

Social Transformation in Eastern Cape Universities, South Africa: Myth or Reality?



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ABSTRACT

This paper explored whether social transformation in two Eastern Cape Universities, South Africa is a myth or reality. The paper draws upon key insights from social transformation about democratic freedom, political, and cultural spheres of society. Taking social transformation in Higher Education institutions (HEIs) as a conceptual frame of reference, some issues affect the university's ability to address their challenges in a transformative manner. The theory of transformation underpinned the paper, to understand that transformation is a method of change from one jurisdiction to the next which can be applied to either a person or a group and its services. The interpretivism paradigm was applied to comprehend what people mean when they act and engage with others, as well as the intentions behind their acts. A qualitative research methodology using a case study design was employed to gain information from various views from the purposely selected participants (academics, support staff, and students). Data was collected through focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. In the data analysed similar categories and themes emerged. The findings of the study exposed a lack of social transformation practices and resistance to change in addressing the institutional processes and practices in a transformative manner. The researchers recommend that Higher Education Institutions ensure they are engaged in practising social transformation strategies to improve their approach to addressing their institutional needs. Based on the findings, a model is proposed as the new knowledge for the existing literature on the social transformation in the Eastern Cape Universities, South Africa whether it is a myth or reality.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper explored whether the social transformation in two universities of the Eastern Cape of South Africa, is a myth or reality. This paper encompasses the understanding of social transformation, social equity, how universities cater for staff and students with disabilities, how democratic freedom is upheld, and also to what extent students' learning needs to be addressed in a transformative manner. It is evident from the literature that social transformation in some universities worldwide including South Africa is not addressing their needs in a transformative manner, for example, they are still complaining about their managers who do not pay attention to their concerns and complaints. Even today in some universities, there is no stability as strikes

are ongoing.¹ Universities are currently dealing with issues and challenges that are "undoubtedly bound to change the nature of the academic enterprise to a degree that today seems almost unimaginable."²

Nonetheless, an important policy choice was made in South Africa about how to handle the reform of the higher education system through the National Plan on Education.³ It attempted to change the higher education policy, which has not produced any tangible results for the majority of historically underprivileged rural colleges in South African society in terms of access, equality, and participation.⁴ Seemingly, as the Plan stated, it is still to be in place as some rural institutions still struggling.

Moreover, while changes have undoubtedly taken place everywhere, the effects of global trends on local institutions and each nation's environment have varied greatly from one to the next without necessarily affecting their fundamental nature and primary functions.⁵ This reveals that transformation is not only a challenge in our country but also globally there is a problem in bringing change. For example, the rich continue to be able to afford and access higher education while most of the poor, who are mostly black, do not appear to profit from the introduction of policies intended to transform higher education in South Africa.⁶ Minor adjustments have changed higher education in South Africa, as some of these have been large-scale changes brought about by government and donor interventions, while others have been gradual, small-scale changes brought about from within organisations.

However, the higher education system needs to change to meet new societal needs comparable to (equity, gender, and race) and address the realities of social transformation.⁷ As a result, social requirements will be met, and new realities of social transformation will be addressed. Institutional leadership, support staff, and students must all actively participate in the change process. Thus, Faculty development and targeted policies are needed for higher education to successfully transform in order to increase institutional resilience and better readiness for crisis management shortly.⁸ A responsive higher education system necessitates a diverse spectrum of schools due to South Africa's extremely varied and diverse economic and social requirements. Institutional structures where every school of higher learning strives to be the same, do the same thing, and all aspire to be a university of change lack virtue.⁹

To be very skilled at performing societal change, transformational leaders should be also very skilled at reducing resistance to change as societal transformation can be significantly impacted by resistance to change.¹⁰ Even so, institutional leaders are the ones who are supposed to drive change in their institutions, but they sometimes face some challenges in implementing it. This challenge has necessitated the need for the present study to explore social transformation in Eastern Cape Universities, of South Africa whether is it a myth or reality.

The general situation of the Higher Education system in South Africa, according to a recent analysis of universities, has considered infrastructure and a large capacity to adapt to the remaking of post-apartheid education in place.¹¹ Nevertheless traditionally, white institutions (as well as a few black ones) generally lack political and moral legitimacy. However, the majority of black universities (as well as a few white institutions) lack academic legitimacy altogether. In general, the system is viewed as one that

¹ Chiara Benassi and Andreas Kornelakis, "How Do Employers Choose between Types of Contingent Work? Costs, Control, and Institutional Toying," *ILR Review* 74, no. 3 (May 5, 2021): 715–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793920944910>.

