IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING OF EXTENDED CURRICULUM PROGRAMMES – A CASE STUDY OF A LARGE SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs) have been in existence in Africa and Southern Africa since the late 1970s. Various needs for programmes exist, but the primary motivator in the current South African context is a transformative one. While many historically white institutions have either scaled down or closed their ECPs, the University of Pretoria runs several large ECP programmes with the largest one located on the Mamelodi Campus. The location of the campus in a township offers many opportunities for transformative community engagement. This article interrogates the ideological underpinnings of the ECP programmes and other activities offered at the Mamelodi campus as these have evolved from their genesis in the University of Pretoria's Foundation Year Programme in 2001. The article argues that a point has been reached where colour and ethnicity are no longer the only criteria for transformation, though the South African education system continues to be plagued by social inequality. Consequently, extended curriculum programmes need to serve the interests of the more disadvantaged section of the population, not the lower performing echelons of the more advantaged citizens, even though these may be black. The most recent government draft policy document provides possibilities for funding developmental interventions across the entire undergraduate education system but will require considerable sophistication in terms of pedagogy and curriculum design. The article concludes with a recommendation for a more responsive selection policy and curricula that provide a smoother transition into the programmes that students wish to access, including those with high barriers to entry.

Keywords: Extended Curriculum Programmes, ideology, access

INTRODUCTION

Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs) have been in existence in Africa and Southern

Africa since the late 1970s especially in the sciences where there has been a shortage of candidates for scarce skills programmes (Rollnick 2010). Various needs for programmes exist, but the primary motivator in the current South African context is a transformative one where the education system (especially in science and engineering) is not performing well (Rollnick 2010).

Twenty-five years into democracy, many programmes have closed, or scaled down at historically advantaged institutions, usually research universities, since adequate demographic representation of students in the field has been achieved, creating the perception that transformation has taken place. Much progress has been made in terms of demography at most historically advantaged universities, but analysis shows that the students in science and engineering faculties still come from mainly advantaged schools. In historically white universities where ECP programmes continue, questions are being asked about whether the most appropriate students are being admitted.

In advantaged institutions where ECPs continue to run, enabled by government policies which provide funding for such programmes (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019), normalisation of the programmes takes place and mechanised selection processes lead to a less rigorous approach to the selection of students for ECPs. The argument in this article is that within the context of the current model of funding access programmes, students need to be selected for ECPs based on high potential to succeed and potential to make a difference to the communities, which have produced them. This is particularly salient where mathematics is a requirement for entry, for example in engineering and science.

This argument is advanced here by making a case for an approach to ECPs, which prioritises the admission of students with high potential who may have underachieved due to poor schooling. Through a case study of the University of Pretoria (UP), a large research university in the executive capital of South Africa, the article explores how contradictions in ideology may arise.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

For more than 45 years, universities all over the world have become aware of the need to cater for non-traditional students, at-risk students, historically excluded students, disadvantaged students, under-prepared students or minority students (Rollnick 2010, 9), these names being an integral reflection of how students in these programmes are perceived. Depending on one's perspective a great deal, or very little has changed since the early 1970s. Different studies have shown the success of ECPs to varying extents (Potgieter et al. 2015; Engelbrecht, Harding, and Potgieter 2014). What is indisputable is that students who would otherwise have not gained

admission to STEM careers in some institutions, have benefitted from ECPs.

A recent national colloquium on foundation programmes, held at the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus in South Africa, was attended by 143 delegates from 14 universities in the country. When the 17 delegates from the University of Pretoria are excluded, there were 19 delegates from four HWUs, 44 delegates from four historically black universities, 37 delegates from universities of technology and 25 delegates from comprehensive universities. This is not very different to the composition of a similar gathering held in 2001 where 100 delegates gathered for a similar conference, hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). When the 30 delegates from the host institution are excluded, there is a similar balance between HBUs and HWUs. However, the 2019 event hosted delegates teaching on programmes beyond STEM, such as commerce and law, whereas the 2001 event focused only on science, engineering and technology. In 2001, there was also a focus on the contrast between HWUs, HBUs, historically black and white technikons (institutions offering technical and vocational qualifications below degree level).

