

Management and Governance in Higher Education: South African Universities under Siege

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Abstract. The recent spate of changes in university management worldwide should be carefully considered, interrogated and assessed against its impact on the capacity of the university fulfilling its unique role in society. For various justifiable reasons, South African higher education has been finding itself under the spotlight of the international community since 1994. The article surveys the South African academic profession vis à vis the changes that have been taking place regarding university governance and management. It is concluded that the South African academic profession, as far as (*de jure* and *de facto*) governance and management are concerned, find themselves sandwiched between two forces: from national and institutional governance on top, and the student corps from the bottom. This threatens the very survival of the university. A new exercise surveying the South African academic profession, as provided for by the Academic Profession in Knowledge Society (APIKS) international survey of the academic profession currently taking place, appears both timely and promising.

Key Words: Academic Profession; Higher Education; Managerialism; Student Activism; South Africa

Valdymas ir administravimas aukštajame moksle: Pietų Afrikos universitetų apgultis

Santrauka. Neseniai įvykę universitetų valdymo pokyčiai visame pasaulyje turėtų būti kruopščiai apsvarstyti, išnagrinėti ir įvertinti pagal tai, kiek jie padeda universitetams atlikti unikalų vaidmenį visuomenėje. Dėl svarių priežasčių Pietų Afrikos aukštasis mokslas nuo 1994 m. atsidūrė tarptautinės bendruomenės dėmesio centre. Straipsnyje apžvelgiama Pietų Afrikos akademinė profesija pokyčių universitetų valdymo ir administravimo srityse kontekste. Daroma išvada, kad Pietų Afrikos dėstytojai ir mokslininkai *de jure* ir *de facto* valdydami ir administruodami universitetus atsiduria tarp dviejų jėgų: nacionalinio ir institucinio valdymo bei studentijos. Tai kelia universitetų išlikimo grėsmę. Todėl labai laiku ir daug žadanti nauja iniciatyva yra tarptautinė Akademinės profesijos žinių visuomenėje (angl. APIKS) apklausa, kurioje dalyvavo Pietų Afrikos akademinės profesijos atstovai.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: akademinė profesija, aukštasis mokslas, vadybiškumas, studentų aktyvumas, Pietų Afrika.

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Introduction

The past thirty years have witnessed the massification of higher education in virtually every part of the world, and higher education has come to assume increasing importance with the rise of knowledge economies (that is where the production and consumption of new knowledge has become the driving axis of economies). The quality of any institution or enterprise can only be as good as its management or governance. Therefore, the recent spate of changes in university management, which took place at the same time as the massification of higher education, should be carefully considered, interrogated and assessed against its impact on capacity of the university fulfilling its unique role in society. The aim of this article is thus to evaluate the current changes in university management and governance, in the case of South Africa.

The article commences with a delineation of the unique functions or role of the university in society. Then the set of twenty-first century societal trends impacting on the university are surveyed, with special attention being paid to its effect on university governance and management. In the second part of the article the focus is then narrowed down to South Africa. The South African societal context and higher education context are discussed in turn, followed by a discussion on governance and management in South African higher education. The state of and trends in governance and management in South African higher education are assessed in the conclusion part of the article.

The university as unique institution in society

The lexical definition of a university is “an advanced autonomous educational institution for the promotion (teaching and research) of various branches of science” (*cf.* Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020). In virtually all societies the university constitutes the pinnacle of the national education project. During the course of history the belief has also taken root that one of the essential features of a university is autonomy, that is freedom to engage in its own activities of teaching, research and others (to be enumerated and discussed later in this section) without interference from the side of government or civil society.

The role or function of the university in society can be encapsulated in six points.

Firstly, the university is an institution of teaching and learning. Aligned with the definition of a university proffered above, of “an advanced educational institution for the promotion (teaching and research) of various branches of science”, this implies that several branches of learning should be taught and studied, at their most advanced level. A second function of a university is to conduct research. The idea is that teaching-learning and research should form a symbiosis: the results of research should be ploughed back into teaching-learning, to enrich and to improve curricula; conversely teaching-learning should be a training ground for the training of researchers.