² Benassi and Kornelakis, "How Do Employers Choose between Types of Contingent Work? Costs, Control, and Institutional Toying," 123.

³ S. Veisi, "The Relationship between Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Self-Efficacy," *International Samann Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2014): 22–41.

⁴ Veisi, "The Relationship between Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Self-Efficacy."

⁵ Veisi, "The Relationship between Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Self-Efficacy."

⁶ N. Mkhize et al., *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Durban, University of Kwazulu Natal, 2020),

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nobuhle-Ndimande-Hlongwa/publication/348683903_Teaching_and_Learning_in_Higher_Education_in_the_Time_of_COVID-19/links/605795d0458515e8345fe922/Teaching-and-Learning-in-Higher-Education-in-the-Time-of-COVID-19.pdf.

⁷ Nicole Mirra and John Rogers, "Institutional Participation and Social Transformation: Considering the Goals and Tensions of University-Initiated YPAR Projects with K-12 Youth," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 29, no. 10 (2016): 1255–68.

⁸ G. Marinoni, "The Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education Around the World," IAU Global Survey Report, 2020.

⁹ Mirra and Rogers, "Institutional Participation and Social Transformation: Considering the Goals and Tensions of University-Initiated YPAR Projects with K-12 Youth."

¹⁰ Rochelle Gutiérrez, "Context Matters: How Should We Conceptualize Equity in Mathematics Education?," in *Equity in Discourse for Mathematics Education: Theories, Practices, and Policies* (Springer, 2011), 17–33.

¹¹ Teboho Moja and Nico Cloete, "Transforming Higher Education in South Africa: A New Approach to Governance," *African Issues* 24, no. 1 (1996): 10–16.

supports inequality, is incredibly inefficient, and is not meeting the demands of the nation in terms of human resources.¹² Roux Many reforms have been called for because of these issues to address disparities and promote better relevance, accountability, and democracy.

Also, poor leadership in universities hampers the progress of transformation especially gender disparity at senior levels. This is a challenge facing HEIs even in developed countries. Making social transformation a top academic and organizational priority will put higher education leaders and their academic peers in a prime position to help create a just and environmentally sound future.¹³ Nevertheless, the key content of the social transformation of Higher education institutions is to produce new information, foster the development of useful skills, increase sustainability awareness, and shape the future of global society in terms of development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social transformation typically refers to the student's transformation through learning or the institution's transformation so that it is better able to provide transformative results and transformative learning when it pertains to higher education.¹⁴ In South Africa, the term "social transformation" refers to the process of changing an apartheid-era society into one that is inclusive. It also refers to the political freedom and social equity that higher education institutions play in this process. For higher education to successfully transform, faculty development and targeted policies are needed to boost institutional resilience and improve preparedness for crisis management. Sometimes it is clear that there is a major factor that affects social transformation, for example, the lack of social transformation practices among the stakeholders to address the institutional needs in a transformative manner.¹⁵

Support is a crucial requirement that encompasses both institutional leadership and pertinent stakeholders (faculty, students, and support staff) to effectively implement change.¹⁶ However, following South Africa's democratic transition in 1994, the government has made reforms to higher education institutions to transform them.¹⁷ Since they are frequently viewed as being either reluctant to change or outright resistant, it is apparent that the social transformation of higher education is a worldwide challenge that is now occurring in most countries around the globe.¹⁸ There have undoubtedly been changes everywhere, but the effects of these trends on the local institutions and national landscapes have varied greatly from one nation to the next, without particularly affecting the fundamentals and core of each.

Consequently, the social transformation of higher education institutions involves more than just changes in the make-up of the faculty and student body, governance structures, or curriculum by making alterations to organisational culture and the creation and adoption of new shared values.¹⁹ All the stakeholders and role-players must undergo fundamental mentality shifts to accomplish this, but academic personnel need special attention. This could be done by linking positive emotions to one of the aspects of social transformation where beneficial social change can have beneficial outcomes when it is put into practice.²⁰

Almost all organisations in Mexico have been under pressure to change their curricula and implement fresh methods of academic validation and quality control.²¹ However, it is asserted that the process of restructuring higher education systems is taking place as a result of the collective properties and constraints of local socio-political changes and international forces related to the shift to the

¹² Tessie H H Herbst and Therese Roux, "Toxic Leadership: A Slow Poison Killing Women Leaders in Higher Education in South Africa?," *Higher Education Policy* 36, no. 1 (2023): 164–89.

