(Mis)framing higher education in South Africa

Vivienne Bozalek (University of the Western Cape)
Chrissie Boughey (Rhodes University)

Abstract

The question of how to make higher education more inclusive has been a central concern in South Africa and elsewhere over the past two decades. However, in South Africa there remains a disjuncture between policy aimed at promoting inclusivity and the experiences of students and staff in the higher education sector. In this article, the relationship between equity of access and equity of outcomes and the expectations that follow from these policy imperatives are examined from the perspective of Nancy Fraser's normative framework of social justice. In particular, her notion of misframing is used to analyze the current situation in the higher education sector in South Africa. The article concludes that a focus on individual higher education institutions is not sufficient to gain a perspective on the social arrangements required for participatory parity in higher education, and in fact, such a focus is an instance of misframing and thus a form of injustice.

Introduction

The question of how to make higher education more inclusive has been a central concern internationally over the past two decades (Drakich *et al.* 1995). In South Africa, inclusivity has been even more of a concern since the first democratic election given the structuring of educational opportunities on the basis of race under apartheid (Soudien 2010). This article uses Nancy Fraser's (2008, 2009) three-dimensional theory of social justice as a normative framework to identify and analyze the conceptual logics that underpin specific problem representations (Bacchi 2009) in South African policy and practice with regard to inclusivity in higher education. The initial part of the article provides a brief outline of Fraser's notion of social justice, after which we discuss South African higher education both during and after apartheid. The current position regarding higher education and inclusivity is then analyzed using Fraser's normative framework, with a particular focus on participatory parity with regard to misframing, as it is this notion that foregrounds inclusivity.

Fraser's normative framework on social justice

Fraser equates social justice with the ability to participate as equals and full partners in social interaction. She proposes that justice requires social arrangements that enable people to interact as peers on an equal footing and identifies three distinct dimensions that affect participatory parity: the *economic*, *cultural* and *political*. Social arrangements must be such that they allow individuals to participate as equals in all three of these spheres. Fraser sees these three dimensions as different and distinct species or genres of social justice, all of which necessarily affect people's abilities to interact as equals.

Firstly, regarding the *economic* sphere, the distribution of material resources should enable people to interact as equals. Participatory parity would be prevented or constrained by economic structures where there is a maldistribution of resources or where there is deprivation, marginalization, exploitation, disparities in wealth, income, labor and leisure time. These class-based or economic dimensions would all prevent people from interacting with each other on a par in social life. In this case there would be distributive injustice that pertains to the class structure or economic sphere of society.

Secondly, in relation to the *cultural* sphere, social arrangements should be such that there is equal respect for all participants and there are opportunities for achieving social esteem. In this case, participatory parity would be prevented through a hierarchical status order in which institutionalized patterns of cultural value depreciate certain attributes associated with people or the activities in which they are engaged. This pertains to the cultural dimension and can be associated with forms of recognition or misrecognition. Fraser identified only these two dimensions – the economic and the cultural – in her earlier views of social justice (see Fraser 1997, 2000, 2003).

A third, *political* dimension has been developed in her more recent works, where she comments on the necessity of moving away from the frame of a post-Westphalian view, which only encompasses the nation-state, to one that acknowledges globalization (see Fraser 2005, 2008, 2009). Injustices that affect people perpetrated by transnational powers and predator states should not be framed as being located in nation-states. The political sphere of society should enable all people to have a political voice and to have influence in decisions that affect them – this has to do with representation. In relation to higher education, in addition to being able to vote and participate in social movements such as the students representative councils (being represented in these fora), Fraser introduces a second level of representation – which pertains to the aspect of boundary-setting. This arises when higher education establishes boundaries that exclude some groups or institutions and include others – what she calls *misframing* them. The notion of political framing and misframing thus allows us to examine who is included and excluded from justice claims in higher education. Criteria of social belonging are thus also established through the political sphere affecting who is eligible to be counted as citizens and who is not, in other words who is included and who is excluded from justice claims. It could be argued that this third dimension of social justice is more severe than either the economic or the cultural, in that one can be wrongly excluded from consideration for distribution, recognition and representation. Fraser refers to the exclusion from consideration for first-order claims against maldistribution and misrecognition as a form of *misframing*. Those who are excluded could only be supplicants for the benevolence of others in that it serves to prevent those who may be poor (economic dimensions) or despised (cultural dimension) from challenging injustices against them. For these reasons, Fraser regards misframing as the defining form of injustice in the globalized era.

In order to overcome unjust social conditions, the institutionalized obstacles that are preventing participatory parity would need to be dismantled (Fraser 2008). All three of the dimensions – economic, cultural and political – must be present for participatory parity to occur. Although they may be complexly intertwined, none alone is sufficient for participatory parity, and one cannot be reduced to the other dimension. For each dimension of social justice, Fraser has distinguished between affirmative and transformative approaches for dealing with injustices. She sees affirmative approaches as

those that do not go far enough in that, while they may correct inequities created by social arrangements, they do not disturb the underlying social structures that generate these inequities. Transformative approaches, on the other hand, address the underlying root causes or underlying generative framework.