An important change in the higher education landscape was initiated in 2002 when the then minister of Higher Education passed legislation on decreasing the number of public institutions from 36 to 23 and the establishment of six "comprehensive institutions", resulting in the merger of former universities and technikons. It was also decided that technikons be called "Universities of Technology" (Cloete and Fehnel 2006). This process took close to three years and the resulting educational landscape in South Africa comprised 24 public universities in seven of the nine provinces by 2014. Between 2014 and 2015, a further two universities were established in the provinces that had previously lacked a tertiary institution – the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. At the time of writing, the 26 public universities can be categorised as *traditional universities*, which offer theoretically oriented university degrees*; universities of technology* which offer vocationally-oriented diplomas and degrees; and *comprehensive universities*, which offer a combination of both types of qualification. However, this classification masks the inequalities which remain from the apartheid era. Some of the mergers resulted in a change of identity for the institution from research university to comprehensive university while other institutions retained their identity as a traditional university but merged with a historically disadvantaged institution resulting in a need to redistribute resources.

Some HWUs that had offered extended curriculum programmes since the 1980s, now saw the need to scale down or even do away with them, while others, such as the University of Pretoria saw an opportunity to embrace a transformative agenda. In this spirit, in 2008 the University of Pretoria designated one of the merged campuses as a community engagement hub with extended programmes as the main academic programmes on the campus.

As a result of the above events and the University's strategic planning, this article focusses on how the ECPs can be improved from an institutional perspective while considering the fact that nationally, access programmes are intended to be redress programmes (Rollnick 2010). From an institutional perspective, the key objective is to ensure that students who commence their studies via this academic pathway graduate in minimum time and preferably in STEM-related fields. In addition to this overarching goal, another important aspect to consider is the extent to which the ECPs align with the five strategic drivers of the University namely, quality, excellence, relevance, sustainability and diversity.

This article responds to the following question: What lessons emerge, from the experience of offering extended curriculum programmes at UP's Mamelodi campus, for enacting a transformative approach to access programmes? Implicated in this question are the following sub-questions:

1.   What are the possible ideological positions underpinning access programmes?
2.   Towards which of these positions have the ECPs at UP Mamelodi Campus gravitated?
3.   From the trends observed in response to question 2 above, what, if any, changes to ECPs are required to ensure that these programmes still serve the need for redress as per the national priority needs of the country?
4.   How could the UP policy for accepting students into ECPs be adjusted to retain both their redress nature and the diversity in the ECP student body?

IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF EXTENDED CURRICULUM PROGRAMMES

The need for ECPs varies in different national contexts, but all are necessitated by either an exclusion of certain groups in the national population or a shortage of students in a particular discipline. In the USA there is still under-representation in science and engineering by African Americans, while the situation with Latin Americans has somewhat improved. One of the biggest impediments to higher education access in the USA has been the lack of prerequisite school credits, for example in mathematics to enable access to science study (Rollnick 2010). Despite efforts by former President Obama's administration to address this problem, not much has changed in the last 10 years (https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-spurring-african-american-stem-degree-completion).

In the United Kingdom, access for underprepared students is usually through colleges offering foundation programmes which are not part of university offerings. Applicants are usually foreign students, and UK based students who have not passed "A" level examinations or are from ethnic minorities and working-class families. Broadhead (2019) suggests that an

increasing number of school leavers from low-income homes have left school with poor GCSE passes (equivalent to grade 11 in South Africa), well short of the "A" level passes needed to enter higher education. In Africa, there is a history of pre-entry science programmes but the university's interest in offering these programmes wanes when they can access sufficient students with prerequisite school grades for them to access science courses. In South Africa, a very good example is that of Wits University, which discontinued its flagship College of Science access programme in 2004, and from the latest reports, has all but discontinued such programmes. Wits University received only R465,000 of the Foundation Provision Grant in the 2019/2020 financial year, the lowest of all tertiary institutions in the country, while UP received R17.3m   (http://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/18%2012%2007%20Ministerial%20Statement. pdf).