¹³ Eddie Blass, Anne Jasman, and Steve Shelley, "Visioning 2035: The Future of the Higher Education Sector in the UK," *Futures* 42, no. 5 (2010): 445–53.

¹⁴ Gutiérrez, "Context Matters: How Should We Conceptualize Equity in Mathematics Education?"

¹⁵ Marinoni, "The Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education Around the World."

¹⁶ Gutiérrez, "Context Matters: How Should We Conceptualize Equity in Mathematics Education?"

¹⁷ White Paper 3 Council on Higher Education, "Access and Throughput in South African Higher Education: Three Case Studies," *Higher Education Monitor No. 9. A Report of the CHE Advise and Monitoring Directorate.* (Pretoria, 2010).

¹⁸ J. Martin, "Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles of Academic Library Leaders: An Exploratory Leaders," *Harvard Business Review Blog*, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2011/12/get-passive-resisters-to-embr>.

¹⁹ R. Wagenaar, *Competences and Learning Outcomes: A Panacea for Understanding the (New) Role of Higher Education?* (New York: Free Press, 2014).

²⁰ Wagenaar, *Competences and Learning Outcomes: A Panacea for Understanding the (New) Role of Higher Education?* .

²¹ P. Duren, *Leadership in Academic and Public Libraries: A Time of Change* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2016).

"knowledge society".²² As commonly assumed, higher education is at the centre of knowledge, society and universities all over the world are facing issues and obstacles.²³ In the nation of Bulgaria, the social role of a university in transformative processes is a mixed-up and complicated phenomenon.²⁴

Sometimes people may occasionally be resistant to change because they do not feel like they have a voice in the organisation, they do not fit in with the new organization, they are fearful of what the change might bring, or they have undergone too much change too rapidly.²⁵ Another negative side effect of social transition is members' concerns about how to succeed and function in the new organisation. De Haas and Fransen state that social transformation encompasses a progressive shift in the lived values of people within a development spectrum for example, transformational leaders have a favourable impact on increasing student participation in their coursework and extracurricular activities.²⁶ Subordinates of transformational leaders have less role conflict, higher task performance, and higher satisfaction with a task than subordinates with non-transformational leaders.²⁷

Thus, higher education must play a transformative role in South Africa's transition from apartheid to an inclusive society because the social transformation has a specific meaning linked to democratic freedom and social equity.²⁸ The opposing viewpoints on the function of higher education in this process are a result of the historical significance of HEIs in South Africa and the global community. Universities are still seen as important players in the growth and change of society. The clearest responsibility they have been given is to produce highly competent study output to satisfy the deemed requirements of democracy.²⁹

During the democratic era, universities in South Africa must first support economic and social change, serve the public interest, and produce critical citizens for a thriving democracy as they are seen as integral parts of civil society.³⁰ When universities contribute positively and are transformative to society, they are seen as intrinsic locations. Higher education institutions' social responsibilities include disseminating knowledge, producing graduates with critical thinking skills, producing, and using knowledge through research and development activities, and promoting community involvement, democracy, and economic growth.³¹

There were some deliberations on the role of universities in social transformation, and three fundamental questions were asked, for instance, Who gets access to higher education? What do they get in terms of the curriculum? And where does it lead them in terms of the labour market, political status, or placement?³² It has been revealed that there will never be equal access to education. Therefore, HEIs can contribute to societal transformation by closing the gap between historically privileged and disadvantaged groups.

Jansen claims that only a small number of alterations have significantly changed higher education in South Africa.³³ For instance, some of these changes have been large-scale ones that have been started from outside through government and donor interventions; others have been minor and gradual changes that have been started from within institutions. The higher education system clearly differs from the distortion, chaos, and fragmentation that characterized the sector at the start of the 1990s. Despite the fact that there are some continuities, Walter Sisulu University (WSU) in the Eastern Cape and the University

²² Duren, *Leadership in Academic and Public Libraries: A Time of Change*.

