



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Regional Forum on Government Involvement in, and Regulation of, Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom (HEIAAF)

Thursday 01 June 2006, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Senate Chamber

1.	<p>Welcome Prof Malegapuru Makgoba, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)</p>
1.1	<p>Prof Ahmed Bawa, who chaired the discussion, opened the meeting at 11:10. He introduced Prof Malegapuru Makgoba, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who would give the welcoming address.</p> <p>Prof Makgoba acknowledged Prof Goba, the Vice-Chancellor of Durban University of Technology (DUT), and acknowledged the two speakers, Prof 'Jimi Adesina and Prof André du Toit. He thanked the Council on Higher Education (CHE) for asking UKZN to host the important discourse on government involvement in higher education, institutional autonomy and academic freedom. He noted that the discussion came at an opportune time at UKZN, as these were some of the issues that the university was grappling with as a young institution and an institution going into the future.</p> <p>Over the past twelve years, public discussion on issues of academic freedom and institutional autonomy had gone through ebbs and flows. On the one hand, academic freedom was embedded in the Constitution; on the other, views had been expressed that there was increasing government encroachment into institutional autonomy. Some presented a view that under the previous regime institutions had had more autonomy. However, this view depended on definitions of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It might be said that under the previous regime, institutions were either autonomous, but under government control; or not autonomous and carrying out a government agenda.</p> <p>Members of European universities had held a conference on "Managing University Autonomy" preceding the <i>Magna-Charta Universitatum</i> ceremony at the University of Bologna in September 2005. This indicated that questions around the autonomy of institutions were topical all over the world. What emerged from this debate was that autonomy was not a static phenomenon, but a notion subject to interpretation and movement within a particular society. Universities had to learn to enter into different kinds of contracts with the society in which they were located. It was instructive to examine how notions of institutional autonomy and academic freedom had evolved over time, how these concepts were assimilated into the nature of the university, and how the notion of public accountability had grown in importance.</p>

	<p>Academic autonomy had been a central feature of the identity of the university through the ages. While this concept had shaped the university, the university was also shaped by the particular society and its history. It was appropriate that the CHE created a series of regional fora to promote debate around the country on these important issues, which at UKZN constituted burning issues at the present time.</p> <p>Prof Makgoba wished participants well in the discussion. He invited participants to both express and experience academic freedom at the institution.</p>
2.	<p>Introduction by the Chairperson Prof Ahmed Bawa, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Knowledge Production, and Partnerships, UKZN</p>
2.1	<p>Prof Bawa expressed a special welcome to the two speakers. He said that he hoped that the regional forum would stimulate further discussions on institutional autonomy and academic freedom amongst the higher education institutions in the province.</p>
3.	<p>Task Team on HEIAAF: Terms of Reference of the Investigation Prof Ahmed Bawa, UKZN; Dr Mala Singh, Acting Chief Executive Officer, CHE</p>
3.1	<p>Prof Bawa informed participants that Dr Mala Singh, the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the CHE, had been delayed, and would join the forum later in the day. In her absence, he would outline the terms of reference of the Task Team investigation.</p> <p>The CHE was a statutory body with an independent board. The decision to constitute a Task Team had been informed by the CHE's role: to advise the Minister of Education on matters of higher education, to monitor higher education, and to undertake quality assurance and quality promotion functions. The CHE had convened the HEIAAF investigation of its own initiative, and not in response to a request for policy advice from the Minister of Education.</p> <p>The Task Team on HEIAAF had been set up in 2005, in response to concerns expressed in the sector over the way that the state was intervening in higher education in the current phase of policy implementation. Many saw government involvement as an incursion into the institutional autonomy of institutions, and expressed disquiet that the steering role envisaged in the White Paper had been transmuted into intervention. The Task Team sought to enquire whether this was, in fact, happening; to what extent; and how this might be redressed. It sought to explore conceptions of the role of the state.</p> <p>The Task Team had been constituted as a panel of well-regarded individuals with relevant knowledge and experience, not as a representative structure. It was chaired by Dr Khotso Mokhele, President of the National Research Foundation, and included a member of the judiciary, members of civil society organisations, a member of CODESRIA (an African research organisation: the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa), and members of the higher education sector.</p>

