

Chapter 8

The University of Fort Hare in post-apartheid South Africa

Nico Cloete & Ian Bunting

Introduction

Building on the ideas of scholars such as Alexander von Humboldt, Cardinal Newman and Clark Kerr, Manuel Castells theorised the core functions of the university within the changing conditions of globalisation and the knowledge economy. According to Castells (2001), historically, and to a greater or lesser extent, universities play a role in four functions, which may be summarised as follows:

- As ideological apparatuses involved in the production of values (citizenship) for individuals, and in the social legitimisation for, or contestation of, the state. Despite claims to the contrary, the formation and diffusion of ideology is still a fundamental role of modern universities.
- The selection of the dominant elites, which is accompanied by a socialisation process that includes the formation of networks for the social cohesion of the elite, as well as a social configuration which makes a distinction between the elite and the rest of society. Despite increased access to and participation in higher education over the past few decades, and greater differentiation between universities (where some have become more elite and others less so), the university remains a meritocratic selector of elites.
- Training of the labour force, which has always been a basic function of the professional university – from the training of church bureaucrats to the Chinese Imperial bureaucratic systems, which extended to the emerging professions of medicine, law and engineering. Over time, the conception of training changed from the reproduction or transmission of ‘accepted’ knowledge to ‘learning to learn’, ‘continuous education’ or creating ‘self-programmable’ workers, all

of which refer to the ability to adapt to different occupations and new technologies throughout one's professional life.

- The production of scientific knowledge follows the emergence of the German research university during the second half of the eighteenth century, and later the American Land-Grant University model, with its specific focus on science with application to society. This knowledge production function is now an imperative in the development of knowledge economies.

Importantly, Castells argued that no single university can fulfil all of these functions simultaneously or equally well, essentially compelling universities to find ways of managing the tensions that arise from performing often contradictory functions. And, since institutions often shift or change functions, the extent to which the university is able to manage these tensions depends on institutional capacity (academic and managerial), as well as the existence of a national higher education and research system (*ibid.*).

In this chapter, we draw on Castells' framework in order to reflect on the range of functions undertaken by the University of Fort Hare (UFH) over its 100-year history. In addition to a historical and sociological account, we also consider key performance indicators as a proxy for an assessment of the extent to which UFH has succeeded in fulfilling its training and knowledge production functions.

The University of Fort Hare in the post-1994 context

The much-anticipated transformation of higher education following the transition to democracy in 1994 confronted South African universities, and UFH among them, with very complex and contradictory challenges. As Badat (2004) observed, policy-making and transformation were not only conditioned by visions, goals and policies, but also by the paradoxes, ambiguities, contradictions, possibilities and constraints of the structural and conjectural conditions at the time.

Specifically, UFH was faced with two major challenges. First, and rather ironically, joining the national university system resulted in a reduction in government funding. Under the apartheid regime, it had received more funds from the Ciskei homeland government (on average, about 55% more) than was paid to a comparably sized South African university. Secondly, under tremendous pressure to transform their racial profiles, historically advantaged (white) universities attracted and recruited the best black students and

staff, resulting in a brain drain from UFH and a number of other historically black institutions.

As a result, by 2000, when the Minister of Education appointed a National Working Group to assist with the re-organisation of the apartheid higher education institutional landscape through processes of merger and incorporation, the overall picture of UFH was that, while it had a proud history in South African higher education, it was essentially a rural university in a small and remote town. According to the Working Group report (MoE 2002), declines in its intake of first-time entering undergraduates (down by 16% since 1995) had affected its enrolment stability, forcing the university to rely on the registration of large numbers of teachers for in-service programmes in education. Its graduation rates also declined (by 32%) and its research outputs were low. Weak financial indicators towards the end of the 1990s reflected poor liquidity and unsustainable levels of personnel expenditure relative to income received. If various environmental conditions became adverse, then the university's ability to survive would be placed in doubt.

The plan proposed by the National Working Group was bold in terms of changing the institutional landscape, and radical in the South African context since, instead of the usual focus on human resources, it exhibited strong undertones of regional and metropolitan development, something unheard of in the country before. Specifically with regard to the Eastern Cape, the Working Group proposed that one multi-campus university should be established in the East London metropolitan area and in the rural areas to the north and north-west of the city. This would involve the merger of Rhodes University with UFH; a reduction in academic programmes offered on the Alice campus of UFH; and the disestablishment of the University of Transkei (apart from the incorporation of its medical faculty into the new university). This new higher education institution would be expected to offer only university programmes, and to develop a major East London campus as the base from which it would grow and link to the designation of East London as an industrial development zone by the provincial government (*ibid.*).

Concurrent with National Working Group, the Centre for Higher Education Transformation and the Eastern Cape Higher Education Association undertook a study of higher education in the Eastern Cape and made proposals about restructuring the higher education landscape in this region (Pillay & Cloete 2002). These proposals informed the National Working Group discussions. The first proposal,

a 'Comprehensive Higher Education System for Buffalo City and the Eastern Corridor', was based on the view that development, including rural development, is essentially driven from urban centres. From this perspective it becomes essential to link the rural hinterland with the urban centres. Such links would be predicated on soft boundaries with high levels of connectivity and collaboration. The areas included in such a collaborative overarching arrangement would be greater East London, Umtata, Queenstown, Butterworth, Bisho and Alice (integrating UFH and the University of Transkei). This proposal was based on the recognition that this would be primarily an undergraduate system, with a career-orientated, vocational skills focus, and improved access and mobility for students in the region.