A third role of the university is that of service. Out of all the purposes, service is probably the vaguest and most difficult to define. Some scholars contend that faculty service is “engagement”, others as “out-reach”. One comprehensive exposition of this function

of the university, is that of Ward (2003), in which he lists the full gamut of activities which could be taken as the service activities of the university. Ward (2003) divides these function activities as internal and external service activities. Internal service could, in turn, be sub-divided into on-campus and off-campus (discipline/scholarly field oriented) service activities. On-campus service includes institutional governance and institutional support, student advising or counseling (on matters outside the narrow scope of the curriculum) and academic oversight. Off-campus service activities which faculty occupy themselves with include service activities to disciplines or scholarly fields by means of membership and commitments to various associations, e.g., professional/scientific societies or publication-related activities (such as serving on editorial boards or acting as reviewers of papers). External service refers to the way higher education institutions put their expertise to the benefit of different external stakeholders and can include consulting, service learning, community action-based research, community upliftment projects, participation in cultural activities and civic service. Such service activities may be paid or unpaid, however the common factor among all service activities is that it is based on the expertise of faculty.

A fourth function of the university is to serve as the conscience of society, that is to critique society (cf. Habermas, 1968: 3–4). This purpose takes on particular significance at this time in history when societies and governments are pledging adherence to the Creed of Human Rights, and where humankind is facing challenges and critical issues such as the threat of ecological destruction and the possibilities created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The university can serve this purpose only on the condition that it is an autonomous institution, beyond influence of or dictates from government or any lobby sector in society.

In the fifth instance the university has a mission regarding the maintenance, the preservation and the development of culture. A sixth and final assignment of the university is with respect to innovation. This refers to innovation emanating from high levels of expertise knowledge of a scholarly type, and in a knowledge economy (as defined earlier) this purpose of the university comes very strongly to the fore. This function of the university can be seen in the number of patents hailing from universities.

Twenty-first century societal trends and its impact on the university

Notwithstanding autonomy as a (claimed or real) distinguishing feature of the university, the university as much as any other part of a (national) education system, gets shaped by societal forces. At least nine interrelated societal forces are driving a global higher education revolution, characterising higher education worldwide. These are demographic shifts, increasing affluence, the rise of knowledge economies, the neo-liberal economic revolution, the information, communication and transport technology (ICT) revolution, the rise of multicultural societies, democratisation, individualisation and the rise of the Creed of Human Rights.

The earth on aggregate is experiencing positive population growth. However, the bulk of this growth is in the Global South. The Global South has a young population, the

median age of the population of Africa is 19.7 years (versus 38.4 years for the United States of America) — the lowest of any region in the world. This means each year a growing number of young people knocks on the doors of universities in the Global South. The global population is an increasingly mobile population. This has implications for the internationalisation of universities, and for the vector of students from the Global South going to universities in the Global North.

Since 1990 one of the most enduring phases of economic upswing has been taking place. In the ten-year period 2005–2015, the global annual economic output has more than doubled, from US\$29.6 trillion to US\$78.3 trillion (World Bank, 2016). This rise has continued to reach US\$ 84.4 trillion in 2018 (World Bank, 2020). While at the time of writing (October 2020) the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remains uncertain, this upswing means more people can afford higher education. Two other economic trends are salient in the current era. The first is the rise of knowledge economies. As was explained in the introduction, this economic change adds even more value to education, and to higher education in particular. A second trend, coinciding with the economic upswing, has been the neo-liberal economic revolution. This revolution, which commenced around 1990 too, entailed the scaling down of the role of the state not only in the economy, but also in other societal sectors such as health services, transport, and — important for its impact on universities — education; giving the forces of the free market free reign.