	<p>The Task Team had selected three key points for its enquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature and modes of government involvement in higher education transformation; • Relationships between government, bodies with higher education regulatory functions, and higher education institutions; • Conceptions of institutional autonomy, academic freedom and public accountability (normative and contextualised). <p>The nature of the enquiry was being kept as open-ended as possible, and the process was seen as being as important as the final research report. Prof Bawa reminded participants that several months earlier the CHE had put a set of questions relating to institutional autonomy and academic freedom to each institution. A large number of institutions had made submissions. These inputs had shaped the regional fora.</p> <p>Besides the call for submissions, and the holding of regional fora, the Task Team had commissioned an Overview paper, commissioned five research studies on selected topics, and held interviews with key role players. The various outcomes of these initiatives would be used by the Task Team to inform its independent report. The report, which might contain policy recommendations, would be disseminated via a national seminar in the second half of 2007. The research report might also lead to a CHE policy advice report to the Minister of Education.</p> <p>Prof Bawa deferred questions on the Task Team investigation until the arrival of Dr Mala Singh.</p>
3.2	<p>Dr Mala Singh, Acting CEO of the CHE, said that the CHE had set up the investigation in response to concerns being voiced in many higher education institutions that higher education was being over-regulated, and regulated in unacceptable ways - in ways that constituted threats to institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Critics had referred to amendments to the Higher Education Act as continuing to roll back institutional autonomy. In contrast, others saw government involvement in the sector as legitimate steering, under the principles articulated in the White Paper, in the context of the national transformation agenda.</p> <p>The HEIAAF Task Team had refined the Terms of Reference of its investigation, within the parameters set by the CHE. The purpose of the investigation was to deepen understanding of how people were using the terms 'institutional autonomy' and 'academic freedom' when making strong claims of closing space; and to facilitate the development of a fine-grained account of the nature of state intervention in higher education, in both empirical and normative ways.</p> <p>The Task Team would produce an independent report based on the findings of a range of investigative mechanisms: a literature review, analysis of submissions, discussions at the regional fora, interviews with key role players, and commissioned research. The Task Team's report would be the subject of a national seminar in the course of 2007, and the final report would be delivered to</p>

	<p>Council with a set of recommendations. Based on this report, the Council would decide whether it wished to formulate a policy advice report to the Minister of Education.</p> <p>Dr Singh noted that the Council on Higher Education was being reconstituted. Thus the Council that accepted the report would not be the same one that conceptualised and approved the Task Team investigation. The Council received regular reports from the Research Coordinator and Project Manager. The membership of the Task Team was evolving, and the Council was committed to strengthening the membership of academic leadership and academics on the Task Team.</p>
4.	<p>Keynote Address Prof 'Jimi Adesina</p>
4.1	<p>Prof Adesina said that it was a great pleasure to be visiting UKZN, and to address the forum.</p> <p>It was crucial to examine the links between institutional autonomy and academic freedom, as this would inform the development of a conceptual framework, and would also allow an examination of practical issues. The current discussion echoed the discussions held at Lima in 1988, Abuja in 1998 and Kampala in 1990. While it was the responsibility of intellectuals to focus on some of the more immediate and compelling threats to institutional autonomy and academic freedom, he would argue that much of the threat was internal, rather than external to the academic community. It was important for South Africa to learn from the experiences of post-colonial Africa. There was a danger of institutional autonomy being presented in a way that became self-serving and perverse.</p> <p>The normative foundations of academic freedom and institutional autonomy lay in a recognition of the importance of the quest for knowledge production and an acknowledgment of the unexpected directions that arose in the frontiers of findings and ideas. The concept of academic freedom promoted the active and free dissemination of knowledge, and sought to protect the right to seek and disseminate the 'truth', and the right to be protected from being punished for finding and publishing unpopular truths. Institutional autonomy received its justification from the need to provide an enabling environment for knowledge production and dissemination.</p> <p>Prof Adesina outlined competing ideas of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, including the liberal discourse (often expressed as "freedom from..."), as well as discourses based on human rights and social responsibility perspectives (sometimes expressed as "freedom to...").</p> <p>Many strands of the liberal discourse could be traced to a Lockean premise, and were based on a view of the need to protect society from an absolutist state. Often, in these formulations, the two principles were treated as one and the same: guaranteeing institutional autonomy would automatically facilitate academic freedom. The TB Davie formulation articulated in South Africa in the 1950s could be seen as a strand of this liberal discourse. However, as André du Toit had</p>