The second proposal, the 'Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Higher Education System', would be a vertically integrated system that would include the University of Port Elizabeth, the Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University, Port Elizabeth Technikon and Russell Road College (a technical college). Such a system would allow for the rationalisation of fields of study, cross-registration of students, resource-sharing and enhanced articulation and vertical mobility. The third proposal was for 'Independent Institutions with Strong Programme Collaboration'. This would mean that UFH, Rhodes, University of Port Elizabeth and Transkei would remain independent universities but with strong programme collaboration and cross-institutional accreditation. It also included a proposal to include a 'rural cost factor' in government funding in order to facilitate this.

These proposals, as well as those made by the National Working Group, were rejected by the South African government in favour of preserving and strengthening the heritage of UFH, given its role and history in the development of black intellectuals and social and political leaders, both in South Africa and in Africa more generally (*ibid.*). In the end, UFH incorporated the East London campus of Rhodes University in 2004 and retained its status as a 'traditional' university (a category alongside the newly created comprehensive universities and universities of technology). As a traditional university, the government expectations were that UFH would offer basic academic programmes up to the three-year degree level in the sciences and humanities, as well as four- and five-year degrees which could lead to accreditation in a recognised profession, rather than undergraduate vocational diplomas or certificates.

Although the government rejected the Comprehensive Buffalo City scenario, it did implement the proposed Nelson Mandela Metropolitan

Higher Education System, except for the proposed inclusion of Russell College. It merged the University of Port Elizabeth and Port Elizabeth Technikon, and incorporated the Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University into the new institution, which became Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Reflections on the functions undertaken by the University of Fort Hare

Over the course of its history, UFH has made its own unique contributions, to larger or lesser degrees, to the four functions of universities outlined by Castells. As will be seen, the university's role in the first three functions – as ideological apparatus, and in the formation of the dominant elite and training of the labour force – has shifted and changed along, with the different imperatives and conditions of the colonial, apartheid and post-1994 democratic eras. By contrast, UFH's role in the production of knowledge is a relatively recent development, but one which has strengthened rapidly.

Ideological and elite selection functions

For much of its existence, UFH has largely been defined as a point of contestation to the dominant colonial values of the white-dominated society. Originally established in 1916 as the South African Native College, it was created specifically for selecting and educating African elites, including the children of chiefs. Elite in this sense refers to the percentage of the population that participates in higher education. Even by 1986, only 5% of Africans in the 20–24 year-old age group were in higher education, compared to more than 60% of whites. But the African students did not come from elite backgrounds or schools (NCHE 1996). With so few university opportunities for Africans during apartheid, UFH attracted the *crème de la crème* – not only from South Africa, but also from other African countries. However, in the post-apartheid era, top students and staff have been attracted to and recruited by the world-ranked institutions in urban areas such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban.

At an ideological level, the 'Christianising' and 'civilising' functions of the university were seen as paramount, and were reflected in a curriculum which focused on subjects such as theology, education and social work. In the British-inspired colonial model of indirect rule, it was necessary for Africans to be educated to perform administrative

tasks to support the functioning of the system. This included training clerks, teachers, nurses and bureaucrats, who could be sent out to service communities in the African reserves, and to ensure that they were well-administered, did not revolt, and that taxes were collected. In short, the university was seen to fulfil a crucial ideological and social function in legitimising state power and authority (Kerr 1968; Massey 2010).

As far as the missionaries, white academics and administrators of the university were concerned, the institution had potential beyond this limited role. They worked with dedication – not only to produce black state functionaries, but also to train Africans in disciplines such as science, Latin, literature and philosophy. High-level postgraduate academic training in these areas was, however, not offered at UFH. Nevertheless, some of the students who attended the university in the first half of the twentieth century were able to travel overseas, sometimes with support from the university, to become medical doctors, scientists and academics in their own right. Two outstanding examples of this were DTT Jabavu and ZK Matthews, both of whom started at UFH and then trained overseas in the UK and America, before returning to take up academic posts back at the university. In fact, Matthews was later to become the first black vice-chancellor of the university in the 1950s (Higgs 1997; Kerr 1968).

The presence of black academic staff at the institution from the late 1920s, together with an admissions policy which allowed people of all races to enrol, created a space for critical debate and engagement with issues of racism and white domination. Under the auspices of its mixed student body, in the 1930s UFH articulated an ideology of non-racialism that it put into practise on campus. The university was also a site where the Hertzog Bills of 1936, which entrenched land alienation and removed the limited political rights Africans enjoyed on the voters' role in the Cape Province, were fiercely debated and contested. In this period, the student body at the university, with support from academic staff, emerged as a major site of resistance to both segregation and apartheid (Higgs 1997; Kerr 1968).

In the 1940s, this role was further entrenched through the participation of staff and students in drafting documents such as the 'Africans' Claims in South Africa' manifesto for equal rights adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1943, and later in the formation of the ANC Youth League. This proved to be decisive in the development of mass-based resistance politics in South Africa. Both the ANC and its Africanist off-shoot, the Pan Africanist Congress,

were reinvented in the 1950s on the basis of the political energy and resistance at UFH. The ANC Youth League at the university was arguably the political engine for this transformation of resistance politics and the formation of new and more radical forms of African nationalism.

In 1959, the apartheid government acted decisively against UFH and other institutions that promoted a subversive resistance politics by passing the Extension of University Education Act, which made provision for the establishment of separate tertiary institutions for blacks, Indians, coloureds and whites. As such, this Act aligned African higher education with 'Bantu education', stripping mission institutions of any role in the university, and transformed universities such as Fort Hare into Bantustan universities. The new function of UFH was thus to assist the apartheid state in transforming the tiny and isolated Ciskei Native Reserve (within which the university was located) into a Xhosa national state. In this period, UFH lost its progressive staff, who either resigned or were weeded out by the new Afrikaner, quasi-military leadership of the university. The students, however, refused to accept the new dispensation and continued to use the campus to resist apartheid. In the teeth of apartheid repression, students of Fort Hare continued to fly the flag of African liberation. But, in practice, many of its graduates were press-ganged into the homeland bureaucracy, which was later amalgamated into the post-apartheid Eastern Cape provincial administration (Bank & Bank 2013; Massey 2010).