Higher Education institutions do not engage in extended programmes for altruistic reasons. Without external political pressure, deliberate actions to achieve transformation would not automatically happen. Groups that have been excluded in the past have been subjected to various deficiencies in preparation which have led to under preparation and thus without intervention, probable failure. In South Africa, the group most prominently excluded was the black majority. Thus, the need identified for extended programmes was to achieve a racial demographic that reflected that of the broader population. As black adolescents gained access to more privileged institutions, the desired balance was achieved and hence there was no apparent need for such programmes.

A university's admissions process tends to reflect its dominant ideology in relation to admission of students. Brennan (1989) outlines four ideologies underpinning admissions policy which have been interpreted by Rollnick (2010) as follows:

1. Relation of admissions to the quality/reputation of departments/institutions: The ability to attract good students is a sign of the institution's quality and is thus easily linked to the performance in public examinations of the school leavers that they admit.

2. Emphasis on equity: The concern here is that competition for places is fair, so admission to higher education becomes an award for diligence. Public tests/examinations are then an objective measure of performance and central to the operation of the equity model. Other non-standard routes into higher education are suspect because they allow people to gain admission through unfair means.

3. The social engineering approach: It shares with the equity approach a concern for equality of opportunity but differs in that it wishes to level the playing fields by recognising that some applicants are disadvantaged when taking school leaving examinations. Here

concern is expressed about the social composition of the cohorts admitted into higher education.

4.   The "shortage-of-students" approach: This arises when admissions officers have difficulty filling places with conventionally qualified students. This is a pragmatic approach and does not necessarily lead to a liberal admissions policy as institutions may choose to leave places unfilled, thus reverting to ideology number 1.

Government, as the funder of higher institutions is able to drive university policies and thus to shape their approach to admissions:

The "short" definition of an extended programmes as given by in the draft policy document of the Department of Higher Education (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019) reads as follows:

> "An extended curriculum programme, in short referred to as an extended programme, is a formal undergraduate degree or diploma programme the minimum duration of which is lengthened by half a year to a full year in order to incorporate substantial academic provision which is of a developmental nature and is additional to the coursework prescribed for the regular curriculum. This additional provision is designed to strengthen the academic foundations – in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies – that are needed for underprepared students to have a greater chance of succeeding in the programme for which they have enrolled". (2019, 5).

Elsewhere in the same document, the DHET policy is an example of in Brennan's social engineering ideology:

> "Extended programmes are a key element of government strategy for improving higher education performance and transformation by means of facilitating equity of access and, most importantly, equity of outcomes." (2019, 5).

Publicly funded institutions wishing to make use of foundational (soon to be referred to as developmental) grants are obliged to adhere to this ideology. Thus, identification of worthy underprepared students from previously excluded communities becomes a key element of selection.

Selection

In the early days of extended programmes, considerable effort was put into the selection of suitable students for extended programmes, viz., those with potential, usually high performing students in lower performing schools rather than those who have underperformed despite considerable support in a high performing institution. Selection is clearly a key step in maintaining a social engineering approach to admission.

South Africa's Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has stated that extended programmes are the instrument of choice for ensuring that underprepared students are provided with developmental support to ensure both equity of access and equity of outcomes. Prestigious universities like UP and Wits University advertise minimum admission criteria based on scores obtained in the high stakes National Senior Certificate examination, commonly known as "matric", written at the end of grade 12. Given the large numbers of applicants and the short time available for decision-making, universities tend to make provisional offers based on grade 11 results and the admission to the applicant's chosen programme is usually an automatic process. This process mitigates against the use of socioeconomic status to prioritise the acceptance of students from disadvantaged communities.