²³ Marek Kwiek, "Changing Higher Education Policies: From the Deinstitutionalization to the Reinstitutionalization of the Research Mission in Polish Universities (CPP RPS 33/2012)," 2012.

²⁴ R.M. Kanter, "Ten Reasons People Resist Change," Harvard Business Review Blog, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2012/09/ten-reasons-people-resist-change.html>.

²⁵ Kanter, "Ten Reasons People Resist Change."

²⁶ H. De Haas and S. Fransen, "Social Transformation and Migration: An Empirical Inquiry" (Amsterdam, 2018).

²⁷ De Haas and Fransen, "Social Transformation and Migration: An Empirical Inquiry."

²⁸ Jonathan Jansen, "Changes and Continuities in South Africa's Higher Education System, 1994 to 2004," in *Changing Class* (Pretoria: HRSC Press, 2020).

²⁹ Jansen, "Changes and Continuities in South Africa's Higher Education System, 1994 to 2004."

³⁰ Linda Chisholm, *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Hsrc Press, 2004).

³¹ Tammy Rogers and K Michael Casey, "Bank Dividend Policy: Does the ESG Rating Matter?," *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics* 17, no. 6 (2020).

³² Yann Lebeau, "Aspects of the Instrumentalization of the University in Nigeria: Students' Experience and the Current Significance of the Certificate," in *The Dilemma of Post-Colonial Universities* (IFRA-Nigeria, 2000), 147–68, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.ifra.1019>.

³³ Jansen, "Changes and Continuities in South Africa's Higher Education System, 1994 to 2004."

of Limpopo in the Limpopo Province have established Centers for Rural Development in South Africa, which are in charge of programs that assist rural development as one of the transformational practices.³⁴

To contribute to the conversation regarding higher education and rural development, this study puts forth the supposition that higher education institutions are involved in the process of social transformation to change people's lives in rural areas.³⁵ He further argues that it is critical to distinguish between universities that initiate change, those that accelerate already-existing change, and those that impede change when examining colleges and societal transformation. Given this information, the two institutions mentioned above were picked because it is believed that they are moving along with change and growth in their rural environments. Findings revealed that faculty development and specific policies are needed for higher education to successfully transform to increase institutional resilience and improve preparedness for crisis management shortly.³⁶

Although the universities' institutional cultures have undergone some changes since becoming democratic institutions and have a critical role to play in achieving the goals of national development, White Paper 3 affirms the principles of social transformation, democratic freedom, and social equity as outlined in the 1997 report.³⁷ This also includes assisting the rest of the post-school system, coordinating curricula and research agendas to help achieve national goals, addressing the issues of social transformation, social equity, how universities accommodate staff and students with disabilities, how democratic freedom is upheld, as well as the degree to which students' learning requires transformational approaches.

The connections between employers, lecturers, support workers, and students at work might also get worse for a variety of reasons such as lack of openness, ambiguous job descriptions and instructions, inadequate communication channels, and unprofessional interactions between managers and staff are a few of these problems.³⁸ It is therefore very important for social transformation to be practised collaboratively whereby all stakeholders feel as part of the institution as it transforms.³⁹ According to Badat's argument (2017), certain organisations primarily consider demographic shifts when interpreting the term "transformation". In the eyes of certain institutions, the phrase encompasses both institutional culture and a more thorough institutional transformation. Because restricting the goal to racial equality ignores bigger transformative issues in traditionally black institutions, transformation should be more holistic and not simply about race. Change should therefore be tackled holistically as opposed to particular issues without comprehending how all kinds of oppression intersect.⁴⁰

In the wake of the "Reitz incident" and the "Shimla Park incident," the Human Rights Commission was previously involved in carrying out investigations and peace-making measures at the University of the Free State (UFS).⁴¹ It is acknowledged that the incidents at the University of the Free State are recent, notwithstanding earlier recommendations by the Commission to address racist behaviour at the universities of Pretoria, North West, and Stellenbosch. South African universities must reflect the transformation in several areas, including the political economy of higher education funding, institutional equity, equitable staffing, institutional cultures, progressive and inclusive teaching and learning, research and knowledge systems, management, and leadership.⁴²

According to Mkhize et al., the Human Rights Commission was created to support universities, including the Eastern Cape, in upholding their obligation to transform and promote inclusion, non-discrimination, and integration at all levels, both within the university and in the local community where

³⁴ Jansen, "Changes and Continuities in South Africa's Higher Education System, 1994 to 2004."