In the post-apartheid period, the intellectual and political role of UFH in the creation of African nationalism in southern Africa has been lionised and acknowledged globally. As an institution, it stands alone in producing five post-independence African heads of state, as well as accounting for the majority of the liberation icons in South Africa, including Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and Govan Mbeki. It is the loadstar of African liberation politics in southern Africa, but has also become an important training ground for the construction of a new, Africanised, ANC-aligned bureaucracy in South Africa. It is this functional role, combined with a broad legitimisation of the ANC as the ruling party, that has defined the university's role in the post-apartheid era. Arguably, however, the reconstruction of UFH as a 'heritage institution' for African nationalism has discouraged its staff and students from contributing to the debates about political renewal and ideological reorientation within the ANC and liberation movements more broadly.

In order to maintain and expand on its historical legacy, UFH has also embarked on a broad programme of opening up recruitment to

staff and postgraduate students from across Africa. This has created an ideological fault line at the university, specifically in the context of the ongoing protests across South African universities relating to student fees and broader transformation issues. Indeed, there has been growing agitation and discontent in the UFH student body at the failure of the university to provide new trajectories into the middle class, beyond the bureaucracy which is now becoming oversubscribed. Furthermore, students have made demands for a kind of fee structure, admissions policy and service that would benefit young black South African nationals, rather than students from other African countries.

Training of the labour force

A basic assumption following the independence of African nations in the 1960s and 1970s was that universities were expected to be key contributors to the human resource needs of their countries, and particularly in relation to the civil service and the professions. This was to address the acute shortages in these areas that were the result of the gross underdevelopment of universities under colonialism. Fort Hare, in contrast, started with theological education and training. But, as apartheid tightened its ideological grip in the 1960s, the university became more of a 'state tool to build a nation within a nation' (Thakrar 2017); in other words, it would produce graduates who could serve the needs of the homeland in which it was situated, training administrators (for the public service rather than for business) and teachers and nurses (rather than doctors or engineers).

By 1994, the enrolment shape of UFH was pretty much how the apartheid government had intended it, with a high proportion (62%) of students enrolled in humanities and teacher training programmes, leaving 24% in science and technology and 14% in business and management programmes. Significantly, not much has changed in the pursuant years. Following the incorporation of the East London campus of Rhodes University in 2004, figures show (Table 8.1) that the greatest increase in graduates occurred in the humanities and social sciences which, in 2014, constituted 44% of the total output. While the number of graduates in science, engineering and technology (SET) grew at a healthy annual rate of around 13% over the period, they still only constituted a quarter of the total. Business and management sciences had the highest average annual growth rate, but, along with education, still constitute the smallest proportion of the graduating class.

Table 8.1: University of Fort Hare total graduates by fields of study, 2004 and 2014

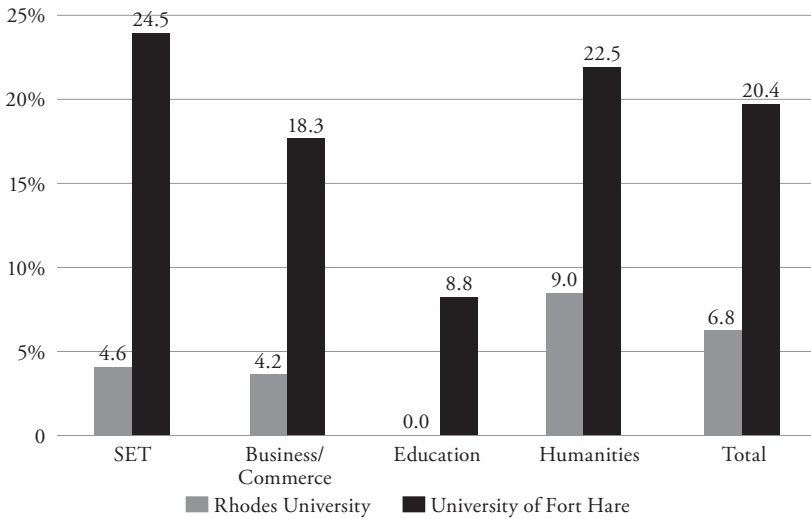
	2004: merger date	% of total	2014	% of total	Average annual increase from date of merger: 2004–2014	Increase in totals: 2014 vs. 2004
Science and technology	236	19%	783	25%	12.7%	547
Business & management sciences	87	7%	489	15%	18.8%	402
Education	503	40%	523	16%	0.4%	20
Humanities & social sciences	418	34%	1 393	44%	12.8%	975
Total	1 244	100%	3 188	100%	9.9%	1 944

Source: Compiled by Ian Bunting from the Department of Higher Education and Training's Higher Education Management Information System data

A study comparing Rhodes University and UFH graduates of 2010 and 2011 regarding study choices and employment transitions (Rogan & Reynolds 2015) is very revealing. At Rhodes, about 60% of graduates who intended to study a discipline within SET successfully completed a degree in this broad field. Among UFH graduates, just less than half (48%) of those who intended to obtain a SET degree did so. Rhodes graduates were also significantly more likely than UFH graduates to complete the degree in which they originally intended to enrol. UFH graduates who changed their study category between leaving school and university graduation, switched to humanities. The main reason provided for changing from the initial intended course of study differed between the groups. Among UFH students, 32% indicated that their school marks were not good enough to gain entry or to complete their studies. Financial pressures were also a consideration, with 7% indicating a perceived lack of jobs in their initial choice of study, or a lack of scholarship opportunities (14%). By comparison, 48% of Rhodes graduates reported loss of interest as their motivation for switching their course of study.