There are two constraining factors affecting admission into programmes of study of first-generation university students. The first is that there is a lower expectation of access to university and students are not aware of the use of grade 11 results and tend to apply to university only after learning that that have qualified for university. The second constraining factor is a form of qualification inflation (Dore 1976) where the requirements for entry rise de facto due to the large number of applicants.

In countries with highly differentiated education systems such as the USA or in countries where universities lose trust in the national exit examination, there is a tendency to move towards alternative admission processes into higher education. In South Africa, discussion of alternative admission processes was underway in 2008 when the national matriculation system underwent a substantial change. During this period Higher Education South Africa (HESA) developed a series of tests, termed National Benchmark Tests (NBTs), which were designed to act as placement tests (Yeld 2007), in other words, tests that would assist in placing students who had already qualified for university. These tests were used in different universities to assist placement, at some universities they were compulsory and at others, optional. At UP the tests are recommended, but to be completed at the applicant's expense (currently R200). The use of NBTs allows for another source of information about the student's ability with little effort on the part of the tertiary institution but provides no information on the socioeconomic status of the applicant, apart from the possible deterrent of the R200 outlay required.

One publicly available indicator of socioeconomic status is the classification of government schools into quintiles. Although not perfect, the system does provide information about whether applicants attended fee paying or non-fee-paying schools. The NGO "Section 27" (http://section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Chapter-7.pdf, 146) describes the quintile system as follows:

"Schools are then ranked between quintiles 1 and 5, with quintile 1 being schools in a very poor area and quintile 5 being schools in a wealthier area. Schools in quintiles 1 to 3 are no fee schools, and schools in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-charging schools. Government wholly subsidises schools in quintiles 1 to 3, and partially subsidises schools in quintiles 4 and 5. For each province, the Minister must publish a list of no-fee-paying schools where learners are entitled to enrol without paying any school fees."

The quintile system provides a useful method of classification of government schools which could be used by universities to guide admission policies. It is currently being used by Wits University to monitor the composition of first year entrants. Data gathered from all first-year entrants to Wits in 2019, shows that more than 30 per cent of students in the science and engineering faculties came from schools in the lower 3 quintiles of government schools, designated as no fee schools (Analytics and Institutional Research Unit 2019), suggesting that despite discontinuing extended curriculum programmes, the university continues to cater for these groups. The university's five year review of teaching and learning (https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/teaching-and-learning/documents/Review TeachingLearning2015-2019.pdf) suggests that intensive support from the office of the various Assistant Deans of teaching and learning and extensive student support have assisted with maintaining the university's current graduation rate.

The role of curriculum

An important consideration in the creation of ECPs is the acknowledgement that the extension of the period of study implicitly involves manipulation of the curriculum. Apart from the requirements of professional bodies, the university has control of the curriculum, yet most responses to accommodating the needs of underprepared students has involved tinkering with the first year of the programme rather than taking a closer look at how the content advances conceptually and epistemically through the programme.

Scott (2018) identifies three major dimensions that need to be manipulated for improved student performance – the content and orientation of the curriculum, its delivery, and its framework. This involves the identification of critical disciplinary content, its orientation, and its connection with the learning needs of a particular group of students. It also requires a consideration of entry and exit level as well as the flexibility of pathways while maintaining an understanding of the relationship between breadth and depth.

Hordern (2016) elaborates on this relationship by identifying important differences between the discourses of different disciplines, identified as horizontal and vertical structures by Bernstein (1999). Vertically structured disciplines, such as the physical sciences tend to advance coherently from a foundational concept while those in the social sciences may display

a horizontal structure using various theories to provide differing lenses on the object of study.

Academics are usually able to identify critical content but may not be able to explicitly recognise the discourse of their discipline, making it difficult to manipulate the orientation of the curriculum and the ability to tailor it to the needs of their students.