The ICT revolution has created an instant 24-hour planetary information network, due to free access to and widespread use of the personal computer, the Internet, the fax machine, and the mobile telephone. The revolution has also made possible a more mobile global population, referred to earlier. Societies have become diverse, multicultural; replacing the more homogenous societies of past times.

Parallel to the economic upswing, and neo-liberal economic revolution, a process of democratisation has gained momentum in large parts of the world since 1990. It should be added that since about 2005, however, in many parts of the world, Africa in particular, many of the gains that had been made on the scale of democratisation since 1990, have been reversed since about 2005 (See Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). The process of democratisation, together with the rise of the Creed of Human Rights (to be discussed later), and the empowerment that the ICT revolution brought to individuals, have all added up to another trends in modern society, namely individualisation. Finally in the multireligious societies and world of today, the Creed of Human Rights has emerged as the new (global) moral order.

The combined result of all these societal trends was a global higher education revolution, which took off around 1990 (see Altbach *et al.*, 2009), and which is still gathering momentum today. The single key feature of this revolution is massification. In virtually every country in the world, enrolments have exploded, as higher education becomes more affordable to more people, and where democratisation, individualisation and the Creed of Human Rights were conducive to the belief that everyone is entitled to higher education. The ICT revolution meant that higher education could be brought to more

people, especially by means of distance education programmes. Globally higher education enrolments surged from 6.3 million in 1950 to 100.1 million in 2000, to 223.7 million in 2018 (UNESCO, 2020). Even after discounting global population growth, the enrolment explosion of higher education remains impressive. On global aggregate level, gross higher education enrolment ratios grew from 5 percent in 1950, to 19.8 percent in 2000, to virtually double again in the short space of eighteen years to reach 38.04 percent in 2018 (UNESCO, 2020).

The principles of the neo-liberal economic revolution were carried into the higher education sector too. The cost of higher education was shifted from state to consumer. However as far as the state remains a major (in most countries the largest) funder of higher education, in line with the fundamental tenets of the the neo-liberal economic revolution, the state now claims a say, and accountability from higher education institutions, bringing in danger the principle of academic autonomy.

Students, not only on strength of paying a substantial part of their study fees themselves, but also in line with the philosophy or beliefs brought by democracy, individualisation and the Creed of Human Rights, also claim a right to power and to have a say in the governance of universities.

The academic profession, and the historical student-professor dyad, searching unhindered for truth, as the guiding value for (also the management and governance) of the university, have been replaced by the principles of the neo-liberal economic revolution, such as the profit-motive, efficiency, and quality control, which now more and more become the principles upon which universities are governed, replacing the historical collegial model whereby (senior) faculty ran universities. Principles such as profitability, cost-effectiveness and efficiency are threatening the place of the search for truth as the summum bonum or highest value being pursued by the academic project. The academic profession finds itself sandwiched between on the one hand, the double layer managerialism of firstly institutional governance and on top of that governmental rulings, and on the other, an empowered and demanding student corps. As De Boer *et al.* (2007) clearly explains in the case of the higher education sector in the Netherlands, the decentralised, or fragmented governance model of age (very visible in disciplinary departments being the basic structural components of university), has been replaced by vertical, more centralised decision-making structures.

South African societal context

For the benefit of the reader less familiar with the South African context and secondly, true to the maxim in the scholarly field of Comparative and International Education that education systems are the outcome of shaping societal forces, and such education systems can only be comprehended against the background of such societal forces (see Wolhuter *et al.*, 2020), the South African societal context will now be surveyed, before turning to the South African higher education scene.