In the economic dimension, transformative approaches make entitlements universal so that vulnerable groups of people are not seen as supplicants or as benefiting from special treatment. In the cultural dimension, transformative approaches acknowledge complexity, deconstructing and destabilizing binary categories, rather than entrenching identity politics or multiculturalism. In the political dimension, affirmative politics of framing accepts that Westphalian state boundaries are appropriate and attempts to redraw these state-territorial boundaries or create new ones. In the transformative approach, injustices are not only seen as residing in state-territorial boundaries but also beyond territorial boundaries, in the global economy, information and communication networks (the digital divide), environmental sustainability issues and other non-territorial powers. In addition to contesting the boundaries of the frame and invoking a post-Westphalian principle, the transformative politics of framing also proposes *to change the way in which the boundaries are drawn*. Fellow subjects of justice would not be constituted in geographical locations, but with regard to particular structural issues that promote advantage or disadvantage – appealing to an 'all-affected principle' (Fraser 2009). This all-affected principle means that everyone who is affected by a particular social structure or institution will be claimants of social justice. People's collective justice claims are thus not dependent on geographical location but on common claims against structures that affect them. As Fraser (2009: 24) puts it, their claims rely on 'their co-imbrication in a common structural or institutional framework, which sets the ground rules that govern their social interaction, thereby shaping their respective life possibilities of advantage and disadvantage'. Examples of groups that have claimed social justice (from structures that harm them) who have applied this all-affected principle across state-territorial boundaries are indigenous peoples, environmentalists, feminists, and development and children's rights activists.

In this article, we focus specifically on this transformative approach to misframing in the political dimension as an analytical framework to examine social inclusion in higher education in South Africa; the transformative aspects of the economic and cultural dimensions are not examined. We now turn our attention to contemporary higher education in South Africa by providing an analysis of higher education pre- and post-apartheid.

Higher education under apartheid

Apartheid impacted on the higher education system in numerous ways. Not only were separate institutions for black and white population groups established, but the programmes these different kinds of institutions could offer were also defined by apartheid beliefs about the roles considered appropriate for different social groups. A historically black university (HBU) was therefore more likely to offer nursing rather than medicine and public administration rather than political philosophy. Under apartheid, research was structured to serve the white population and the need for the security of this group on a continent wracked with wars for independence (Bawa & Mouton 2001). As a result, while South Africa was able to draw on research to achieve the world's first heart transplant and

to develop a nuclear weapons programme, research into diseases affecting the majority of the population or research on conditions in which they lived was not available. Although several HBUs were to function as centers of intellectual thought in the movement against apartheid, the national research agenda impacted on them alongside understandings of their function as contributors to certain categories of labor for a segregated workforce. As a result, the number of postgraduate programmes at HBUs was also limited in comparison to those available at historically white institutions.

Significantly, different categories of universities were governed and resourced differently (Bunting 2002. Historically white universities (HWUs) were given the administrative and financial power to make decisions in relation to the spending of government subsidy, the setting of tuition fees, the number of staff to employ and the way in which any surplus should be invested. HBUs and the former 'technikons', or vocationally based higher education institutions [1], were considerably more constrained in the decisions they could make, however. Budgeting for these institutions involved gaining approval for expenditure from the controlling government department. As Bunting (2002) points out, these negotiated budgets resulted in institutions needing to return unspent funds to the controlling department at the end of each financial year. As a result, the tendency was for remaining funds to be used up at the end of each year in an annual spending spree. Of more significance, however, was the fact that these universities were not able to build financial reserves and that the controlled nature of the budgeting processes meant that the capacity to plan and handle financial resources was not always developed. In post-apartheid times this legacy was to impact on the ability of the historically black institutions (HBIs) to manage their own finances in substantial ways. In recent years, several HBUs have been placed under administration because of the perceived failure to manage their affairs appropriately. Although corruption cannot be dismissed in such cases, neither can the fact that HBUs were systemically denied the opportunities to develop the capacity to manage their own affairs under apartheid. At institutional levels, the extent to which cultures of accountability, transparency and so on, has been developed over decades needs to be considered. As they were established for social groups considered inferior by apartheid legislators, the HBUs were also resourced on the basis of an understanding of the needs of these groups being less. Library facilities were minimal and teaching venues poorly equipped. One significant feature of black campuses was the architecture that was designed to impede movement in cases of civil unrest. Such poor design continues to impact on learning environments to this day.