The evolution of extended programmes at the University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria is one of eight institutions that incorporated a Vista Campus as part of the 2002 reconfiguration of the Higher Education System referred to above. The reconfiguration, which included both mergers and incorporations, was met with widespread ambivalence especially among institutions that were to merge and to a lesser extent among those that were to incorporate Vista University campuses (Moja and Hayward 2005).

The sectoral response to the announcement of mergers and incorporations varied from unhappiness and reservations, through to defensiveness to hostility and strong resistance with the hostility culminating in court challenges in some instances (Soobrayan 2002 in Sehoole 2005). Notwithstanding the reservations and anger, it was imperative for universities, especially historically white universities not to be perceived as being anti-transformation in the post-apartheid era. Gradually, reservations made way for active planning propelled to varying extents by among others, recognition of limited options for an exit strategy, acknowledgement of the primacy of the national imperative and the opportunity to erase apartheid-created institutional typologies. The leadership of the University of Pretoria, like that of many other institutions responsible for incorporating Vista University campuses, embraced the incorporation of the Vista Mamelodi Campus, located 18 km from the administrative hub, Hatfield. This incorporation was followed by a re-orientation of academic and other staff and the start of an historic journey to define the academic identity of a former township campus, which was different from its other campuses, both in spatial terms and in many other aspects, including resources.

In 2007, after considering the results of a review of possible contributions that the Vista Mamelodi Campus could make to the academic repertoire of the University, the UP Council designated the campus as "a community engagement hub"[1] with a focus on providing access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programmes. In other words, the campus would provide opportunities for those who apply to the university but who may not meet the admission requirements to register for STEM career programmes. Enrolment in these access programmes, would be open to both the youth of Pretoria (including Mamelodi) as well as other applicants to the University of Pretoria with special consideration towards disadvantaged students.

As part of the process for accomplishing the Mamelodi Campus's role as an access campus, the University developed three access programmes, the Bachelor of Science Extended Curriculum Programmes in Biological and Agricultural Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Mathematical Sciences to replace the bridging programme, known as the *University of Pretoria Foundation Year* (UPFY) that the University offered at that time. These programmes were approved for funding by the Department of Higher Education and offered at the Mamelodi Campus from 2008. Unlike the UPFY which was a bridging programme[2], the Extended Curriculum Programmes are formal degree programmes and students register for BSc degree from the outset. Their design is such that the foundational component comprises three semesters, two of which are offered at the Mamelodi Campus and the third semester at the Hatfield Campus. The BSc Extended Curriculum Programmes offered on the Campus, thus constitute the nucleus around which the identity of the campus has developed.

As an additional effort to broaden access to STEM on the Mamelodi Campus, a partnership was established between the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education's Tshwane South District Office to assist learners at school level. The partnership involved working in schools in Mamelodi and surrounding areas, to provide pre-university academic enrichment programmes in mathematics and physical sciences, called after school programmes (ASPs). This second initiative was intended to provide an additional pathway for black learners to gain admission to primarily STEM programmes at the University of Pretoria.

In addition to the above two initiatives, several faculties located some of their community engagement activities on the Mamelodi Campus. The community engagement activities are carried out primarily through clinics, some of which contribute to the research focus of the university. The clinics currently hosted on the campus include a Psychology Clinic, a Business and Entrepreneurship Clinic, an Animal Health Clinic and an Occupational Health clinic. These clinics serve the community through both "on campus" and "off campus" activities. Their primary aim is to provide university students enrolled for professional programmes with an opportunity to complete their compulsory service-learning modules.