³⁵ Lebeau, "Aspects of the Instrumentalization of the University in Nigeria: Students' Experience and the Current Significance of the Certificate."

³⁶ Marinoni, "The Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education Around the World."

³⁷ Council of Higher Education, "A Programme for Transformation of Higher Education" (Pretoria, 2010).

³⁸ A. Beer, *Focus on Supervision in General Management* (Cape Town: Juta, 2018).

³⁹ Nico Cloete, "The South African Higher Education System: Performance and Policy," *Studies in Higher Education* 39, no. 8 (2014): 1355–68.

⁴⁰ S. Badat, "The Post-Secondary Education System: Towards Policy Formulation for Equality and Development," 2017.

⁴¹ Shadrack T Mzangwa, "The Effects of Higher Education Policy on Transformation in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Cogent Education* 6, no. 1 (2019): 1592737.

⁴² E.J. Majola, "Transformation in Higher Education Perspective of the SAHRC. Launch of the Free State Centre for Human Rights Transformation in Higher Education - Perspective of the SAHRC.," 2018.

the university is located.⁴³ To advance the education sector, deal with all forms of unfair discrimination, and remove barriers to access and success, the South African Human Rights Commission came up with a transformational idea.⁴⁴ This idea is more consistent with the preamble of the Constitution. Buildings should be based on the values of acceptance, respect, and social inclusion. To advance the education sector, deal with all forms of unfair discrimination, and remove barriers to access and success, the South African Human Rights Commission came up with a transformational idea.⁴⁵ This idea is more consistent with the preamble of the Constitution. Buildings should be based on the values of acceptance, respect, and social inclusion.

However, Higher Education Institutions support a cultural framework that is linked across societies and constructed into social positions of significant collective meaning and legitimacy. It also aids in the construction of global citizens organized around universalistic competence and scientific knowledge.⁴⁶ Thus, Higher education promotes new organizational forms, globalization, and social mobilization while also rationalizing society and the state. Higher education has always been seen as separate from and possibly even harmful to the economy. Today, because of the expanding post-industrial knowledge economy, the outcomes of higher education are more frequently evaluated and quantified in economic terms.⁴⁷

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The transformation theory, which defines transformation as a process of change from one state to another and can be applied to a person, an organisation, or the product or service provided by the organisation, served as the theoretical foundation for this paper.⁴⁸ This theory also refers to changing one's surroundings and oneself. When discussing transformation with higher education institutions, most people mean either the transformation of the learner through learning or the transformation of the institution to better enable the provision of transformative results, such as transformative learning or research.⁴⁹ Therefore, transformation theory was used by the researchers to understand the social transformation in EC universities, in South Africa whether is it a myth or reality. The researchers contend that a transformed university provides transformative practices to all its university stakeholders including lecturers, students, and support staff. Among others, the management should pay attention to social equity, democratic freedom, and social transformation to address their needs in a transformative manner.

It is understood that the issue of who has access to them is crucial to know whether such practices are a myth or reality because higher education credentials are the primary legitimate route to all stakeholders' roles and social status in the knowledge and attainment of all three aspects mentioned above.⁵⁰ Also, to understand if there can never be equal access to education if the gap between historically wealthy and underprivileged groups in HEI is eliminated and societal reform is still possible.

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

This paper used an interpretive paradigm deep-seated in a qualitative approach to determine whether social transformation is a myth or reality in the Eastern Cape Province, South African Higher Education Institutions. Therefore, the primary goal of using interpretivism in this study was to comprehend how the stakeholders in HEI perceive transformation.⁵¹ According to Mishra & Raj, interpretivism aims to

⁴³ Mkhize et al., *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*.

⁴⁴ Department of Higher Education and Training, "Report on the Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation – Called by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, 22–23 April 2015.," 2015.

⁴⁵ Department of Higher Education and Training, "Report on the Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation – Called by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, 22–23 April 2015.," 2015.

⁴⁶ D. H. Kamens, *Beyond the Nation-State: The Reconstruction of Nationhood and Citizenship* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Books, 2012).