With regard to the transition from university to the labour market, the two most striking findings of the study were the differences in unemployment rates and employment sectors (*ibid.*). On average, the unemployment rate among Rhodes graduates was 7%, while that among the UFH graduates was almost three times higher (20%). Contrary to popular belief, the lowest unemployment rate for both

Figure 8.1: Broad unemployment rates by field of study (as of 1 March 2014)



Source: Rogan & Reynolds (2015)

groups was in education. For UFH students the highest unemployment was in SET while for Rhodes it was the humanities. This certainly raises many labour market and quality of programmes issues. The most dramatic finding in relation to employment was that the vast majority (73%) of Rhodes graduates were employed in the private sector, while 67% of UFH graduates found employment in the government sector. These findings imply that UFH has not shaken off its traditional African and homeland mission of predominantly training students for work in government. There are exceptions such as the accountancy training programme in East London, but it is difficult to expect UFH to change its profile and brand unless it can offer programmes in medicine, engineering and regional niche areas.

The production of scientific knowledge

Castells (2001) argued that the major area of underperformance of universities in Africa is in the research or ‘generation of new knowledge’ function. Tellingly, Africa is at the bottom of almost every indicator-based ranking and league table in science and higher education (Zeleza 2016). A recent assessment of eight flagship universities in sub-Saharan Africa concluded that while these institutions had done well in elite selection and training, they had not been very effective in developing social legitimization

or cohesion (Cloete, Bunting et al. 2015). And, with the exception of the University of Cape Town, they had fared poorly in terms of knowledge production (i.e. doctorates and research outputs) (*ibid.*).

Prior to 2006, UFH had minimal interaction with national policy frameworks and knowledge production initiatives, and research-facilitating structures were fragmented and uncoordinated across the institution (Cloete & Bunting 2013). This situation changed after 2006 when UFH started a process of developing a new strategic plan in order to avoid being classified as a low-ranked teaching university in South Africa. The shifts that occurred were underpinned by a realisation that research capacity development for academic staff and postgraduate students should be a priority. This was connected to the centralisation and strengthening of research administration, which allowed for a greater sense of planned facilitation, monitoring and evaluation of research efforts. Further interventions were the development of a strategic research plan for 2009–2016, the restructuring of the research management division, and the identification of key research funders and possible niche areas. In addition, an incentive scheme for research outputs was put in place which included USD 2 000 for each accredited research article, USD 2 000 for each masters graduate, USD 6 000 for each doctoral graduate, and USD 1 500 for winners of the vice-chancellor's senior and emerging researcher medals.

As the figures below show, these strategic interventions have supported and encouraged the development of UFH's knowledge production function from its very limited beginnings. For the purposes of this chapter, high-level knowledge production is conceptualised in terms of inputs and outputs (Cloete, Bunting et al. 2015). Inputs include the seniority and qualifications of academic staff employed by a university, as well as doctoral enrolments. The outputs include doctoral graduates and research publications in the form of journal articles and published proceedings of research conferences. Senior academics (professors, associate professors and senior lecturers), and especially those with PhDs, are important for knowledge production since they are qualified to supervise students. They are also much more likely to publish (see e.g. Cloete et al. 2016).

Over the period 2006–2015, the number of senior academics at UFH increased from 105 to 154, an annual increase of 4.3%. Despite this improvement, the proportion of senior academic staff (45%) in 2015 fell short of the policy target of 60%, which has been used in assessing the performance of traditional universities. There was also a substantial increase in the number of academic staff with doctorates, from 54 in 2006 to 145 in 2015. This constitutes an average annual

change of around 12%, which is much higher than at a university such as Rhodes (3%). However, since UFH started its growth from such a low base, it still did not quite meet the traditional universities' policy target of 60% of academic staff to hold doctoral degrees.

UFH also expanded its doctoral student enrolments rapidly over the period, at the very high average annual rate of 24%, from 90 doctoral enrolments in 2006 to 637 in 2015. The 2015 doctoral enrolments were 4.7% of UFH's total student enrolment which meant that UFH had come close to meeting the traditional university target of 5% of enrolments to be in doctoral programmes. By way of comparison, Rhodes in 2015 had 560 doctoral enrolments and a ratio of doctoral enrolments to total student enrolments of 7%. Doctoral graduates also grew rapidly from only 9 in 2006 to 60 in 2015, an average annual increase of just over 23%.

Further details of UFH's doctoral enrolments and graduates in 2007 and 2015 can be seen in Table 8.2 below. The table shows that doctoral enrolments in all fields grew rapidly between 2007 and 2015. The highest increase was in education doctoral enrolments, which grew more than 10-fold from 12 in 2007 to 115 in 2015. Doctoral enrolments in agriculture grew four-fold from 18 in 2007 to 76 in 2015. Doctoral enrolments in the life, physical and mathematical sciences also grew four-fold over this period, from 33 in 2007 to 133 in 2015. Doctoral graduation rates appear to be slow, but could be catching up with

Table 8.2: University of Fort Hare doctoral enrolments and graduates by field of study, 2007 and 2015

	Doctoral enrolments		Doctoral graduates	
	2007	2015	2007	2015
Agriculture	18	76	2	11
Life, physical & mathematical sciences	37	133	4	17
Health & clinical sciences	0	23	0	0
Economics & management	0	18	0	3
Education	12	115	2	13
Public administration	0	62	0	7
Humanities & social sciences	88	210	2	9
Totals	155	637	10	60

Source: Cloete et al. (2016)

enrolment growth. The 60 doctoral graduates of 2015 were 9.4% of doctoral enrolments in that year, compared to the target ratio of 15% which has been used as a national performance target.