pointed out, to ask whether the institutional autonomy of institutions was under external threat by the state in post-apartheid South Africa, was essentially to ask the wrong question.

Other perspectives went beyond Lockean–liberal discourse, to examine collectivity, rights and responsibility. Both the Lima Declaration of 1988 and the Kampala Declaration of 1990 conceived of academic freedom as a human right, although especially applicable to the broad academic community. An important point of departure was that no freedom could be protected for a section of a community if the rights of other sections of that community went unprotected. The declarations recognised the dangers of ‘perverse’ institutional autonomy, as well as threats from outside. It was notable that both these declarations emphasised the responsibility of the intellectual towards members of the academic community and society, and the responsibility to oppose both censorship and self-censorship. This view of academic freedom valorised obligations and responsibility not as a *quid pro quo* for the rights, but as a mutually inclusive web of social obligations.

In the South African context, it could be argued that the content of the TB Davie formulation failed the test of the Lima and Kampala Declarations. Although it was invoked against the apartheid state, particularly by the English liberal universities, it co-existed with racialism, sexism and feudal mindsets in the running of academic departments.

In the transitional period in South Africa, three key perpetrating or beneficiary institutions had received a virtual amnesty: high capital, the security forces, and the universities (i.e. the economic, military, and cultural arms of the racist order). The challenges of the post-apartheid higher education sector might be easier to understand if one followed Mahmood Mamdani’s urging to look at the narrative of transformation beyond that between perpetrators and victims, to include that between beneficiaries and victims.

Prof Adesina said that he wished to focus on internal threats to academic freedom, as understood in the context of the Lima and Kampala Declarations. In his view the external threat from the state had lessened, although it could be seen in some aspects: e.g. a narrow view of the university for skills procurement, efforts at homogeneity in the name of efficiency, and a heavy-handed approach to institutional implosion. Indeed, one sensed a state more baffled about the failure of a transformation agenda than an aggressive and threatening one.

Three dimensions of internal threat could be highlighted in South African higher education institutions in the context of the Lima and the Kampala Declarations: unreformed institutional culture; managerialism and corporatisation; and a culture of self-censorship. A fourth dimension, corporate interest and commercialism, was both internally and externally driven.

Unreformed institutional culture constituted an internal threat to academic freedom through manifestations of acute intolerance and authoritarianism; continued markers of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’; institutional culture steeped in subliminal racism; lip-service to transformation of faculty; curricula that did not acknowledge the identity and dignity of many students; and evasion of the responsibility of academics to contribute actively to a new society. In contrast, it