Geographical location also affected the HBIs, which were located either in deeply rural areas in the former 'bantustans' or 'homelands' or in urban areas designated for the population groups they were intended to serve, often on the fringes of more affluent areas. The apartheid state established 10 small geographical areas as self-governing 'homelands' for the black majority. The result was overcrowding and poverty compounded by maladministration on the part of the homeland governments themselves. Location therefore impacted on academic life by contributing to the social segregation already introduced by apartheid legislation. Post-apartheid, this historical legacy continues to be significant. Universities in remote rural areas are, for example, less likely to attract highly qualified staff than their urban counterparts while the best qualified school leavers also

tend to be attracted by the urban areas provided funding is available (see, for example, Boughey & McKenna 2011).

The result of apartheid thinking and legislation was that the first democratic government elected in 1994 inherited a system that was fractured along a number of lines. These included race, the type of institution (university or 'technikon'), location and language of instruction (English or Afrikaans). These divisions had profound implications for the quality of education available to different population groups. Policy work since 1994 has therefore aimed at the development of a single, coherent system that will offer a quality education to all South Africans and that will contribute to the economic and social needs of the new state and new society.

Policy post-apartheid

Although the national liberation movement had drawn on 'left socialist formulations' (Kraak 2001: 88), policy development post-1994 had to deal with both the need for equity resulting from apartheid and the need to engage with development necessary for South Africa to engage with a rapidly globalizing economy (Wolpe 1991). In the context of globalization, the influence of the 'high skills thesis', or the belief that economic development was only possible in the context of a highly skilled workforce and a co-ordinated policy structure (Finegold & Soskice 1988), was to have profound implications. The most significant higher education policy document of the 1990s, the 1997 *White Paper on Higher Education* (Department of Education 1997) addressed South Africa's development needs through increased access and the massification of higher education while, at the same time, calling for the development of a knowledge economy, the use of new technologies and so on, as a response to globalization and labor market needs.

By 1997, however, another important piece of policy, the *South African Qualifications Authority Act* (Republic of South Africa 1995) had been promulgated. This Act established a National Qualifications Framework, administered by the South African Qualifications Authority, spanning both vocational and formal education. Significantly, the identification of the learning outcome, defined as a description of what students should be able to do when a qualification is awarded, as an organizing principle that would allow for the registration of qualifications on the framework, can be seen to link to the need to produce knowledge workers for the global economy. The acceptance of the learning outcome and the concomitant introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) into all sectors of the education system, including higher education, was made possible, according to Kraak (1999), by the cloaking of OBE with a language of empowerment previously associated with the left wing People's Education Movement active during apartheid. In higher education, these developments resulted in wide-scale reorganization at institutional level as disciplinary-based departments were shifted into schools and other structures intended to facilitate the Mode 2 knowledge [2] (Gibbons *et al.* 1994) associated with the construct of the learning outcome. As later published work (see, for example, Chisholm 2000; Muller 2005, 2008) would also argue, the introduction of OBE resulted in curricula 'whose signalling of knowledge and sequence was and is wholly inadequate' (Muller 2008: 22) because of the way outcomes-based approaches focus on the application of knowledge to context rather than on the building of knowledge frameworks associated with more traditional curricula.

A second factor influencing policy on higher education was the development of more stringent macroeconomic frameworks from the mid 1990s onwards. The new government elected in 1994 inherited budget deficits, debt and a history of more than 20 years worth of zero growth rates thanks to the apartheid system, which had hindered the country from mobilizing all of its human resources and prevented it from participating in international trade thanks to sanctions (Faulkner & Leowald 2008). In addition to the need to deal with deficits and debt, Oldfield (2001) identifies inconsistencies in the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (African National Congress 1994) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR) (African National Congress 1998) as leading to economic stringency. According to Oldfield (*idem*), the fact that the state accepted responsibility for basics such as education, housing, healthcare and water only 'within its available resources' (Republic of South Africa 1996: 12) was characteristic of the negotiated settlement itself. This proviso was then carried through into the RDP but, by 1998, had been reconstructed as the *facilitation* of basic services in the GEAR, which replaced the RDP in order to attract international capital. This relaxation in understanding heavily impacted the education budget with the result that budgetary reprioritization, rather than budgetary increase, became the government's main strategy in addressing equity from the mid 1990s onwards (Fataar 2000).

In higher education, the impact of this fiscal discipline was felt most heavily by the HBUs, which had already been affected by changes in the higher education funding mechanism. As noted earlier in this article, the HBUs had never enjoyed the same freedom as the HWUs in planning and managing budgets and, thus, had never been able to build financial reserves. As apartheid came to an end, the broad expectation was that redress funding would become available to address historical inequities in the sector (Bunting 2002). The fact that this redress funding never materialized then impacted heavily on institutions that were 1) under-resourced in the first place and 2) suffering from the inability of the poor black working class students they mainly attracted to pay tuition fees. Other factors also came into play as the 1990s progressed. As apartheid came to an end, the HBUs were successful in getting the negotiated budgets that had characterized their existence replaced by the standardized funding formula that was previously only been applied to the HWUs. The formula was partly based on enrolments, and the HWUs were pleased to be included in this form of provision as, in the early 1990s, they were experiencing considerable growth in student numbers (Bunting 2002). From the mid 1990s onwards, however, student numbers began to drop (Cooper & Subotsky 2001), and HBUs felt the impact on enrolments more heavily than other institutions that were more highly regarded given historical status and resourcing. Between 1993 and 1999, African student enrolments decreased from 49 per cent to 33 per cent in the HBIs. As a result, many HBIs found themselves in serious financial difficulties that impacted on the historical legacy they were already trying to manage.