At the national level, research outputs are incentivised as part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's funding framework, which was implemented in 2006. The funding formula does not set fixed prices for research outputs; instead, it divides the research budget allocation between universities on the basis of their share of the total outputs in a given year. These outputs consist of research article publications, published research conference proceedings, chapters in research books, and include research masters graduates and doctoral graduates. The breakdown for 2007 and 2015 of UFH's research output totals can be seen in Table 8.3 below.

Table 8.3: University of Fort Hare research output totals, 2007 and 2015

Type of research output	2007	2015
Research articles	63	325
Research conference proceedings	3	9
Chapters in research books	7	3
Total research publications	77	337
Research masters graduates	37	153
Doctoral graduates	10	60
Total (unweighted) research output	124	550
Weighted total (with doctoral graduates weighted by 3)	144	670

Source: Cloete et al. (2016)

In 2007, UFH's weighted research output total was 0.93% of the national total for public universities, and in 2015 was 2.2%. The financial impact of this increased share was considerable. In 2007, UFH received ZAR 16 million in research output subsidies, and in 2015 ZAR 72 million. This represents an average annual increase in nominal rands of over 20%, and in real rands of at least 13%.

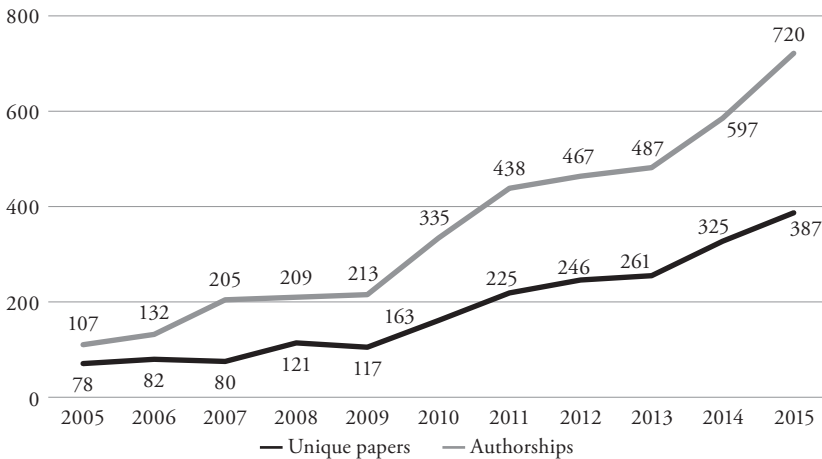
As can be seen in Table 8.3, a substantial component of UFH's increase in research outputs between 2007 and 2015 was in research articles. Mouton and Valentine (2016) have concluded, based on various analyses of South Africa's research output, that the introduction of the Department of Higher Education and Training's 2006 funding

framework, along with some other factors, has resulted in steep and sustained increases in the number of research publications across the South African higher education sector.

As Figure 8.2 below shows, since 2005 there has been an annual increase of around 18% in publication outputs at UFH which, albeit starting from a low base, is one of the steepest in South Africa. This is due to an extraordinary increase in research article production, especially over the last three years, reaching a total of 387 papers in 2015 compared to 80 in 2007. It should be noted that the differences between the Table 8.3 totals of 63 articles in 2007 and 325 in 2015, and those in Figure 8.2, result from the government subsidy rule that a full article unit can be credited to a university only if all its authors are from that university.

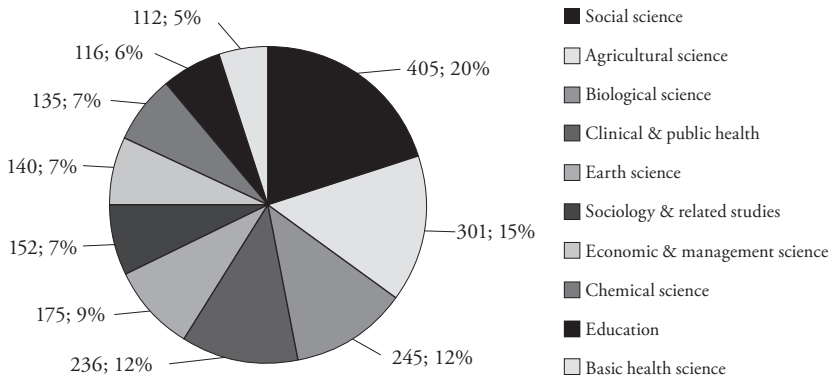
Figure 8.3 shows that the majority of UFH’s publication outputs are in the social sciences, followed by agriculture and the biological sciences – a surprising development given that agriculture, biological sciences and public health have traditionally been UFH’s strongest fields. If one looks at changes in the number of publications in specific fields from 2007 to 2015, it can be seen that while agriculture remained somewhat constant (from 111 to 131), the biological sciences decreased (from 40 to 26). The most dramatic increases were in fields such as the chemical sciences (13 to 81), economic and management sciences (1 to 74), education (12 to 78), sociology and related studies (0 to 156), and ‘other’ social sciences (12 to 239).

Figure 8.2: Publication trends at the University of Fort Hare, 2005–2015



Source: Mouton & Valentine (2017)

Figure 8.3: University of Fort Hare publication output by scientific field, 2007–2015



Source: Mouton & Valentine (2017)

Concerns about the state of high-level knowledge production at the University of Fort Hare

The data in the previous subsection show that UFH has engaged in concerted attempts at the institutional level to boost research outputs in the form of doctoral enrolments and graduations, and publications. It should be noted that UFH has been the most successful of the historically disadvantaged universities in strengthening its knowledge production function. This has contributed to increased government subsidies for doctoral student enrolments, and in particular for research masters and doctoral graduates and for publication outputs. Furthermore, by increasing its research outputs, UFH has been able to improve its external profile and to attract more interest from funders for research grants.