	<p>could be noted that much of the transformative pedagogy and institutional framework of knowledge production and dissemination at the universities of Dakar, Ibadan and Dar-es-Salaam in the early post-colonial period involved intellectuals who had defined the transformative agenda at a time when the state was least intrusive.</p> <p>Turning to managerialism and corporatisation as threats to academic freedom, Prof Adesina argued that managerialism tended to destroy the spirit of collegiality and mutual accountability on which scholarship and academia rest. These trends in some cases led to authoritarianism, intolerance of dissent, and deployment of power rather than intellect. The practice of appointing executive Deans, rather than elected Deans, in some cases contributed to the ‘command and control’ environment. An adherence to market discourse had also led to the closure of departments not considered “cost-effective”.</p> <p>The third dimension of internal threat to academic freedom was seen in the culture of self-censorship and acquiescence. This might arise as a response to unreformed institutional culture or the new managerialism, and be adopted as a form of self-preservation. However, adopting a culture of self-censorship compromised one’s intellectual responsibility to pursue knowledge and the ‘truth’ wherever it might lead.</p> <p>The influence of corporate interest and commercialism on the academic enterprise constituted a further threat to academic freedom, driven by both external and internal actors. This extended from the role of commercial interest in driving the research agenda and limiting dissemination of research findings, to division amongst peers as to the nature of research undertaken, and compromises in the time afforded to teaching and mentoring.</p> <p>Prof Adesina concluded that an invocation of institutional autonomy in the face of the threats outlined above came across as perverse and self-serving. He posed several questions that could be used to face the future: What manner of state intervention would promote accelerated reform? When does the state become the protector of rights against internal violation? How do we take intellectual responsibility to ensure that our institutional cultures and curricula reflect our commitment to the new South Africa and our African identity?</p>
5.	<p>Discussant Prof André du Toit</p>
5.1	<p>Prof du Toit said that his first visit to the Westville campus had been in 1973, when he gave an address on civil disobedience in South Africa. He had been allowed to proceed only once the Rector had changed the topic from “civil disobedience” to “civil obedience and disobedience”. This had led him to argue that civil obedience was more alarming than civil disobedience!</p> <p>He wished to present six comments in his discussion of the keynote address. The keynote address provided an important extension of the ongoing debate on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, beyond the liberal mantra of the TB Davie formulation (which, in fact, defined institutional autonomy rather than</p>

academic freedom). It should be noted that not all South African universities had shared the liberal tradition and its conception of academic freedom: the Afrikaans universities had subscribed to a traditional notion of a '*volksuniversiteit*' which implied a different set of relations between the university and society – perhaps closer to the current notion of the developmental role of universities as national resources.

Adesina had located the debate in the wider African context, referring to the Lima and Kampala Declarations, and drawing instructive parallels between post-independent developments at African universities and the South African post-1994 democratic transformation of universities. The Lima and Kampala Declarations conceived of academic freedom as a human right, inseparably linked to freedoms of other sections of the community. This conception had been raised in South Africa in the 1980s when the University of Cape Town Senate declared that academic freedom did not exist in South Africa, as South Africa was an unfree society.

A paper presented by Adam Habib at an earlier regional forum on HEIAAF had similarly set out to widen the unduly narrow focus of the South African academic freedom debate. While the liberal focus was on state interference as a threat to academic freedom (in the present era as much as in the apartheid era), Habib had noted du Toit's view that threats to academic freedom were not only external, but predominantly internal. Habib had expanded on this view to argue that the internal threat included senior academics who failed to uphold their intellectual responsibility. A question could be asked: What is the relation between academic freedom and intellectual responsibility in the South African context?

This question could be examined with reference to the Lima and Kampala Declarations. These declarations conceived of academic freedom as a right, but concurrently insisted on the responsibility of intellectuals towards society. Adesina had endorsed this view when he said "Academic freedom... immediately valorises obligations and responsibility ... as a mutually inclusive web of social obligations". From this perspective, if academics had a duty or obligation to academic freedom and institutional autonomy, this was in relation to other parties (including the state and colleagues), who had the right to expect such obligations from them.

Habib and Adesina had pointed to instructive parallels between developments in post-independent African universities and the post-1994 'transformation' of universities in democratic South Africa. In particular, calls by expatriate staff in African universities in the 1960s to "be left alone" could be seen to correspond to attempts in the predominantly English-enclave universities in South Africa to invoke institutional autonomy and academic freedom in defence of unreformed institutional culture marked by intolerance and authoritarianism. In addition, Adesina had highlighted the role of African intellectuals in defining the transformation agenda of post-independence universities on the African continent in the 1960s, and in building indigenous intellectual traditions. It could be argued that South African intellectuals had not stepped forward to occupy similarly influential positions. An examination of the role of intellectuals required an analysis not only of their role in relation to the state, but also in relation to the developing economy and in relation to society. This expanded perspective required an examination of whether or not there was an underlying social pact on