⁴⁷ D. J. Frank and J. W. Meyer, *The University and the Global Knowledge Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

⁴⁸ Sanna Joensuu-Salo and Marko Matalamäki, "The Impact of Digital Capability on Firm Performance and Growth in Incumbent SMEs," *Journal of Enterprising Culture* 31, no. 02 (June 6, 2023): 211–32, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S0218495823500073>.

⁴⁹ Tobias Joachim Schnitzler, "Success Factors of Transformative Learning for Sustainable Development" (ÖFSE-Forum, 2020).

⁵⁰ Lebeau, "Aspects off the Instrumentalization of the University in Nigeria: Students' Experience and the Current Significance of the Certificate."

⁵¹ J. Maree, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

comprehend the intentions, meanings and uses people give to their behaviours and relationships with others.⁵²

Research Design

A case study design was used by the authors for a more affluent analysis of the problem under study. This design assisted in giving a more concise understanding as they investigated social transformation in Eastern Cape Universities, South Africa whether is it a myth or reality. The researchers obtained an opportunity to investigate more by immersing a variety of questions to acquire rich data from the participant's responses.⁵³ Additionally, a case study research design was used because it assisted in learning about different perspectives in the sample group and allowed the researchers to concentrate on the characteristics that were the subject of the study.

Research Approach

The qualitative approach was used to investigate social transformation in Eastern Cape Universities, South Africa whether is it a myth or reality. Creswell argues that a qualitative approach is an inquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports, or detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting, that is, in the participants' environments.⁵⁴ The primary justification for using a qualitative approach was that the study was conducted in a natural setting, in HEIs to the situation.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this paper incorporated lecturers, students, and support staff in two Eastern Cape universities in South Africa. A population is the total number of persons participating in a single activity or event that adheres to a particular standard and for which the researchers have no plans to generalize their findings.⁵⁵ To identify and choose examples with the most information possible while making the best use of the limited resources available, the qualitative research method known as "purposeful sampling" is frequently used.⁵⁶

For this paper, 6 lecturers, 6 students, and 6 support staff in two institutions, namely, the Walter Sisulu University and the University of Fort – Hare in the Eastern Cape, South Africa were purposively selected to explore whether social transformation is a myth or reality.

Data Collection

Focus group interviews were later employed in conjunction with a qualitative research methodology during data gathering. Focus group interviews allow researchers to look beyond the facts and learn or confirm the meaning behind the facts that might be obtained via methodology.⁵⁷ Focus groups are small groups of people who are asked to respond to questions in a moderated setting. The sampled institution's names were not real because the researchers used pseudonyms for identification, for example, letters of the alphabet (A and B) were used. The study was conducted in two Eastern Cape universities in South Africa. The researchers used the names Institution 1 and Institution 2 to maintain their anonymity. There are three campuses and B at Institution 1. The main question asked was: What are social transformation practices applied in universities to address transformative needs?

⁵² Nirmal Raj Mishra, "Teachers and Students' Perception on Intended and Enacted Teaching Methods in Higher Education Teaching," *Researcher: A Research Journal of Culture and Society* 5, no. 1 (2021): 99–110.

⁵³ J. R. Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues* (Mawah, NJ: Eribaum: Cengage Learning, 2020).

⁵⁴ J. W. Creswell, *The Mixed Methods Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017).

⁵⁵ Mathew Kimanzi, "The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Fostering Innovation and Sustainable Entrepreneurship: A Case of a University in South Africa," 2020.

⁵⁶ Fr Baiju Thomas, "The Role of Purposive Sampling Technique as a Tool for Informal Choices in a Social Sciences in Research Methods," *Just Agriculture* 2, no. 5 (2022): 1–8.

⁵⁷ Marta Brunner, "Scenes: Lever Press: An Interview with Marta Brunner. American Book Review," *American Book Review* 41, no. 1 (2019): 31–31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/abr.2019.0145>.

Data Analysis

Data collected from engaging focus-group interviews were studied and analysed to expose the hidden information from the raw data to identify themes that emerged.⁵⁸ The researchers kept their voices and sense of uniqueness throughout the data analysis process and completely depended on what the participants disclosed. Patterns were identified and classified, units and categories were created, and patterns were recognized. Transcripts of the recorded themes, sub-themes, and replies were analysed thematically.⁵⁹

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following themes emerged during the data analysis, and are subsequently discussed:

- Lack of social transformation practices
- Resistance to change in addressing the institutional needs in a transformative manner.