However, the system of increased government subsidies for knowledge outputs, together with institutional financial incentives, has put pressure on both UFH as an institution and individual staff members to over-report and overproduce. According to Harzing (2016), there is considerable evidence internationally that increased publication outputs associated with direct financial incentives can be linked to a reduction in quality (measured in terms of a decrease in citations). In addition to the perverse effect of incentives, there is also pressure on young academics to publish quickly, both for promotion and for financial rewards, which makes them susceptible to predatory journals.

A particular challenge which UFH may have is that with its unusually high proportion of mobile academics (i.e. foreign academics without tenure), there is an even higher pressure to publish quickly, which is

only exacerbated by incentives that are paid in US dollars. This also raises the question about the relevance or local/regional applicability of the knowledge produced – an issue which certainly warrants further investigation, particularly in light of Thakrar's (2017) report on the disengagement of UFH from its surrounding communities.

Mouton and Valentine (2016, 2017) have drilled down further into these concerns about UFH's knowledge production in the form of research articles. They point out that the research publication totals, as cited in the previous section, must be viewed with a measure of caution. The main reason is that UFH's totals include a large proportion of predatory journal publications. Journals are classified as 'predatory' when they are open access for the sole purpose of profit; solicit manuscripts by spamming researchers; have bizarrely broad or disjointed scopes or titles; claim extremely rapid response and publication times; publish markedly high numbers of papers per year; boast extraordinary and often fake journal impact factors; make false claims about where the journal is indexed; often have fake editorial boards or editorial boards that comprise a small number of individuals from the same organisation or country; and often include high-status scholars on the editorial board, without their knowledge or permission.

In their analysis of the universities in the Eastern Cape, Mouton and Valentine (2016) show that a quarter of all publications produced at both UFH and Walter Sisulu University could be classified as predatory, compared to only 2% at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and less than 1% at Rhodes. In fact, out of all South African universities, only the Mangosuthu University of Technology had a higher proportion of predatory journal articles than UFH.

Mouton and Valentine (2017) point out further that from 2005 to 2011, UFH showed a clear trend towards increasing publications in the Thompson Reuters Web of Science (in 2011, more than 80% of all UFH papers). There has also been an increase in the number of UFH papers published in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, an index that mainly caters for journals in the humanities and social sciences. In fact, by 2015 more UFH papers were published in this index than in Web of Science journals. However, it is the International Bibliography index that is most suspect in terms of predatory journals: while the journals listed in the Web of Science are normally subjected to rather more stringent criteria of quality assurance, this is not the case for all journals in the International Bibliography. As Mouton and Valentine (2016) argue, this is a trend that should cause concern as it may suggest that academics at UFH have changed their publication

strategies to submitting increasing numbers of papers to journals that are perceived to be ‘easy and quick to publish’.

A way of summing up these concerns about UFH’s research article outputs is this: if UFH’s research article total was reduced by 25% (to remove predatory journals), then its government subsidy for 2015 would have been reduced by ZAR 9 million. This is not a large amount but, as the next section will show, the drop in subsidy would have served to increase the financial pressures on UFH.

The financial state of the University of Fort Hare

Because public universities in South Africa do not receive full financial support from government, their ability to fulfil the functions of training a high-level labour force for the country, applying existing knowledge and producing new knowledge, will be dependent on their financial health and financial sustainability. If a university is in poor financial health, then it is highly likely that it will not be able to perform adequately in delivering these functions. According to Bunting (2018), in a financial analysis covering the period 2007 to 2016, UFH is assessed as being in very poor financial health. Although there have been recent limited-scope, positive financial trends, these are not considered to be sufficient to mitigate the institution’s generally negative financial outlook.

This assessment was based on a number of factors (ibid.). Firstly, public universities in South Africa receive their funding from three main sources: (1) the government subsidy formula together with earmarked-funding for specific (usually infrastructural) projects, (2) student academic and residence fees, and (3) private (non-government) gifts and contracts plus income from private investments. Although no targets are set for these sources, a typical income pattern for public traditional universities in South Africa would be: government sources 40%, student sources 30% and private sources 30%. The UFH’s proportions in 2016 were outside these ranges, with 53% government funding, 38% student fees and 10% from private sources. Secondly, the university’s high reliance on student fees is problematic because of the challenges it has experienced in fee collections, and because it has to make substantial balance sheet commitments for bad fee debts. In 2016, UFH had a gross student debt of ZAR 326 million and had a provision of ZAR 235 million for student debt on its balance sheet. Thirdly, the 2016 balance sheet of UFH was significantly weaker than the national averages for public universities in terms of the following

dimensions: low investment and cash balances; high proportionate amounts of illiquid assets (property, plant and equipment); high levels of debt to financial institutions; low unrestricted equity; high restricted equity; and the highest proportionate level among South African universities of off-balance sheet lease obligations (ZAR 470 million in 2016). Fourthly, UFH's low level of unrestricted equity is directly linked to the problems which it experienced in raising private income. These low levels imply that UFH has an inadequate defensive cushion for dealing with unexpected losses of income or unbudgeted new expenditures.

Finally, an important factor which must be considered when financial performance is being assessed is that the council of each public university is responsible for the control and management of its finances, within frameworks of rules determined by government and by the International Accounting Standards Board. The following problems in the UFH Council's exercise of its responsibilities should be noted when assessments are made of the financial health of the university: (1) UFH failed to submit its 2016 financial statements to the national Department of Higher Education and Training prior to the set deadline; (2) the 2016 external audit report was qualified, with an additional three matters of emphasis; (3) errors of ZAR 330 million affecting previously published and audited financial statements were reported in 2016; (4) UFH did not provide two of the disclosures required by the International Financial Reporting Standards, namely student debt age analysis and student debt impairment reconciliation; (5) UFH did not provide voluntary disclosures of bursaries expense and audit fee (commonly given by other universities); and (6) it did not make its audited financial statements publicly available to all stakeholders.