	<p>institutional autonomy and academic freedom in the transforming society.</p> <p>Adesina had introduced a new concept to the discussion: that of “perverse” institutional autonomy and academic freedom. This was manifested in self-serving invocations of institutional autonomy and academic freedom in contexts of unreformed institutional culture, authoritarianism, subliminal racism, and unreformed curricula. According to Adesina, these invocations amounted to an evasion of “the responsibility of academia and academics to meet their responsibility to a new society”. Conversely, the imperatives of intellectual responsibility should be closely related to the agenda of ‘transforming’ universities within the particular context. This led to a range of questions on the relationship between academic freedom and intellectual responsibility. It also led to the question: What is the relation between academic freedom and the transformation of culture at liberal South African universities?</p> <p>Finally, Adesina’s keynote address had raised the need for intellectuals to revisit the relation between the (liberal) right to academic freedom and the (social) duty or obligation of intellectual responsibility. While the implications of the constitutional position had not really been tested in South Africa, perhaps more important was an examination of the development, or not, of a social pact on academic freedom, intellectual responsibility and institutional autonomy.</p>
6.	Open Discussion and Questions to the Speakers
6.1	Unidentified speaker
	<p>The participant endorsed the concerns raised by ‘Jimi Adesina over the appointment of executive Deans, rather than elected Deans. He agreed that the greatest threat to academic freedom arose within the university itself. One acquiesced for the sake of self-preservation. How should academics react, in a way that went beyond narrow self-preservation?</p>
6.2	Dr Lizwi Mhlane, DUT
	<p>The participant said that ‘transformation’ was a value-driven concept. The Adesina presentation had not made clear who it was that drove institutional values. ‘Jimi Adesina had referred to dictatorship by managers, and even in some instances by academics. Did he then advocate an interventionist model?</p>
6.3	Unidentified speaker
	<p>The participant said that both Adesina and du Toit had made it clear that academic freedom was provided for in the South African Constitution. He argued that academic freedom did not fall under freedom of speech (clause 16(1)). Constitutionally, no right was absolute. All were subject to the limitation of rights (section 36).</p> <p>He argued that what had been lacking in Adesina’s presentation was a discussion on the extent to which academic freedom should be limited. It was important to understand where one should draw the line in demanding academic freedom,</p>

	otherwise attempts to extend the right might fall short.
6.4	<p>Response by Prof Adesina</p> <p>Prof Adesina said that his argument was that academic freedom and intellectual responsibility were bundled, not alternative concepts. The victims, such as Caroline White, were members of the academic community, not some person from the street. Since the two concepts were bundled, it behoved members of the higher education community to understand each person's responsibility to others, to enable each person to enjoy their rights. How many people would survive in a department, or gain promotion, if they were vociferous in speaking out against professors?</p> <p>He asked academics to examine their own attitudes. When a student raised his hand to speak, did one think, "Saucy little bugger" or "That's an interesting point"? A person who had influenced him profoundly was a professor of Sociology who had welcomed student questioning. Intellectual freedom belonged to all intellectuals, including students. A commitment to intellectual freedom contributed to an apprenticeship system, where one looked at every student as becoming a colleague in five years' time.</p> <p>Prof Adesina said that constitutionality was a bounded thing. Academic freedom must be treated as a human right, not dependent on the Constitution. Violation of rights happened in small ways. For example, the increasing corporatisation of the university led one to ask, "Is this Daimler Chrysler, or the university?"; the views and issues of students might be sidelined as "unimportant", yet shouldn't an institutional leader deal with an 18-year-old on certain occasions, even if this meant a delay in attending to senior staff?</p> <p>In instances of institutional restructuring, members of the university might be offered no choice. University communities did not do well under authoritarianism. Students could not be productive in an atmosphere of fear. The use of threats demonstrated power. In contrast, academic freedom flourished where each person took responsibility as an intellectual.</p> <p>On the wider question of who drives transformation: intellectuals certainly had a place in this, through extending the boundaries of knowledge and ideas.</p> <p>Responding to the question of whether academics should acquiesce to negative institutional pressures for the sake of self-preservation, Prof Adesina said "No". He argued that academics were bright enough to find a way around or to address unwelcome or threatening institutional policies.</p> <p>He said that a key debate in Grahamstown was what it meant to be an African university. Transformation was not something anybody could impose on the university; it required members of the university community to step forward. In particular, it was essential for intellectuals to step forward, and to take risks. He owed his freedom to give the current lecture to intellectuals such as Solomon Mahlangu, Braam Fischer and Ruth First. Africa was a mosaic of peoples. It was vital for Africans to embrace Africa's problems as their problems; to "sing it in Xhosa and English".</p>