Geography

South Africa occupies 1.2 million square kilometres at the southernmost part of the African continent. Even in current times of globalisation, the benefit of the fruits of the ICT revolution and a “flat” world (the expression of the belief that in the contemporary world, whatever benefits geography has bestowed on a country, such as location or mineral resources, has been cancelled out by factors such as the ICT revolution and the knowledge economy), this location at the periphery of the world scientific, technological, educational, and economic system, with its central nerve centre far away in North-America and Western Europe, places the country in a disadvantageous position. Travelling to their counterparts and leaders in their scholarly fields in the leading academic nodes in the world, is for South African academics a costly and time-consuming, cumbersome undertaking.

Demography

The population of South Africa totals 61 million. The country is experiencing a high natural growth rate, on top of that there is a strong influx of (legal as well as illegal) immigrants from countries in Africa to the north of South Africa. Historically the population was by law classified in four categories: Blacks (these are South Africans of African descent, currently making up 80.2 per cent of the total population); “Coloureds” (a controversial term, indicating South African of mixed racial descent, 8.8 per cent); Indians (South Africans of Indian descent, 2.5 per cent); and Whites (South Africans of European descent, 8.4 per cent). While this legal classification has been done away with, these categories are still used for purposes of measuring equality of the lack thereof, and for implementing policies of affirmative action in the economy and employment.

Economy

While, in terms of the World Bank classification, South Africa is an upper middle income country, it is at the same time a poverty stricken country, with high and growing unemployment. Depending of which definition is used, the unemployment rate can be taken as topping the 50 percent mark. Over 10 million South Africans of working age are unemployed. Even in years before the Covid 19 pandemic economic growth was barely positive, and since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has turned into negative terrain.

Social system

South Africa has eleven official languages. These are (in bracket after each language appears the percentage of the population who speaks that language as their first language): isiZulu (23.8%), isiXhosa (17.6%), Afrikaans (13.3%), Sepedi (9.4%), English (8.2%), Setswana (8.2%), Sesotho (7.9%), Xitsonga (4.4%), siSwati (2.7%), Tshivenda (2.3%) and isiNdebele (1.6%).

Socio-economic inequalities are rife. The Gini-index of 62.5 is the second highest in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). As concern raising is the incidence

of social pathologies such as crime, including violent crime. What makes for an explosive cobintaaion, is that inequalities run largely coterminous with the racial divide; with Whites the most affluent and least plagued by unemployment, Blacks the least affluent and most plagued by unemployment — the burgeoning growth of a Black middle class the past quarter of a century despite — and Indians and “Coloureds” somewhere in between.

Politics

Not long after the first Europeans set foot in the territory what is South Africa today, they established a monopoly on political power. The Dutch East Indian Company set up a colony in 1652, taken over by the British Government in 1906. In 1926 South Africa attained Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth, and in 1961 became an independent republic outside of the British Commonwealth. As in all colonies of the time, policies of extreme racial segregation were followed, hardened after 1948 when the National Party, expounding an extreme form of such policies (named Apartheid) came to power. These policies met with increased rejection and resistance both within South Africa (among the Black population) and internationally. Schools and particularly universities where large numbers of students were Black were one of the main focal points of socio-political uproar against policies of segregation or Apartheid.

In 1994 negotiations between a wide spectrum of South Africans resulted in the adoption of a new Constitution, based on the Western liberal model, with universal adult franchise, buttressed by a Bill of Human Rights widely praised as one of the most progressive in the world. In recent years, widespread incidences of corruption, nepotism and cronyism, combined with ineffectuality of the state; have tarnished the prestige gained in 1994 (see Adré, 2020).

Religion and life- and world-philosophical forces

According to population census returns 76% of South Africans proclaim to be Christians. Here too the social divide is perceivable. Afrikaans-speaking Whites belong mainly to the Calvinist-Protestant churches which can trace their descent to the Calvinist church in the Netherlands. The biggest denomination of these is the Dutch Reformed Church. English speaking Whites belong to churches such as the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church. While all these churches also have Black members, Blacks are concentrated in the Africanist churches, such as the Zion Church of Christ. Many Blacks of all denominations practice a kind of syncretic religion, combining Christianity with elements of Traditional African religion, such as the worshipping of ancestors. Eighty percent of South Africans of Indian descents are Hindus, and 8% are Muslim.