At the time when the UP Council designated the Mamelodi Campus a "community engagement hub" (see above), the issue of transformation loomed large in the deliberations on the use of Vista campuses. As a historically white institution, UP embraced the opportunity to acquire a historically black campus inside a township enabled it to make progress towards achieving its social transformation agenda. While such transformation would be a major advance for the institution, the possible perception of the campus as reserved for black students only (given that ECPs are redress programmes), was a concern for UP's leadership. Such a

perception could undermine the very transformational gains the institution hoped to achieve by being located within an impoverished black community. To address this concern, it was recommended that white students be allowed to register for ECPs, as had been the case in slow stream programmes offered at various universities in the past. In the interest of promoting racial diversity on all its campuses, the UP leadership supported this recommendation as this would bring the Mamelodi campus in line with the university's three other off-site campuses: Prinshof (Health Sciences), Groenkloof (Education) and Onderspoort (Veterinary Science) all of which were already racially diverse. Another argument was that the exposure of white students to a township campus could result in unintended but desirable transformational gains for students in ECPs as has been the case for other students who were involved in community engagement projects in the Mamelodi township through other faculties (such as the clinics). While white academic staff had been in the majority at the various Vista campuses in the past, it would be both unusual and highly symbolic of transformation to have white students studying in a township environment.

By 2012, following a concerted effort by the university management and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, agreements that would strengthen the STEM focus of the campus were in place. For example, the United Stated Embassy opened the Mae Jameson[3] Science Library meant primarily for use by high school learners in Mamelodi. In the same period, the student population grew from the initial 300 to 550 students with the introduction of a Bachelor of Commerce Extended Programme. By 2019, the numbers of students registered for BCom and BSc ECPs stood at 850 with a projected figure of 1200 by 2021.

Since 2008, ECPs have therefore been the flagship academic programmes of the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus. However, in 2018 a radical reconceptualization of the campus's identity was forged, with the community in which it is located becoming recognized as an important site of knowledge production and the university positioning itself as an engaged university (Gaffikin and Perry 2009). The campus has connected with the community through its anchor strategy (Birch, Perry, and Taylor Jr 2013), in this instance creating a thematic multi-disciplinary campus and an accompanying anchor strategy known as the Mamelodi Collaborative (Ogude, Mathabathe, Mthethwa, and White 2020). The location of the ECPs at the Mamelodi Campus, however, still poses a dilemma for the university and there is a constant effort to position the campus as providing for students of diverse demographic backgrounds. While some literature still contends that ECPs are perceived as second class (e.g. Alexander and Hlalele 2012), this perception appears to be changing, especially at the Mamelodi Campus.

In a recent paper, Ogude et al. (2019) reported on the success of the ECPs at the University

of Pretoria as well as the intention of the university to consolidate the offering of the programmes, increase student numbers and determine areas of improvement from an institutional, curricular and student perspective. That paper focused on the improvement of the programmes from the student perspective or the "student voice" and also probed possible concerns about "off-site provision" and perceptions of stigma associated with the programme (Alexander and Hlalele 2012). Through the use of appreciative inquiry, the aim was to establish from students who had graduated using this pathway, how ECP's could be improved. Like the study of San Martin and Calabrese (2011), this inquiry was designed to collect data on students' positive experiences, strengths and assets. In view of the finding that students in the study and the evident success of the ECPs in other respects, including the provision of a pipeline for postgraduate studies (Potgieter et al. 2015), the campus management engaged further with former and current students. This engagement culminated in the launch of the Mamelodi Campus Alumni Club[4] by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic on 17 March 2018. The membership is comprised of students who commenced their studies in the ECPs and have since graduated. The club is formally registered with the Department of University Relations. The formation of the Alumni Club further cemented the significance of the ECPs for the University of Pretoria. Since its establishment, the alumni group has been very active on the campus assisting during orientation week, an annual open day now called "#ChooseUP Day" and in conferences such as the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa (HELTASA) Colloquia held in 2018 at the University of Venda[5] and in 2019 at the Mamelodi Campus. In these activities the alumni have taken upon themselves to narrate their experiences while at the Mamelodi Campus and how the foundation they received at the campus contributed to their success. Importantly, most of these alumni seem to have a strong sense of civic duty.