Managing contradictory functions?

Fort Hare, like many universities around the world, is at the beginning of the next phase of its development. As such, it is confronted with contradictions and tensions that are both a product of its history and of its changing societal context locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Castells (2017: 42) explains this as follows:

... the critical element in the structure and dynamics of the university and the university system is the ability to combine and make compatible seemingly contradictory functions which have all constituted the system historically and are all probably being

required at any given moment by the social interests underlying higher education policies. It is probably the most complex analytical element to convey to policy-makers: namely, that because universities are social systems and historically produced institutions, all their functions take place simultaneously within the same structure, although with different emphases.

As mentioned earlier, UFH was established as part of an ideological (colonial Christian) project. This function became even more entrenched following the 1959 Extension of University Education Act when the imposed mission of the university was to forge a Xhosa ethnic identity and to produce functionaries for the Ciskei homeland. UFH resisted the anti-apartheid role by becoming a site of contestation against the apartheid regime through developing a very strong human rights culture, while still producing a mixture of politicians and functionaries.

However, since the transition to democracy, the unifying anti-apartheid ideology of the university has fragmented, and the elite selection function is not as pronounced. In terms of the analysis of Castells (2001) regarding the ideological apparatus function, in many post-independent African countries things unravelled very quickly as the universities, with competing aspirant elites, became cauldrons of conflicting values ranging from conservative-reformist to revolutionary ideologies. The contradictions between academic freedom and political militancy, and between the drive for modernisation and the preservation of cultural identity, were detrimental to the educational and scientific tasks of the university. These new universities could not merge the formation of new elites with the ideological task of forging new values and the legitimisation of the state, which is essential for development, and hence the universities and the development project failed (*ibid.*).

Two other functions that are crucial for development are training and knowledge production. A daunting task for UFH was to move away from the enrolment shape imposed on it by the apartheid government. In 1994, a very high proportion (62%) of students were enrolled in humanities and teacher training programmes. Not much had changed by 2014 insofar as the greatest increase in enrolments was once again in the humanities and social sciences (44% of the total enrolments). While UFH has managed a steady increase in SET and business management enrolments, SET still only constitutes 25% of all enrolments and business management 15%. What this tells us about UFH's training function is that although it is slowly shifting

its enrolment profile, it is still trapped in the historical African and homeland path of preparing people for government, as the employment figures show (67%). And, with the looming slowdown in government employment, this will indeed be a serious challenge.

The most significant shift in UFH has been in the area of knowledge production which has been the result of prioritising the restructuring of the institutional research architecture, capacity development for academic staff, and postgraduate students and research outputs. This followed a lengthy planning and consultation process led by the then (new) vice-chancellor and resulted in a new strategic plan for the period 2009–2016 (UFH 2009). In particular, from 2008, UFH increased the number of senior academics, academics with doctorates, doctoral student enrolments and graduates and, even more dramatically, publication outputs. Its share of research outputs for the whole South African university system showed the third highest improvement of all universities in the country. Yet, casting a shadow over these achievements is the spectre of the high proportion of publications in predatory journals and the social sciences, which raises questions about the relevance of the university's research outputs to development in the Eastern Cape and the country as a whole.

An even more serious obstacle for UFH is its poor financial health. Income from state sources include block grants generated by a subsidy formula, and earmarked grants for specific purposes such as physical infrastructure development. The majority proportion of block grant funding is generated by full-time equivalent student enrolments, which are, for subsidy purposes, weighted by field of studies and qualification level. According to Bunting (2015), government planning decisions on Fort Hare's student shape and size have had a major impact on the block grant it receives, specifically insofar as these decisions have resulted in the university remaining primarily a humanities, social sciences and teacher training university, with low proportions of students in SET, business and management programmes. As a consequence, UFH's annual block grant has been substantially lower than that of a similarly sized university with greater proportions of enrolments in these latter fields. In addition, UFH has not been able to supplement its state income by increasing student fees or effectively collecting outstanding student debt. While UFH did reasonably well in obtaining designated or restricted research grants, which averaged ZAR 127 million per annum between 2000 and 2008, its private or undesignated donations were, over the same period, a worryingly low annual average of ZAR 6 million (*ibid.*). Considering the large number

of illustrious alumni, this suggests that the 'Fort Hare brand' has not been widely supported by donors. One of the effects of its low level of third-stream income has been that UFH has had little or no scope to fund infrastructure developments not approved by government.

With regard to East London, it could be argued that just as the government oscillated between developing the Alice or East London campuses, so too has UFH. East London, unlike Port Elizabeth, does not have a stand-alone university; it is just a reservoir of students for competing higher education institutions (Cloete et al. 2004). There was one attempt to change this. In February 2007, at the official reopening of Tenby flats in Fleet Street, which had been turned into accommodation for UFH students, the then vice-chancellor, Derrick Swartz, announced that he aimed to bring 10 000 students into the university's city campus over the next decade, and to develop an East London campus at a cost of ZAR R800 million. He stated: 'Our aim is to create a globally connected city. East London is the only medium-sized city in South Africa without an in-house city campus. This is a prerequisite for all major cities in the world.'¹ The statement intimated that the plan was not to put a wall between the campus and the city, but to integrate university buildings with the city, similar to what happened with Stellenbosch University. Alas, as this chapter and chapter 12 in this volume show, nothing of the sort happened; instead, the unsustainable rental agreements in unsuitable buildings is a major contributing factor to driving the university to financial unsustainability.