In 2004, the funding formula for higher education was revised (Department of Education 2004) to allow funding to be used as a more effective 'lever' for transformation. The revised formula focused on throughput and outputs in teaching and outputs in research and, as a result, did not favor the HBUs given the sort of students they were able to attract

and their lack of research capacity. Since 1994, therefore, funding policy has penalized the HBUs, which had already been under-resourced under apartheid to the extent that they had been unable to build the reserves that could sustain them into the future.

As Boughey and McKenna (2011) show in their study of teaching and learning at five HBUs, in spite of numerous strategies aimed at turning around their fortunes, more than 17 years after the arrival of democracy, these institutions continue to struggle. Significantly, the long term lack of resourcing and continuing financial struggle appear to have impacted on these institutions in other ways. Boughey & McKenna *(ibid.)* identify, for example, an overwhelming sense of despondency amongst staff at these institutions, which then plays itself out in a failure to shoulder responsibilities related to the terms of employment, particularly teaching. Data examined by Boughey & McKenna show academic staff failing to appear for lectures and failing to mark students' work timeously or sometimes not at all. Consequentially, it is in relation to these institutions that access to good quality higher education is limited for many black working class students, particularly those from rural areas. Since 1994, the public schooling system is widely acknowledged to have failed (see, for example, Bloch 2009; Soudien 2010) with the result that the majority of schools open to black learners continue to be marked by the sort of conditions characteristic of apartheid. This then means that the impoverished nature of the educational experiences offered at secondary level are compounded by the conditions related to teaching and learning at tertiary level.

Following the 1997 *White Paper*, the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (Department of Education 2001a) represented an attempt to operationalize the programme for transformation of higher education. Significant in the NPHE was the identification of three institutional 'types': traditional universities, universities of technology (UoTs) and 'comprehensive' universities offering a mixture of traditional and vocational programmes. The identification of these three types can be seen as an attempt to begin to reconfigure the higher education system in order to meet the need to engage with globalization. The NPHE examined reasons for the continued inequalities between higher education institutions and identified competition between these institutions as being one of the causes. As apartheid fell away, large numbers of black students sought to access the better resourced HWIs. Cooper & Subotsky (2001) provide a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon showing a movement into the historically white technikons in particular. This movement can be understood as a desire, on the part of black students, to achieve a vocationally based qualification that would provide readier access to the job market than more traditional academic qualifications. Also 'winners' in the movement between institutional types in the early 1990s were the Afrikaans speaking institutions, which had repositioned themselves to make themselves attractive to black students (Cooper & Subotsky 2001). What appears to have been the case, therefore, is that the most 'able' students, where 'able' is defined as related to the ability to make a choice because of financial and other circumstances as well as by performance on school leaving examinations, exercised that choice and moved away from the HBIs. The effects of the funding formula being applied to HBUs have already been noted. When the fact that enrolments at these institutions is mostly limited to poor black working class students, who are often unable to service tuition fees and who are usually characterized as

'underprepared' for higher education, is considered, then the impact of changes since 1990 on HBUs becomes even more severe.

The *White Paper* (Department of Education 1997) made a clear distinction between social (i.e. individual) redress and institutional redress (i.e. redress aimed at historically disadvantaged institutions). In a report published in 2000, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2000: 14) argued that 'the former [i.e. social redress] is not reducible to the latter [i.e. institutional redress]' because large numbers of students from historically disadvantaged groups were entering historically advantaged institutions. This point needs to be underscored as the changing demographic profile [3] of the student body since 1990 has meant that the burden of teaching under-prepared students is no longer primarily confined to the HBUs. Thus, social redress, which includes both the provision of student financial aid for poor students and the provision of resources to institutions to deal with the learning needs of under-prepared students, cuts across the past divide between the historically black and historically white institutions. As a result of this sort of thinking, in its 2000 report the CHE argued that:

> '[T]he categories of 'historically advantaged' and 'historically disadvantaged' are becoming less useful for social policy purposes […] [and the] 36 public higher education institutions inherited from the past are all South African institutions. They must be embraced as such, must be transformed where necessary and must be put to work for and on behalf of all South Africans.' (Council on Higher Education 2000: 14).