Because of the new phase the campus is entering where ECPs are the nucleus around which the Mamelodi Collaborative is being conceptualized, it is important that the programmes are strengthened further, institutionally. More importantly, given the challenges faced by first generation students, it is critical to ensure that the campus still contributes to the transformational role of the university and the community in a more integrated way than simply by providing community services through the clinics. One of these would be by ensuring that greater numbers of learners from Mamelodi access the ECPs as well as other UP mainstream programmes. The urgency of further introspection was necessitated by the following emerging issues:

Firstly, relatively few school leavers apply to the University of Pretoria from schools in Mamelodi (between 246 and 362 between 2015 and 2018). To put these numbers into perspective, only 496 matriculants (31% of the total passes), obtained Bachelor passes in 2017

entitling them to access degree programmes in higher education. 73 per cent (362) of these school leavers applied to the university. Unfortunately, only 63 per cent (228 students) actually gained admission, suggesting that although more students qualified for admission to university, their scores fell short of the higher entry scores required by the University of Pretoria.

Secondly, there is anecdotal evidence that more and more students from advantaged backgrounds seem to be accessing the programmes. While this may not be a problem, the extent of uptake in the institution may well be. There is, therefore, a need to ensure that adherence to the original intent and ideological underpinning of the ECPs as redress programmes is monitored. Anecdotal evidence emerging from continued engagement with some of the alumni has revealed that some of them, both black and white[6] did not come from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds as they attended quintile 4 or 5 schools. Furthermore, the profile of parents and prospective students at the #ChooseUP day[7], is changing with more white students and parents expressing an interest in the ECPs offered by the University of Pretoria.

In addition to the evidence that more students from advantaged backgrounds are accessing the ECPs, a recent increase in the APS score (minimum score for admission) mitigates against qualification by students from impoverished backgrounds such as those of many students from Mamelodi schools. It is thus imperative to investigate the extent to which the effort to ensure that the campus is racially diverse may have impacted on the original intentions of ECPs being redress programmes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Having described the evolution of a range of ECPs and other academic and community-oriented activities on the Mamelodi campus between 2007 and 2020, we return to the questions posed at the beginning of the article. The answer to question 1 regarding the ideological underpinning of access programmes, is that the approach adopted is dependent on stakeholder interests as elaborated below.

As shown above, there is now a clear view from the government (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019) and the university, as evidenced by its decision to create a community engagement hub and encourage community partners such as the Mamelodi alumni club that access programmes are intended to redress past inequalities. There is still a need to contribute towards providing access to programmes with high entry bars, such as actuarial science and accountancy, for historically excluded students.

The university and key stakeholders in the country (the university, the government, and parts of the public) have reached a point where race is no longer the only criterion for transformation, though the increasing number of black graduates of South African universities

is clearly a sign of one type of transformation. Given that the South African education system continues to be plagued by social inequality, access programmes need to serve the interests of the more disadvantaged section of the population, rather than lower performing echelons of the more advantaged citizens, even though these may now include black learners. Inequalities remain in both the school system and the tertiary education system and thus the basic underpinning imperative for offering these programmes remains.

Many of the innovative pedagogies practised by access programmes are transformative. For example, Conana, Marshall, and Case (2016) showed how they were able to make explicit the literacy practices and epistemological functioning in the discipline of physics, using movement between abstract principles and concrete contexts during problem solving. Their approach assisted students' induction into the disciplinary norms of the discipline while making room for critique, which is considered transformative.

Years ago, Kloot, Case, and Marshall (2008) called for the infusion of principles used in the teaching of these programmes into the teaching of mainstream programmes. Since then, funding of access programmes has become government policy. In its most recent draft policy document, government has established possibilities for funding developmental interventions across the entire undergraduate education system (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019) which seems a step in the right direction.

Van Pletzen, Sithaldeen, and Nduru (2020) explored aspects of current ECP policy enabling or hindering the achievement of the intended policy outcomes, including addressing the articulation gap, and contributing to systemic transformation and recommended that the new government policy should encourage the development of more flexible and integrated pathways through the curriculum and avoidvisible separation of students into different streams.