On a secular plane the modern Western liberal, individualistic and materialistic philosophy, with its attendant value system has taken root in the country among all population groups, existing side by side with traditional cultures and their philosophical systems, with religious groupings with their philosophical systems, and with political groupings, with their philosophical overtones.

Higher education in South Africa

Formal education (at least in the form it is present in the contemporary world) in South Africa commenced soon after the Dutch East Indian Company in 1652 founded a refreshment station where Cape Town is today. During the first century and a half, those few who went for higher education went abroad, i.e. to the Netherlands and after the colony changed hands in 1806 to become a British colony, to the United Kingdom. The first university in South Africa was the University of the Cape of Good Hope, founded in 1873 under the auspices of the then British colonial administration (this University eventually became the University of Cape Town in 1916). This was in time followed by the creation of ten other universities, the last one being the Rand Afrikaans University, established in 1967. All of these universities were meant to supply higher education for the White population. They all were modeled on the liberal-academic example of universities exuded by the motherland, the United Kingdom (Wolhuter, 2009-1: 361).

Higher education for Black South Africans began in 1916, when the South African Native College was established at Lovedale. This institution became an autonomous university in 1949 under the name of the University of Fort Hare. The year 1948 is a key date in South African history. The National Party came into power and implemented a policy of total racial segregation (the policy of *Apartheid*). For each of the homelands (territories set aside for the occupation of each of the Black ethnic groups) a university was eventually established. In this way a further ten universities came into being. Progressive political opinion in South Africa, and especially among the political organizations of Black South Africans rejected the entire notion of segregated universities.

The industrialisation and the development of a strong mining sector, and the general economic development of the country necessitated the development of higher education institutions offering education of a technical-vocational kind. For this purpose a new kind of institution, called a Technikon came into being in the twentieth century. By the end of the 1980s, there were thirteen Technikons in South Africa: seven for Whites and six for Blacks.

When a new socio-political dispensation commenced in 1994, the new government formulated a new education policy, based upon the following four principles (*cf.* Wolhuter, 1999):

- Democratization: education and training should be built upon the principle democracy, characterized by the active participation by all parties, i.e. teachers, students, parents, and community
- Equity
- Desegregation
- Multicultural education.

Furthermore, the entire education system should be geared toward the realization of the potential of the entire population, with the societal goals of economic development and the molding of national unity as final goals (Wolhuter, 2009: 365).

In the years since 1994, a major shake-up of the institutional fabric of South African higher education took place.

In 2001 the Minister of Education announced his National Plan for Higher Education (Republic of South Africa, 2001). Although the main motivations given for this radical reform of the higher education landscape in South Africa were equity (ending segregation and the inequality between institutions catering for students from different racial groups, and creating single, integrated institutions of higher education) and to end the unnecessary duplication of institutions (having more than institutions of higher education catering for different racial groups in close geographical proximity), the result of this plan did not achieve this. The result was, however, the diminishing of the number of higher education institutions from 36 to 24 (subsequently two new public universities were established). Some of the technikons merged with each other and some merged with universities (the most conspicuous example of this was the Technikon RSA merging with the University of South Africa, to create a single distance education higher education institution in South Africa), but the majority remained as they were.

In 2003 the Minister of Education announced that the name “technikon” will be done away with and be replaced with “University of Technology”. All the technikons henceforth became known as Universities of Technology. Apart from this name-change, and the fact that they could from then on also grant degrees (up to doctoral level) and no longer only diplomas as in the past, nothing changed regarding the technikons.

Since 1994 great strides have been made regarding enrolment growth. Higher education enrolments have swollen from 495 355 in 1994 (Wolhuter, 2009) to 1 116 017 in 2017 (latest available figures) (UNESCO, 2020). As can be seen in table 1, on the equalisation front (at least at the point of participation in higher education) great progress has occurred since 1994, though the composition of the student corps still does not correspond one hundred percent to the population profile of South Africa.