This does not imply that institutional redress is no longer relevant. On the contrary, the continued role of the HBUs as integral components of a transformed higher education system requires that institutional redress be addressed. However, it suggests that the focus of institutional redress must shift from the current notions of redress, which are narrowly focused on the leveling of the playing fields between the historically black and historically white institutions. In this respect, the key question that needs to be asked is redress for what? The Department of Education is of the view that the main purpose of redress must be to ensure the capacity of institutions to discharge their institutional mission within an agreed national framework. It also requires that universities not only develop a clear mission and sense of purpose but also that they establish the management, administrative and academic structures to support the mission (Department of Education 2001a). This position has also been adopted by the national quality assurance agency, the Higher Education Quality Committee, in its adoption of the definition of quality as 'fit for purpose' (Council on Higher Education 2001).

The NPHE was followed by the Report of a Working Group (Department of Education 2002), which made concrete recommendations in the light of the principles established in the Plan itself. These recommendations resulted in the reduction of the number of South African institutions of higher education from 36 to 23 as a result of a series of mergers and incorporations. The merger/incorporation process itself took account of the three institutional types proposed in the NPHE and involved the establishment of traditional universities, (UoTs) and 'comprehensive' universities that offer a mix of traditional

academic and vocational programmes. The merger process itself has been long drawn out and fraught with difficulty. All three institutional types established as a result of the NPHE have been subject to a new output driven funding formula that rewards graduations and research outputs although some subsidy for enrolments is provided. As a result, all universities, regardless of history and type, have to compete for funding in the same way.

The impact of the lack of a research tradition in some universities (particularly the HBUs and UoTs) along with the drift of experienced and highly qualified staff into what were perceived to be more prestigious institutions post-apartheid, a process that itself has been fostered by demands that the former HWUs should transform their staff profiles, has resulted in some universities being much more able to earn income through research outputs than others. As a result, five of the 23 public universities, all HWUs, regularly produce approximately 60 per cent of all research articles. The three most research-productive universities *per capita* are also HWUs. These three universities also have the largest proportion of permanent academic staff with doctoral degrees (Council on Higher Education 2009b; Academy of Science of South Africa 2010). The type of students HBUs are able to enroll also impacts on their ability to earn funding. Crucial here is that many poor black working class students cannot afford to service tuition fees. These same students are often the most ill-prepared for tertiary study impacting on graduation rates. While some universities are able to enroll students (and thus earn input subsidy), their ability to earn output subsidy based on graduation and throughput rates is negatively affected, not only by the 'preparedness' of the students themselves but also, in the general funding climate and the lack of historical resources, by their ability to provide the sort of intense teaching and support these students need.

Recent research (Centre for Higher Education Transformation 2010) that served before a 'commission' on institutional differentiation at a higher education summit called by the Minister in 2010, analyses the 23 contact universities in the South African system and identifies three groups of institutions characterized by patterns based on both inputs and outputs. One group is notable because it consists of historically white, privileged universities that are clearly able to capitalize on their historical legacies in order to attract students with the capacity to succeed and to produce research. Significantly, this group, termed the 'red group', has markedly lower numbers of students receiving financial aid – an indicator of the social class of the student body. Another group, the 'blue group', consists largely of the UoTs and two comprehensive universities formed from former HBUs. The third, 'green' group, consists of the remaining nine South African universities. According to the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (2010) each of these groups fulfills vastly different purposes in relation to the students they serve and the type of qualifications they offer. The 'blue group' provides access and 'occupation ready' qualifications for poor South African students who have three times the potential to get a job and additional potential to earn more than they would have with only a school leaving certificate. The 'red group' produces the bulk of African doctorates and future academics. The purpose/purposes of the 'green group' has/have yet to be identified. Arguably, the fact that the 2011 higher education summit included a session on institutional differentiation marks the end of an era where issues around difference were not open to discussion.

The problem of misframing in South African higher education

We have thus far discussed higher education from a historical perspective, particularly as it has differentially affected both students and institutions with regard to racial and participatory parity and have identified the way policy has worked to try to bring about greater equality. In this section we use the third political dimension of Fraser's framework on social justice to explore higher education. In order to do this, we need to consider whether the higher education itself is an appropriate frame to think about social justice or whether this is problematic in that it forecloses consideration of the entire education system as being socially unjust. Fraser's (2008, 2009) political dimension of social justice is useful as an analytic tool for the South African higher education landscape, particularly with regard to her notion of misframing. In South Africa, misframing can be seen as a major form of injustice, as it partitions political space in ways that block students or staff at HBUs from challenging forces that oppress them; here misframing implies that a 'misframed' institutional setting is imposed on the South African higher education system. This frame can also be seen to insulate privileged institutions from critique. Amongst those shielded from the reach of justice are the HWUs and the national bodies such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the CHE.