Richardson (2000) provides a useful three-stage framework for institutional response to student diversity. He suggests that when an institution is put under pressure to accommodate diversity, it first responds by behaving in a reactive fashion (Stage 1), and providing extrinsic support, without the deeper support structures needed to retain non-traditional students. When these strategies fail, the institution becomes more strategic (Stage 2) and responds by trying to change the students in such a way that they provide a better fit for the institution. Stage 3 strategies, which require the institution to adapt its practices to take account of a changing student population can only take place in the context of transformative state policies combined with committed institutional leaders. Stage 3 strategies are characterised by a change in culture of the university resulting in new curricula and new pedagogies, such as those referred to above.

Richardson's framework is useful for answering the second question posed in this article, regarding the direction in which the ideological underpinnings of ECPs on the Mamelodi

campus have gravitated. The ground conditions for a Stage 3 response now exist in South Africa and at the University of Pretoria. However, we argue that the university is in transition between Stage 2 and Stage 3 as the institution is still employing narrowly focused ECP admission policies based solely on school achievement and fail to use social engineering policies to target the desired makeup of the student body. This observation also assists in answering question 3, regarding changes needed in the ECPs. The ECPs at the university are hampered in their quest to serve the need for redress. However current initiatives such as the Mamelodi collaborative will assist in providing a stronger link between the campus and the community. An important part of this link is the strengthening of pre-university activities which have now been consolidated under the aegis of the Mamelodi Pre-University Academy (Ogude et al. 2020) which aims to improve access of a targeted township community to the university.

Finally in answer to question 4, regarding adjustments to UP policies, we propose changes from the current "open automated admission process" to a more rigorous admission policy based on quintiles. Regarding the latter, the university has proposed a quota-based approach of 60 per cent for quintiles 1–4 with the remaining 40 per cent made up as follows: Other quintiles, 25 per cent, earmarked students wishing to proceed to Health Sciences Faculty (10%) or Engineering (5%). In this manner, the programmes will continue to be predominantly redress programmes, while considering the UP strategic driver of diversity on all campuses. Furthermore, the university has accepted a process to identify students with potential which would involve the administration of selection tests and/or NBT scores, interviews for a sample of students and scored biographical questionnaires. Lastly, we propose curricula that provide a smoother transition into the programmes that students wish to access including those with high barriers for entry.

In the recent past, higher education has faced great challenges, first in the form of student protests in 2015 and 2016, which in addition to a call for free education, also made important challenges to university curricula, and more recently in the form of a pandemic which has led to major progress in the development of remote learning. Both challenges have required serious considerations on how to best ensure student success in the context of South Africa's highly unequal distribution of resources in higher education. To re-establish stability, two important considerations mentioned above as identified by Scott (2018) – structural curricular reform in both ECPs and the mainstream and a careful consideration of how best to maintain student engagement.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Dipolelo, https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/708/dipolelo-1-2019.zp171228.pdf

2. Bridging programmes are one year programmes meant for Black students from disadvantaged background with aptitude. They prepare students for tertiary study. Unlike Extended Curriculum Programmes that register for a university degree, students in bridging programmes do not register for a formal university qualification.

3. Mae Carol Jemison is an American Engineer, Physician and former NASA Astronaut. She became the first black woman to travel into space when she served as a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour, in May 1992.

4. Griffiths Makgareetsa, Mamelodi Campus launches its Alumni Club. *Mamelodi Dipolelo*, Volume 2 Issue 1, March 2018.

5. The HELTASA Colloquium is an annual activity of the Foundation Special Interest Group hosted annually by one of the 26 South African Universities. At this Colloquium, for the first time in the history of HELTASA, students presented their perceptions and personal stories of their experiences in Extended Curriculum Programmes

6. Race is still a proxy for advantage in South Africa, though more black students from high socio-economic classes do access quintile 4 and 5 schools.

7. The significance in the numbers in of parents and prospective students that attend #ChooseUP Day is that unlike the previous Open Days which invited all prospective students, for #ChooseUP Day only provisionally admitted students and their parents are invited.

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