Table 1. Student Corps at South African Public Universities, per Population Group (percentages)

Year	Population group	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
1994		43	5	7	45	100
2005		63	6	6	25	100
2016		73	6	5	16	100
Population group percentage of total South African population		76.4	8.9	2.5	9.1	100*

(Sources of data: Wolhuter, 2009, 2014-2; RSA, 2018).

*3.1 percent of the population are unspecified regarding population group

However impressive enrolment growths and equalization appear from enrolment statistics, South African higher education is plagued by high attrition rates. Fifty five percent of all students at South African universities and forty five percent of students at residential universities leave these institutions after about four or five years without

having graduated (Smit, 2020: 8). What is making matters worse is that it is that the attrition rates are much higher among Black students, i.e. wiping out gains made on the equalization front at the enrolment point (see Wolhuter, 2014-1).

The above enrolment and equalization figures should also be qualified by noting that these are aggregate figures. Higher up on the academic ladder a more skewed pattern emerges. The percentage of Black students in the PhD graduation class has grown from 25 percent in 2000 to 47 percent in 2015 (latest available figures at time of writing) (Mouton *et al.*, 2019: 36), i.e. once again significant progress, but (this time even more than aggregate enrolment figures) not reflecting the demography of South Africa.

Governance and management in South African higher education

As was noted above, South African universities commenced as a transplantation of the Western (particularly the British) university. Part of that model was institutional and academic autonomy, as guiding principle in the governance and management of the university.

One aspect of the history of South Africa was that since the country left the Commonwealth in 1961, its policies of racial segregation (Apartheid) resulted in it becoming increasingly ostracized from the international community. It found itself at the receiving end of a wide range of sanctions and boycotts in the economy, trade, sports, politics and culture. The latter included an academic boycott. The extent of this academic boycott is well covered by Harricombe & Lancaster (1995), and included a refusal to accept South African students and academics at universities abroad (be it for long term or short term visits of whatever nature), a refusal to visit South African universities by academics and students at universities abroad, a refusal to accept South African participation at conferences abroad, a refusal to attend scientific conferences organised in South Africa; and a refusal by scholarly journals to publish articles authored by South African academics. However, one often unnoticed and unintended part of this international academic boycott was that South African universities were shielded from developments taking place at universities globally. One of these developments was the creeping managerialism at universities that came in the wake of the neo-liberal economic revolution which (as outlined above) began in the countries of Western Europe and North America in the 1980s; and which carried into universities the principles of a free-market economy, such as the profit-motive, performance appraisal and performativity, quality assurance, and cost-effectiveness.

However, when South Africa re-joined the international fold after 1994, and in the wake of the socio-political reconstruction that commenced at the time, for a combination of reasons, this wave of managerialism came down onto South African universities and the academic profession at double speed and at double weight, compared to the outside world, where it developed relatively gradually. This can be ascribed to a number of factors in the South African context. Government assumed a more commanding role

in higher education. For example, in the past there was an Act of Parliament for every university, enacted when the university was established. In 1997 government scrubbed all these acts and replaced them with one Higher Education Act, making government interference easier. Universities were staffed, especially at the echelons of senior staff and management, by staff still coming from the pre-1994 era, and in this regard Johnson (2004) describes a concern-raising trend of leadership perceivable widely across civil society (from the media to churches to universities to business and industry) to rather volunteer compliance than to risk being labeled as hankering back to pre-1994 days. Thus a new regime of quality control for universities was set in place, in any case easily justified in terms of international practice which had developed in recent decades worldwide (see Harris-Huemmert, 2010). The rising managerialism in the higher education sector, is double layered. Thus it was also the case in South Africa: prescriptions from government were not only to be enacted by institutional management, but in this process a new layer of managerialism developed and thrived at the level of institutional management.