In recent years, a discourse focusing on efficiency has come to dominate much conversation and thought about higher education (Boughey 2007). This discourse can be seen to derive from the funding formula that attempts to 'lever' universities into greater efficiency by rewarding outputs. Analyses (Scott *et al.* 2007) have identified low throughput and poor graduation and success rates as a characteristic of the system as a whole. By channeling the frame or the view onto the low throughput of students as a whole – without identifying the ways in which students are disadvantaged by social class and the intersection of social class with the schooling system, the extent to which they have choice in attending institutions and the differing capacity of HBUs and HWUs to assist the students they admit, the problem is assigned to universities themselves. The effect then is to prevent such universities from being able to express their currently untenable situations, as the blame is put on them for the position in which they find themselves.

Although the entire system is discursively constructed as being inefficient, HBUs and UoTs tend to be constructed in especially negative ways because of poor throughput, graduation and success rates. As a result, the gaze is turned upon particular kinds of universities, and this, as our analysis of policy above has attempted to show, is problematic given the way they have been structured to perform by apartheid and subsequent policy. In these cases then, struggles against misrecognition and misdistribution cannot succeed, unless they are joined in a struggle against misframing. So in higher education, the first problem is misframing in that individual students, lecturers and institutions are held accountable for success in higher education endeavors, rather than the entire education system, which is inequitable. If the subjects of injustice are the students themselves in a particular institution, then the very idea of general injustice in the education system is inconceivable. Academically excluded students in an institution petition their justice claims against their own institution, as the frame is generally seen to be the individual higher education institution itself. From this frame or perspective, the students can have no such claims against the education system as a whole, which has or has not provided them with the epistemological access [4] (Morrow 2009) or access to dominant ways of knowledge

making, required to study at a tertiary level thanks to an academic cultural system that privileges particular ways of being, such as middle class, English-speaking, white, Western and masculinist views (Gee 1990; Bernstein 1999; Bourdieu 2002). Academic exclusion would be seen as a problem internal to the individual institution. This is patently unjust. The very foreclosure of the possibility of education as a whole not facilitating the social arrangements for successful study at university is itself a form of social injustice and social exclusion of the position in which students, and particularly those at HBUs, find themselves. Students are not in a position to press justice claims against a system that has not prepared them adequately for tertiary study and that does not address their development needs once they are admitted to it. Rather, the problem is located in poor teaching practices of lecturers, the inadequate mix of programmes and qualifications offered by some institutions, in the failure to align curricula or in mismatches between mission and vision statements and what an institution is doing. By presupposing that a focus on institutions of higher education and their performance is the only legitimate or correct frame, we commit another meta-form of injustice in which we misframe first order injustices. Assuming an inappropriate institutional frame, all actors, processes and mechanisms that operate at a national level are left unproblematic in the problem representation (Bacchi 2009).

The effect of the disparity in the social system puts certain privileged schools and universities out of the reach of the majority. Since the effects of apartheid are still geographical (Bozalek *et al.* 2010), and schools operate from a geographical constituency, those who were excluded from quality education in the apartheid era remain excluded. Authors like Yeld (2010) have written about the general low performance including the low participation and the low throughput and pass rate of South African higher education compared to other countries. For example, cohort studies that track students from entry to exit (Scott *et al.* 2007) identify graduation rates for contact universities as 40 per cent in South Africa, 78 per cent in the United Kingdom and 58 per cent in the United States. Access to higher education is also generally lower in South Africa when participation rates [5] between countries are examined. Yeld (2010) uses comparative figures, cited in a report by the CHE, to show that, in 2006, the South African participation rate in higher education was 16 per cent, Latin America and the Caribbean 31 per cent, Central and Eastern Asia 25 per cent, and North America and Western Europe 70 per cent. In these sorts of generic description of how South African higher education is faring, there is no disaggregation of how the different institutions of higher education in South Africa are performing.

There is no consideration, for example, of the way school of origin impacts on students' ability to learn in higher education. If this were explored, it would paint a different and much bleaker and unequal situation in South Africa. While it is acknowledged in such studies that the major problem facing higher education is the general low level of schooling in South Africa (Yeld 2010), what is omitted from this universalized statement is the disparity between the South African schools – what Christie (2009) has called 'incomes-based' rather than 'outcomes-based' education. By universalizing the low participation and throughput rate in South Africa, the inequities within the higher education sector become blurred. This is another instance of misframing in that the problem is presented from an apolitical and a-historical perspective, with no discussion about the doubly inequitable situations of HBUs related to the paucity of resources and the lack of educational

preparation of the students they enroll. The result is the misframing and de-politicization of the differential positionalities of students and institutions.

Because of its focus on individual institutions, the system of institutional audits, which forms part of national quality assurance procedures, can also be seen to position HBUs in positions of weakness while shielding more powerful privileged HWUs from the reach of justice. The audit system is based on a definition of quality as 'fitness for and of purpose' although minimum standards are identified in a set of criteria. The assumption, therefore, is that all universities are similarly able to put in place the necessary conditions to ensure they are indeed 'fit for purpose'. The acknowledgement that universities have the differential resources and differently positioned students in higher education is not sufficiently acknowledged. On the other hand, if the inequities were recognized, it would be clear that both students and staff at these differently placed universities would require different sorts and amounts of resources to meet the same audit criteria.