6.5	<p>Prof Peter Zacharias, UKZN</p> <p>This participant said that both Adesina and du Toit had referred to the correlation between rights and duties. Was it possible for the university to exist solely as a place of scholarship any longer? The university had a range of accountabilities: accountability to the state, accountability to society. The individual in the academy had accountability to raise issues and act in particular ways. How did accountability to the state and society, and the accountability of individual academics, fit into the university's hierarchy of rights and duties?</p>
6.6	<p>Prof Jim Phelps, University of Zululand (UZ)</p> <p>This participant referred to a distinction between scholarly freedom, and scholarly rule (the way that academics ruled themselves within a discipline). In Britain in the 19th century, a royal commission investigating Oxford and Cambridge found that institutional autonomy taken to extremes became a sickness. Socrates had demonstrated true intellectual freedom, being independent of everything including the institution.</p> <p>It was imperative for the state to create the conditions under which intellectual freedom and academic freedom could be exercised. However, the demands for institutional autonomy should be interrogated; the requirement that higher education institutions meet quality assurance requirements was legitimate. It should also be noted that requirements for greater accountability were coming in the context of reduced funding for institutions.</p>
6.7	<p>Prof Evan Manzaris, UKZN</p> <p>This participant said that an earlier speaker had asked whether notions and the material reality of institutional autonomy and academic freedom could exist in the social realities of South Africa. The university could not be autonomous because it was founded on the power of the state. Different universities served different regimes. The duties and the functions of the university were intertwined with the functions of the state. If the state had a particular socio-economic policy, what could the university do? In the current context, could Vice-Chancellors resist managerialism?</p> <p>The low salaries of academics were contributing to the muting of their voices. Critical intellectuals were not an accident of history: they constituted what was left of the autonomy of institutions.</p>
6.8	<p>Responses by the speakers</p> <p>Prof André du Toit</p> <p>Participants had questioned the supposed autonomy of the institution in the context of major funding by the state and a general policy framework set by the state, with concomitant demands for accountability. Paradoxically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state's proportion of institutional funding had been dropping (from 80-

90% thirty or forty years ago, to possibly 60% on average and below 40% in the case of some institutions at the current time);

- Yet, the role of the state in directed interventions and steering had increased.

An underlying issue was the level of trust between the state and society in general and universities in particular. 'Jimi Adesina had made the point that under the previous regime, even in the face of conflict over apartheid ideology, the state had trusted universities to set the general direction of their education and research. State and society did not find it necessary to intervene. This was no longer the case. It appeared that universities had lost the trust of the state, of research bodies, even of business. The demand for greater accountability, for example in increased quality assurance requirements, was an illustration of this, although it was not confined to South Africa.

The issue of the relationship between scholarly rule and intellectual freedom had been addressed in an important paper by Graeme Moodie. A speaker had asserted that Socrates demonstrated intellectual freedom. One could accept that at a general level of abstraction, and give thanks for some Socratic figures in one's midst, but how did one build that into the academic enterprise itself? Where was the locus for responsibility in the academic enterprise? Notions of academic freedom – embodying academic rule and intellectual freedom – had a great deal to do with accountability to one's peers. It was necessary for the university's core functions of research and teaching to be organised in certain ways to allow academic freedom to flourish. There should be certain procedures in place so that key decisions were taken with accountability to one's peers.