Lack of Social Transformation Practices

The understanding of lecturers, students, and support staff on social transformation in their institution was found to be different during interviews. All three groups complained about the lack of social transformation practices which affects them because their managers were unable to use different strategies to address their needs in a transformative manner. Some interviewees declare that even though they are raising their concerns on time, the managers do not pay attention. Sometimes, they channel their needs through their unions and still, there are no changes. For them, their managers' institutional practices are not pleasing, and they are not comfortable with that. The managers pay attention to a few things and that to them, is not transformation. The managers pay little attention even to listen to what they want to say, in fact, they always make promises that they will attend to their concerns every time. The participants contend that:

Our managers do not pay attention to our concerns and that made us regard to lack of social transformation practices, for example, they keep on postponing the appointments we made requesting to have meetings with them and that affects us (Interviewee 1A).

Because of the negligence of managers, we sometimes request unions to represent us, but still, we found that there is no change. Sometimes we raise our concerns on time but our managers do not pay attention (Interviewee 1B)

Our managers' practices are not pleasing us at all, they are not pleasing us as a result we are not comfortable. We have seen our managers paying attention to a few things and that to us is not transformation (Interviewee C).

From the findings above, it came to our attention as the researchers of this paper that the managers of the institution pay little attention to addressing the needs of all the stakeholders in a transformative manner. The participants sometimes resorted to engaging other structures because they were not comfortable with the actions of their managers.⁶⁰ He argues that rather than focusing on specific problems, transformation should be approached holistically, taking into account the intersectionality of all forms of oppression. There are allegations of negligence even if they have made requests on timeously and that affects them negatively as they keep on postponing their appointments. Their managers fail to apply social transformation processes and practices.

Resistance to change in addressing the institutional needs in a transformative manner

It transpired from all the participants that they all have a better understanding of the concept of transformation. They were able to share their understandings and indicated that when one speaks transformation refers to changing things, meaning upgrading. Also, the participants shared that

⁵⁸ P.D. Leedy and J.E. Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 10th ed. (Boston: Merrill/Prentice Hall, 2021).

⁵⁹ Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*.

⁶⁰ Badat, "The Post-Secondary Education System: Towards Policy Formulation for Equality and Development."

transformation is about how things were done before and now. Even though the participants understood transformation, they were still facing the problem of their administrators who were not practicing transformation, for example, they resisted change and failed to organize some workshops to develop them and that did not address the institutional needs in a transformative manner. They do not want to give them a chance to discuss their challenges with them, they resist change and always promise to change things. One participant argued that even when they wanted to address some issues, they did not have enough information to share, which affected the progress.

When you speak of transformation, we speak changing of things meaning upgrading things. Transformation is how things were done before and now (Interviewee A).

We had a problem with our administration office that is not practising transformation and that made them not address their needs in a transformative manner and that caused problems (Interviewee B).

Our managers resist change and they failed to organize workshops to develop and gain more information to share with others (Interviewee C).

The responses above indicate that the participants all agreed that transformation is a change, from old ways of upgrading things from old to a modern standard. For instance, they were aware of what was supposed to be done by their managers when they presented their concerns and complaints to them. Some participants indicated that their managers lacked enough knowledge and skills to address their needs in a transformative manner. Regarding these findings, the authors argue that resistance of managers to change affects the transformation process in the institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the present study recommends that Higher Education universities in the Eastern Cape in South Africa should ensure that are addressing the needs of lecturers, students, and support staff in a transformative manner, for example, social equity, catering to faculty staff and students with disabilities, uphold democratic freedom and student/lecturer relations. However, some institutions are still in their initial stages of transformation as long as they are not accommodating and addressing other stakeholders' needs in a transformative manner. There is a need to support managers, lecturers, support staff, and students with appropriate knowledge and skills to practice transformation in their institutions. Consequently, they need to organize and attend workshops to decolonise their attitude toward resisting change and certify their knowledge and understanding of an area of proficiency that one could achieve through fundamental changes in their mindset. In this paper, the researchers propose a model with strategies for social transformation practices. The proposed model is presented in Figure 1 below.