However, with serious questions raised about the sustainability of UFH in its current form, at both the Alice and East London campuses, the issue of a city university embedded and engaged in the metropolitan growth district must be explored again. East London and UFH need each other, but not under the present arrangements in which the main contact seems to be with city landlords, who rent blocks of flats and old hotels at high prices to UFH for the accommodation of disadvantaged students, and leave UFH with the task of collecting rentals directly from the students.

There is also another crucial factor. For a university to effectively engage with and contribute to city development, it requires relevant academic capacity. The assessment of UFH's functions and performance raises serious doubts about the institution's capacity to engage, for example, with the health issues of the metro, the global car industry, and the East London industrial development zone. Looking at other

1 <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/New-student-city-on-the-cards-20070202>.

universities in South Africa which too are grappling with contradictory functions, a university such as Stellenbosch shifted from being largely a producer of apartheid ideology and civil servants to one of the best-performing universities in the country (Cloete, Mouton et al. 2015). Key to this transformation was deliberate internationalisation driven by strong medical and engineering faculties, as well as agriculture linked to the international wine business. In contrast, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (the result of a merger between a historically white university, a historically black university and a technikon) has done very well in terms of performance and engagement with the city. In addition to engineering, that university is now, with significant government support, developing a medical school and an Institute for Coastal and Marine Science.

In Castells' (2001) terms, while the elite selection and ideological functions at UFH have weakened considerably, the training and knowledge production functions have strengthened. However, major challenges remain: firstly, in terms of training, there needs to be a shift to producing students who will be competitive in the private sector labour market; and secondly, the impressive progress in doctoral enrolments and graduates, and the dramatic increase in research output, is tempered by questions about quality – such as the large proportion of publications in predatory journals. For UFH to develop a more sustainable strategic plan that also contributes to the development of East London, the university will not only have to rethink its model of the 'traditional' university, but it may have to revisit the original National Working Group plan of a multi-campus university in the East London metropolitan area, with at minimum a medical school and engineering faculty. But, as Castells (ibid.) pointed out, this will require both institutional capacity and national system support.

References

- Badat S (2004) Transforming South African higher education 1990-2003: Goals, policy initiatives and critical challenges and issues. In Cloete N, Pillay P, Badat S & Moja T (eds), *National Policy and a Regional Response in South African Higher Education*. Oxford: James Currey, pp1–50
- Bank A & Bank L (eds) (2013) *Insider African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and her interpreters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bunting M (2015) *Financial Characteristics of the Non-Profit Organisation: Theory and evidence for the assessment of the financial condition of South African public universities*. PhD thesis, Rhodes University

- Bunting MB (2018) Financial Review of the South African Public Higher Education Institutions for the Financial Year Ended 31 December 2016. Unpublished technical report. Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training
- Castells M (2001) Universities as dynamic systems of contradictory functions. In Muller J, Cloete N & Badat S (eds), *Challenges of Globalisation: South African debates with Manuel Castells*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, pp206–223
- Castells M (2017) The role of universities in development, the economy and society. In: Muller J, Cloete N & Van Schalkwyk F (eds), *Castells in Africa: Universities and development*. Cape Town: African Minds, pp57–66
- Cloete N & Bunting I (2013) *Challenges and Opportunities for African Universities to Increase Knowledge Production*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- Cloete N, Bunting I & Maassen P (2015) Research universities in Africa: An empirical overview of eight flagship universities. In Cloete N, Maassen P & Bailey T (eds), *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education*. Cape Town: African Minds, pp18–31
- Cloete N, Bunting I & Van Schalkwyk F (2016) *HERANA Phase 3: Changes and trends*. Paper presented at the HERANA Phase 3 meeting, Franschhoek, South Africa, 21–23 November 2016
- Cloete N, Mouton J & Sheppard C (2015) *Doctoral Education in South Africa: Policy, discourse and data*. Cape Town: African Minds
- Cloete N, Pillay P, Badat S & Moja T (2004) *National Policy and a Regional Response in South African Higher Education*. Oxford: James Currey
- Harzing A-W (2016) Australian research output in economics and business: High volume, low impact? *Australian Journal of Management*, 30(2): 183–200
- Higgs C (1997) *The Ghost of Equality: The public lives of D.D.T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885–1959*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press
- Kerr A (1968) *Fort Hare, 1918–1948: The evolution of an African college*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter
- Massey D (2010) Under protest: The rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare. *Hidden Histories Series*. Pretoria: Unisa Press
- MoE (2002) *Transformation and Restructuring: A new institutional landscape for higher education*. Pretoria: Ministry of Education
- Mouton J & Valentine A (2016) *University of Fort Hare: A bibliometric study*. Cape Town: Centre for Higher Education Trust
- Mouton J & Valentine A (2017) The extent of South African authored articles in predatory journals. *South African Journal of Science*, 113(7–8): 79–87
- NCHE (1996) *An Overview of a New Policy Framework for Higher Education Transformation*. Pretoria: National Commission on Higher Education
- Pillay P & Cloete N (eds) (2002) *Strategic Co-operation Scenarios: Post-school education in the Eastern Cape*. Pretoria: Centre for Higher Education Transformation and Eastern Cape Higher Education Association
- Rogan M & Reynolds J (2015) *Schooling Inequality, Higher Education and the Labour Market: Evidence from a graduate tracer study in the Eastern Cape, South Africa*. International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) 59th World Assembly, ‘Challenging Disparities in Education’. Tokushima, Japan, 19–22 June 2015
- Thakrar J (2017) University–community engagement as place-making? A case of the University of Fort Hare and Alice. Unpublished paper

UFH (2009) *Strategic Plan 2009–2016: Towards our centenary*. Alice: University of Fort Hare

Zezeza P (2016) The Role of Higher Education in Africa's Resurgence. Eric Morobi Inaugural Memorial Lecture. University of Johannesburg, 15 October 2016