Prof 'Jimi Adesina

Prof Adesina said that he agreed with the view that higher education required additional resources. Real spending on higher education had declined. There were major challenges, including those resulting from the mergers. It was interesting to examine to what extent the higher education sector could bring pressure to bear on the state to provide redemption grants to historically disadvantaged institutions, or to institutions adversely affected by the new funding framework. This required solidarity between institutions.

The balance of power between the administration and Senate was another topic of investigation. In the academic arena, the Head of Department had power as the voice of the department, yet must not be a tyrant. Deans should not only be elected, but acceptable, in order to animate their colleagues and promote intellectual freedom. The business of the Dean was scholarship, at the same time as every cent had to be accounted for. Similarly, although animating the new generation of researchers was the *raison d'être* of the university, as a researcher one had to spend money effectively. While acknowledging the importance of accountability, the 'line manager' approach did not allow academics the free space necessary for the academic enterprise.

Prof Adesina said that he wished to clarify that the post-colonial experience in Dakar (Senegal) and other universities had not been a clear-cut case of expatriate whites opposed to black African scholars. Basil Davidson had become a

	<p>chronicler of the post-colonial project. White academics were part of the new thinking at the University of Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania).</p> <p>At the University of Ife (Nigeria) by 1973 the regime rolled tanks into the university and ordered the academics out. Violations of academic freedom had started within the university, when the Vice-Chancellor sanctioned a professor for giving a lecture critical of the regional government. Many people had become victims within their own institutions. The Kampala Declaration served as an affirmation that the way to defend one's own right to academic freedom was to defend the rights of other people.</p>
6.9	<p>Prof Leana Uys, UKZN</p> <p>This participant said that she disagreed with André du Toit's analysis that the previous government had trusted the universities. Their attitude had rather been, "You don't question us, we don't question you". Now the government said, "You interrogate us and we interrogate you". This was part of democracy.</p> <p>It was easy to say that since South Africa has a legitimate government, it had the right to interfere. But this statement required qualification. The degree of government involvement constituted a fine line, not an either-or situation.</p>
6.10	<p>Prof Charlotte Mbali, UKZN; National Tertiary Education Staff Union (NTESU)</p> <p>This participant questioned whether the Task Team had consulted unions active in higher education.</p> <p>She drew attention to the responsibility of the institution to producing employable graduates. There were anecdotal stories of graduates from certain institutions continuing to higher degrees because they could not find jobs. Although the Department of Education had set targets of throughput, these did not include throughput to employability. Furthermore the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) had abandoned its graduate survey.</p>
6.11	<p>Prof Malegapuru Makgoba, UKZN</p> <p>Prof Makgoba said that the two speakers appeared to have a romantic view of the university. He pointed out that universities were highly diverse in their changing historical context, their missions and their funding. Where one university was funded by individuals, and another by the state, were both equally autonomous?</p> <p>He asked how one might measure in a meaningful way the assertion that academic freedom had been encroached upon. If it could not be measured, the assertion could be used to create an imaginary threat, or used for other motives.</p>
6.12	<p>Prof RV Gabela, UZ</p> <p>This participant said that in looking at contrasting conceptions of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, the focus should not be on the concepts in</p>

