosophical and sociological foundations are clearly demarcated, understood and applied in arriving at the type of knowledge, skills and attitudes a particular higher education institution seeks to pursue. It would be unrealistic for any one institution to try to be the best Athens-type university, the best Berlin-type university, the best New Yorker university and the best Calcutta-type university.

Following the National Plan for Higher Education (Ministry of Education 2001), as well as other subsequent pronouncements, the following three types of HE institutions have emerged in the country, (a) University (unqualified), (b) Comprehensive University and (c) University of Technology. The assumptions

appear to be that the (unqualified) universities' primary purpose will be to undertake high-level scientific research, within the spirit of 'pursuing knowledge for its own sake', while the universities of technology will primarily dwell on the applied value of knowledge and cultivation of job-related skills. In line with this, Du Pré (2004, 9) sees the role of a university of technology as to 'make knowledge useful'. According to Du Pré (2004, 17), the focus of universities of technology should be 'to deliver on-site education and research enriched by industrial and business experience . . . . A university of technology must deliver appropriately qualified graduates to the labour market . . .'. He subsequently even goes further to assert that 'relevance in higher education should be assessed in terms of the fit between what society and the modern world of work expect of institutions and what they actually do' (du Pré 2004, 35).

Overall, it appears as if the best way of describing South Africa's idea of a university of technology is an institution which: 'would explore new problems of technology through the sciences, the arts, and the humanities, as well as through the new sciences of the artificial (otherwise known as design) and the new disciplines of computer science, cognitive psychology, and information and decision sciences . . .' (Buchanan 2001, 1).

Actually, such an idea of a university goes back to 1968 as reflected in the vision behind the creation of Carnegie Mellon University in the U.S.A. The idea of a South African university of technology aptly matches this vision.

Coming to South Africa's comprehensive universities, it appears that their primary purpose is twofold: (a) to pursue knowledge for its own sake, and to also at the same time and with equal intensity, (b) dwell on the applied value of knowledge and cultivation of job-related skills. This is so, given that these institutions came about as a result of an amalgamation of 'new post-war universities' and the PSIs – otherwise known as 'technikons' in South Africa. Most, if not all, the universities that merged with technikons in South Africa, would generally fit Trow's (1984) categorisation of new post-war universities, in that they were built after the second world war – and mainly also answered to national needs in terms of both teaching and research. This suggests that South Africa's comprehensive universities may most probably have been born of institutional types which were already drifting towards each other. As Geuna (1995, 6) observes, 'it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that during the 1980's and 1990's the distinction between universities and PSIs [in the case of South Africa – "technikons", now universities of technology] has become fuzzier'. This Geuna (ibid) attributes to the 'academic drift phenomena caused by PSIs emulating universities . . . [as] teaching staff, mainly trained in the universities, aimed to gain the rights and privileges of their peers working in the university.'

Accordingly, the pain of finding academic synergies in the creation of comprehensive universities may, therefore, not be major. However, one important issue relates to evident variations in the proportional loading of 'university type qualifications' vis-à-vis 'technikon-type qualifications' on offer at the country's

comprehensive universities. For instance, whereas, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University may have roughly the same emphasis on the two types of qualifications, Walter Sisulu University has been advised to have about 70 per cent 'technikon-type' qualifications; across the country at the University of Zululand, and Venda University of Science and Technology, no indication is yet evident on the proportions of programmes under each category – other than that the two universities should introduce 'technikon-type' programmes. So, it appears that it'll be up to each comprehensive university to determine and communicate its own idea of the university, and consequently determine the kind of knowledge production society can expect from it.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Let's now look at how the various changes in the evolution of universities may have affected knowledge production in universities. According to Geuna (1995, 8), the increased student enrolments and competition for funding (in Europe) have necessitated 'a process of change in the structure of knowledge production' (Geuna 1995, 8) even in the pre-war universities. Geuna (ibid) advances this point further as follows:

> This transformation from elite to mass higher education has put the university under strain . . . . The university structure . . . was shaped for an elitist system and not for a mass system . . . . Due to the extreme need for teachers, less qualified lecturers found, first temporary, and then tenure positions in the university [leading] to a consequent decrease of the quality of the instruction.

Even more important has been a change in 'the idea of a university' in that these old universities have also begun to offer career-based programmes and 'training oriented courses for new and emerging professions . . . [thereby] creating tensions in the old faculty subdivisions' (Geuna 1995, 8). In the view of Geuna (ibid), the university is no longer 'a community of peers engaged in the production and transmission of knowledge, but a bureaucratic organization run by officials where scholars were involved in teaching and research together or in one of the two'. In turn, the change in the organisational structures of universities has also had an impact on the structure of knowledge production within the university. According to Geuna (1995, 8–9), this has manifested itself in the following ways:

- Although most of the prestigious universities of the pre-war period have retained a position of pre-eminence, their position tends to be limited to particular research fields rather than spanning the knowledge spectrum;
- The lost intellectual pre-eminence of faculties and departments has been followed by the rise of the research centre as the intellectual unit of research – thereby leading to specialised type of knowledge, while on the other hand, the

knowledge production process at the frontiers of science and technology tends to be more trans-disciplinary in character.