All the practices foregrounded above have the effect of misframing disputes about justice and quality as being *institutional* in nature and of insulating national bodies as well as the education system as a whole from critique. Amongst those institutions shielded from critique particularly, are those that continue to enjoy the privileges developed in the apartheid era and a small black middle class who can afford to send their children to private or exclusive public schools and HWUs. Also protected are the governance structures – the DHET and the CHE – that do not always provide sufficient resources or support for the implementation of their recommendations or decisions.

There has been some contestation regarding the injustices and lack of participatory parity in the South African higher education sector e.g. a social movement initiated on equal education in the Western Cape and a new task team set up by the Minister of Higher Education and Training to re-examine the higher education funding policy. The question remains, however, whether this is will indeed be sufficient to move those who have been discriminated against to be claimants of social justice rather than supplicants for the benevolence of others, including state resources.

Conclusion
Through tracing developments in South African higher education, we have attempted to show how misframing has occurred through the representation of particular problem configurations in higher education. We have also shown how representations or framing of problems in higher education have built-in assumptions about who is responsible for current conditions (Bacchi 2009). Using Bacchi's historical approach, we have analyzed how racially informed policies influencing higher education in the apartheid era continue to impact on the sector in the current period, having devastating effects for certain people, while continuing to advantage other privileged groups of people.

We have made use of Fraser's concept of misframing to interrogate the conceptual logics, or meanings, that underpin the sense-making of apartheid and post-apartheid policies impacting on higher education. Through policies and practices that frame issues in relation to individual higher education institutions, a range of factors impacting on higher

education are simplified or omitted from this framing or problem presentation. In our analysis of the misframing, we have shown how representations and practices continue to benefit some and harm others, thus impacting on social justice and the ability of differently positioned groups to interact on an equal footing in higher education. We propose that the historical and current inequalities in the higher education sector be reframed from the analysis that we have provided in this article.

Notes

1. From 2002 onwards, all public institutions of higher education in South Africa were designated 'universities'. Before 2002, there was a distinction between universities and technikons. In our analysis of developments before 2002, we therefore distinguish between HBUs/HWUs and HBI/HWIs where the term 'university' refers only to universities and the term 'institution' refers to both universities and technikons.

2. Mode 2 knowledge means that knowledge is no longer located solely within disciplines and higher education institutions but is distributed across various sites of knowledge production – across geographical, diverse organizational and disciplinary boundaries and spaces. It is also participatory, collaborative and focused on real world problems applied to the social or market context and involves quality control regarding the usefulness of the knowledge (Gibbons *et al.* 1994).

3. The CHE (2004: 82) reported that: 'In terms of the overall South African demography Africans form 79% of the population, Coloureds 9%, Indians 2% and Whites 10%. In this regard, Africans are still under-represented in higher education and especially under-represented at universities (48%). Whites remain strongly represented in all institutional types, especially in the universities (37%).'

4. Epistemological access means 'learning how to become a successful participant in academic practice' (Morrow 2009: 78).

5. Participation rates refer to the proportion of a country's adult population enrolled in formal tertiary education institutions.

References

African National Congress. (1994), The reconstruction and development programme. Johannesburg: Umanyano Publications.

African National Congress. (1998), Growth, employment and redistribution: a macroeconomic strategy. Johannesburg: African National Congress.

Academy of Science of South Africa. (2010), The PhD study. Pretoria: Academy of Science South Africa.

Bacchi, C. (2009), *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to Be?* New South Wales: Pearson.

Bawa, A. & Mouton, J. (2001), Research. In N. Cloete, R. Fehnel, P. Maassen, T. Moja, H. Perold and T. Gibbon (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures and local realities in South Africa.* Cape Town: Centre for Higher Education Transformation, pp. 296 - 333.

Bernstein, B. (1999), Vertical and horizontal discourse: an essay. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20, 2: 157-173.

Bloch, G. (2009), Building education beyond crisis. Development Today. Pretoria: Development Bank of South Africa.

Bozalek, V., Carolissen, R., Nicolls, L., Leibowitz, B., Swartz, L. & Rohleder, P. (2010), Engaging with Difference in Higher Education Through Collaborative Inter-Institutional Pedagogical Practices. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24(6): 1023-1037.

Boughey, C. (2007), Educational Development in South Africa: From social reproduction to capitalist expansion? *Higher Education Policy*, 20: 5-18.

Boughey, C. & McKenna, S. (2011), A meta-analysis of teaching and learning at five historically disadvantaged universities. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Bourdieu, P. (2002), Forms of capital. In N. Biggart (ed.), *Readings in Economic Sociology*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell.