	<p>terms of negative connotations, but in terms of perversions that were not desirable. In some institutions there was abuse of power and manipulation of available resources. In the absence of checks and balances, that manipulation led to perversions of institutional autonomy. Any investigation should seek explication of the hidden variables in particular pockets of micro-politics.</p> <p>Referring to 'Jimi Adesina's concern over the trend to establish executive deanships, he said that it would be useful to investigate the merits and demerits of this trend, as more and more institutions were moving to executive deanships.</p>
6.13	<p>Dr Volker Wedekind, UKZN</p> <p>This participant said that Mala Singh had invited participants to look at what the CHE and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) were doing. Within the higher education landscape there was fragility in the system. What worried him was not the threat of a monolithic state intervening, but the fused nature of a regulatory state and an interventionist state putting pressure on different points of the system. Although the state did not directly intervene in who was taught and what was taught, pressures were exerted by the funding framework, by provincial demands on the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and by pressures to produce particular skills. The higher education system was in the middle of these competing pressures. He was not sure that it had the capacity to meet all the expectations placed on it, and that in itself constituted a threat to the system.</p>
6.14	<p>Responses by the speakers</p> <p>Prof 'Jimi Adesina</p> <p>Prof Adesina acknowledged that there were different models of universities. What made the university distinct was its focus on knowledge production. What unified diverse universities was the impulse to ring-fence knowledge producers away from outside pressures. From this perspective, increased managerialism constituted a threat. If institutions took senior academics out of knowledge production, this weakened the academic enterprise.</p> <p>He had worked in a context of elected Deans. In his view, the job of the Dean was academic leadership, including interaction in classrooms, not undertaking a heavy burden of academic management.</p> <p>Responding to the comment on the range of pressures placed on universities, Prof Adesina said that there were enormous pressures on universities to meet various training requirements and equity targets. He referred to the pressure being placed on academics to obtain a postgraduate diploma in higher education (PGDHE). In his view, the first three years of post-doctoral research should be focused on taking root in the field and taking off in research. If academics were forced to respond to all the external requirements, they would not be able to publish. Rhodes had introduced the PGDHE requirement in a developmental way over a four-year period, starting with the development of a teaching portfolio.</p>

Prof Adesina thanked the CHE for holding up a mirror to the practices in higher education, and seeking active debate. In South Africa one should not be afraid of ideas; one would not be asked to drink a glass of hemlock for dissenting.

Prof André du Toit

Prof du Toit said that one difference in context between the apartheid regime and democratic government was the level of authoritarianism. He agreed with the view that the apartheid government would leave universities alone provided they did not question it too far. Now, in the democratic context, it was accepted that interrogation should take place both ways. That was a large part of the current discussion.

Responding to Prof Makgoba's assertion that the speakers appeared to have a romantic idea of the university, he said that the university was a complex organisation. Clark Kerr had said that one should not speak of a "university" but of a "multiversity", based on the many, complex ways in which it operated. How could one recognise a university? An easy rule of thumb was whether its members were concerned with academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Was it appropriate, for instance, for secondary schools to be concerned with academic freedom and institutional autonomy? If not, why not? Institutions concerned with knowledge production valued institutional autonomy and academic freedom in ways that commercialised enterprises did not.

This led to other questions asked earlier: How did one measure intrusions on academic freedom? And, should academics acquiesce to managerial pressures, as a form of self-preservation, rather than raising their concerns? There might not be a common definition of academic freedom, but conceptions of academic freedom would rise in one's face when the principle was violated. One could argue that violators of academic freedom were self-defining. They were recognised by people involved in the academic community, since academic freedom was something practised by that community. It was important that members did not just view their own academic freedom, but also that of others. If members of the community did not respond to threats to the academic freedom of others, they could lose their own academic freedom.

Dr Mala Singh, CHE

Dr Singh said that 'Jimi Adesina had given complexity to the ways that academic freedom and institutional autonomy could be violated, whereas this was often represented in a knee-jerk way by members of the higher education community. He had recognised the ways that greed, opportunism, cowardice and laziness in academics created an environment in which academic freedom might be diminished. It would be valuable for the Task Team to incorporate this insight into its investigation.

Having said that, even if an institution exercised institutional autonomy in the best way, this did not mean that there was no role for the involvement of the state or regulatory bodies. Accountability demands were huge and diverse. It was important for members of the higher education community to continue to ask whether those demands were justified, how they could be justified, and whether

	the accountability demands could be managed (particularly whether the sector had the resources and capacity to give effect to all the demands being made on higher education institutions). Role players could seek to create enabling environments, but what were the parameters of that?
7.	Closure by the Chairperson
7.1	<p>The Chairperson thanked everybody present for a very interesting discussion. The CHE's decision to hold regional fora around the country was an important step in a national process. He urged participants to find ways to take the discussion forward at institutional level and regionally.</p> <p>The Chairperson closed the meeting at 15h00.</p>