Due mainly to the expectations of government for universities in South Africa to offer qualifications relevant to the social, economic and cultural needs of the community, even the 'pre-war' universities have also tended to offer trans-disciplinary programmes – although it is possible that most of the type of research undertaken in these institutions is still discipline-based

In consideration of the South African government's directives and prescriptions regarding HE in the country, as well as the resulting classifications of universities. Table 1 could then be a good summary of the essence of HE in South Africa. In essence, this summarises the knowledge production concerns of the respective university types.

Table 1: Models of South African universities, purpose and knowledge production focus

Institutional type	Primary focus	Purpose	Knowledge production focus
University	Philosophical	Ideological and Liberal	• The pursuance of knowledge for knowledge's sake • Cultivating an educated citizen • Cultivating wisdom • Research in basic disciplines • Social Responsibility: promoting *access, redress and equity* • Cross disciplinary research • Addressing and solving the problems of the community
Comprehensive University	Professional and Managerial	Ideological and Functional	• All round humanistic education, encompassing professional qualifications • Unity of research and teaching • Cross disciplinary research • Social Responsibility: promoting *access, redress and equity* • Research in applied and basic disciplines. • Addressing and solving the problems of the community
University of Technology	Vocational and Technical	Functional	• Professional and career education driven by market forces and entrepreneurialism • Cross disciplinary research with a research and development focus • Social Responsibility: promoting *access, redress and equity* • Addressing and solving the problems of the community • Emphasis on applied research.

The salient features of the above table are:

- Academic freedom (i.e. freedom of teaching; academic self-governance) has disappeared. (Note that the notion of academic freedom featured prominently on the Berlin-type university model).
- Addressing and solving the problems of the community is a common attribute of all the three university types in South Africa
- Social responsibility is also a common aspect of education in all the three university types
- Research in basic disciplines transcends both the universities and the comprehensive universities, but is absent in the universities of technology.
- Cross-disciplinary research is a feature of all the three educational types, as a result of government expectations which require that South African universities be relevant to their communities, and help solve societal problems. Even at lower levels, the school curriculum talks about cross-field educational outcomes.

With regard to the disappearance of institutional autonomy, and the autonomy of individual lecturers – and hence academic freedom, from the radar of HE in South Africa, Jansen (2005, 217) sees this as follows:

> I content that the most far reaching changes in higher education [in South Africa] are to be found in the gradual but systematic erosion of historical standards of autonomy that were engrained within the institutional fabric of universities.

Much of this loss of autonomy has had to do with the accreditation process, and the funding framework, which have both been used to drive the transformation of HE in the country. In addition, it has been argued that HE institutions need to be accountable in the light that public funding is used to sustain most public universities in the country. Properly accounting for public funds can be done even if universities had the autonomy to pursue knowledge in ways that did not dance to the political agendas of the country. Indeed, loss of autonomy and the right for self-governance on account that public funds are used to sustain the lives of universities is in itself a futile argument in that very soon the government, or anyone else for that matter, could use the same argument to suggest, for instance, that the courts of law should also do what the government wants since public funds are used to sustain them. This is already happening in some countries where judges are scared to deliver judgements that may be perceived by the government not to be in line with its (government's) positions. Perhaps there is no such thing as university autonomy in the absolute sense but the argument for universities enjoying a degree of autonomy is aptly summarised by Singh (2001, 12) in her words that higher education functions as 'critic and conscience of society'.

Overall, it is clear from Table 1 that there is no one university type in South Africa which does not, to some extent, duplicate what is a primary function of

other university types. Whether this should remain so or not is beyond the scope of this article – which was merely a critical reflection of HE transformation in South Africa, and the implications of this for knowledge and knowledge production.

CONCLUSION

From the information presented so far in this article, it is clear that there is not only one acceptable idea of a South African university. To a great extent, the distinctions amongst the three university types have been eroded by government 'interference', by using the same funding framework and giving the same directives for transformation to all the university types in the country. This has resulted in all of them attempting to do the same things in order to survive financially and politically. In turn this has been associated with a loss of academic freedom and the right of self-governance. But, more seriously, has been the absence of a philosophical or ideological thrust in the transformation process. So, instead of being directed by some conceptual/intellectual direction, the entire HE sector has been driven by the 'bottom line'. It is, therefore, small wonder that in the nature of the research, teaching and community service, being undertaken in all university types in the country, they're all essentially on the same page – as Table 1 illustrates. The main difference may simply be in the detail and levels of efficiency.

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