Bunting, I. (2002), Funding. In N. Cloete, R. Fehnel, P. Maassen, T. Moja, H. Perold and T. Gibbon (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures and local realities in South Africa.* Cape Town: Centre for Higher Education Transformation, pp. 115-146.

Centre for Higher Education Transformation. (2010), Differentiation in South African higher education. Report to the Commission on Differentiation, Higher Education Summit, Cape Town, April 2010. Available at http://www.cepd.org.za/files/HESummit_Commission4_Differentiation.pdf

Chisholm, L.V. (2000), A South African curriculum for the twenty first century. Pretoria: Department of Education.

Christie, R. (2009), The Drama of Incomes-Based Education Performance, Keynote Address to the Kenton Education Conference, Stellenbosch

Cooper, D. and Subotsky, G. (2001), The skewed revolution: trends in South African higher education 1988 – 1998. Bellville: Education Policy Unit, University of the Western Cape.

Council on Higher Education. (2000), Towards a new higher education landscape: Meeting the equity, quality and social development imperatives of South Africa in the 21st century. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Council on Higher Education. (2001), Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) founding document. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Council on Higher Education. (2004), South African higher education in the first decade of democracy. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Council on Higher Education. (2009a), The State of Higher Education in South Africa. *Higher Education Monitor* 8. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Council on Higher Education. (2009b), Postgraduate studies in South Africa: a statistical profile. *Higher Education Monitor* 7. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Department of Education. (1997), A programme for the transformation of higher education. Education White Paper 3. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. (2001a), The national plan for higher education. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. (2001b), The restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. (2001c), Manifesto on values, education and democracy. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. (2002), The restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. (2004), A new funding framework: how grants are allocated to public higher education institutions. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Drakich, J., Taylor, M. and Bankier, J. (1995), Academic freedom is the inclusive university. In S. Richer and L. Weir (eds), *Beyond Political Correctness: Towards the inclusive university*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, pp. 118-135.

Fataar, A. (2000), Engaging the narrowing education trajectory in South Africa. *South African Review of Education*, 6, 19-30.

Faulkner, D. & Leowald, C. (2008), Policy change and economic growth: a case study of South Africa. Policy Paper 14. Pretoria: National Treasury of South Africa.

Finegold, D. & Soskice, D. (1988), The failure of training in Britain: analysis and prescription. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 4, (3) 21-51.

Fraser, N. (1997), *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. London: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (2000), Rethinking recognition. *New Left Review,* 3, May/June: 107–20.

Fraser, N. (2003), Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition and participation. In N. Fraser and A. Honneth (eds), *Redistribution or recognition?A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, pp.7-109.

Fraser. N. (2005), Mapping the feminist imagination: from redistribution to recognition to representation. *Constellations,* 12, 3: 295-307.

Fraser, N. (2008), Reframing justice in a globalizing world. In K. Olson (ed.), *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser Debates her Critics*. London: Verso, pp. 273-291.

Fraser, N. (2009), *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gee, J. (1990), *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourse.* Basingstoke: Falmer.

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P. & Trow, M. (1994), *The New Production of Knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies.* California and London: Sage.

Kraak, A. (1999), Competing education and training policy discourses: a systemic versus 'unit standards' framework. In J. J. Christie (ed.), *Changing Curriculum: Studies on Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa.* Cape Town: Juta.

Morrow, W. (2009), *Bounds of Democracy: Epistemological Access in Higher Education.* Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Muller, J. (2005), The world is not enough: knowledge in question. *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 19, 3: 497-511.

Muller, J. (2008), In search of coherence: a conceptual guide to curriculum planning for comprehensive universities. Johannesburg: Centre for Educational Policy Development.

Oldfield, S. (2001), The South African state in transition: a question of form, function and fragmentation. In E. Motala and J. Pampallis (eds), *Education and equity: The impact of state policies on South African education.* Cape Town: Heinemann, pp. 35-52.

Republic of South Africa, (1995), The South African Qualifications Authority Act. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa, (1996), Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: Act No 108. Cape Town: Government Printers.

Roman, L. & Eyre, L. (1997), *Dangerous territories: struggles for difference and equality in education.* New York and London: Routledge.

Scott, I.R., Yeld, N. and Hendry, J. (2007), A case for improving teaching and learning in South African Higher Education. *Higher Education Monitor 6.* Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Soudien, C. (2010), Transformation in higher education: a briefing paper. Pretoria: Development Bank of South Africa.

Wolpe, H. (1991), Education and social transformation: problems and dilemmas, in E. Unterhalter and Wolpe, H. (eds), *Education in a Future South Africa: Policy lssues for Transformation.* London: Heinemann, pp.1-16.

Yeld, N. (2010), Some challenges and responses: higher education in South Africa. In G. Bloch (ed.), *Discourse/Diskoers – Transforming higher education in South Africa: Finding new direction.* Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.