The result was that a depressing managerialism descended down on the academic profession in South Africa, so much so that when the international Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey of the academic profession took place in 2008, of the 23 participating countries, South African academics scored the highest values on all questions pertaining to managerialism (see Wolhuter *et al.*, 2011). The following can serve as an example:

Table 2. *South African Academics' Experience of Institutional Governance, Results of the international Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey of the academic profession, 2008*

Responses to statement	% of respondents in agreement	% of respondents neutral	% of respondents in disagreement
At my university there is a top-down management style			
South African academics	69	19	12
Canadian academics	52	27	21
Italian academics	52	32	16
At my university there is a cumbersome administrative process			
South African academics	62	27	11
Canadian academics	65	24	11
Italian academics	53	25	22

Source of data: CAP database.

When considering management and governance, however, the double layered managerialism from national and institutional governance is not the only centre of power to factor into the equation. In the survey above it has been pointed out that one of the trends in the modern world is that of democratization, and in the global higher education revolution that is manifested in the increasing power and clout wielded by the student corps. In this regard too, South Africa is no exception. In recent decades, and espe-

cially within the context of the new socio-political dispensation since 1994, students were granted increasing power within university settings. This is evident in for example mandatory lecturer evaluation by students (a few decades unthinkable in South Africa), students gaining seats and votes in panels selecting and appointing staff (including the most senior staff, up to the level of rectors), and students getting a place in all policy formulating and planning structures and committees. However, as far as student power is concerned, South Africa also (as in the case of managerialism from above) falls in a category other than other countries. In South Africa schools and particularly universities were loci of the socio-political turmoil in the run-up to the changes of 1994. Education and equalization of education, and the large numbers of youth in South Africa, all served to emboldened students, in continuing the militant, activist culture of entitlement after 1994. In one spate of activism on campuses in 2015, damage to property to the extent of South African Rand 150 million (roughly US\$ 10 million) was incurred (Tandwa, 2016). Even very progressive Education scholar, Harold Herman (2020: 50), a former Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape, and himself an alumni of a historically Black university, complains about this culture of entitlement and activism that currently characterises South African student life. Similarly Even very progressive South African social commentators, such as Mondli Makhanya (2020) have expressed their unreserved objection to this kind of activism. The intimidation and threatening behaviour of activist groups of students have brought an entire academic programme to a standstill, where for weeks, no lectures or any academic activities are possible (for a vivid description of protracted turmoil in 2015-16 at one of the top universities in South Africa, and the heavy toll it exacted on the personal life of the rector, see University of the Witwatersrand Adam Habib's personal account, Habib, 2019).

Conclusion

Thus South African academics, as far as (*de jure* and *de facto*) governance and management at their universities are concerned, find themselves sandwiched between two forces: from national and institutional governance on top, and the student corps from the bottom. The university, maintaining its integrity, as defined in the beginning of the article, and for fulfilling its unique role in society, as outlined earlier, is contingent on two principles: pursuing excellence and safeguarding its autonomy. These new poles of power structures which the South African academic profession finds itself squeezed in between, are undermining these principles, posing a clear and perceivable danger to the integrity of the university, as has been pointed out by scholars and education commentators across the spectrum: from conservative scholar and erstwhile rector of the University of Pretoria Flip Smit (Smit, 2020), to liberal academic and journalist RW Johnson (2012), to progressive scholar and erstwhile rector of the University of the Free State Jonathan Jansen (2017). Since 1994 South Africa has been identified as a poignant case for the rest of the world (see Johnson, 2019), also by scholars of Education, including, by a scholar no less than renowned Sociology of Education scholar Michael Young (see Whilby, 2018). A new round surveying the South African academic profession, as

provided for by the Academic Profession in Knowledge Society (APIKS) international survey of the academic profession currently taking place, therefore appears both timely and promising.

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