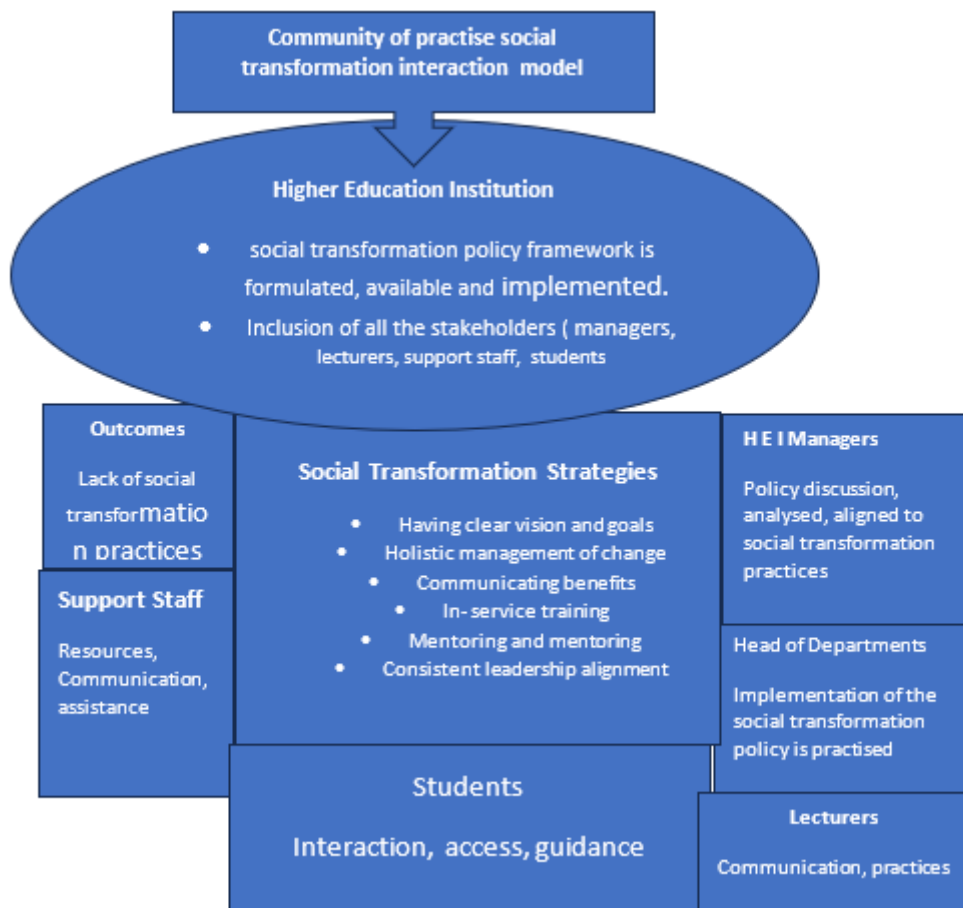


Figure 1: Nqabeni, Maqhubela, and Ciske (2024) proposed a community of practice Social Transformation Interaction Model

Figure 1 above shows the community of practice Social Transformation interaction model that needs to be adopted by all the stakeholders, namely, managers, heads of Departments, lecturers, support staff, and students in Higher Education Institutions. This model shows different types of social transformation strategies to be considered in all the activities performed in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) depending on the requirements of the situation. The role players of the proposed model include stakeholders such as the Department of Higher Education, managers, lecturers, support staff, and students as a community of practice.

In this model, the Department of Higher Education, and managers should work collaboratively to ensure there is a social transformation policy that addresses all issues and is implemented. The policy should be accessible, discussed, and analyzed to benefit all the stakeholders to understand how to perform social transformation practices by using different types of strategies during their interactions. There should be clear guidelines and effective communication through mentoring, and monitoring to accommodate the understanding of all the role players. Also, the Department of Higher Education Institutions should organize service training for all the stakeholders for quality education and to sustain social transformation practices to avoid social transformation being a myth and people that resist change. Therefore, all the stakeholders play an important role in assisting one another, working collaboratively, and bringing ideas to their attention hence in this model we emphasise the community of practice social transformation interaction model. The suggested strategies if used by all the stakeholders could assist in addressing the lack of social transformation practices and resistance to change in dealing with the institutional processes and practices in a transformative manner.

CONCLUSION

The authors of this paper have explored the social transformation in Eastern Cape universities, in South Africa whether is it a myth or reality. The paper exposed the fact that some of the Eastern Cape institutions are not yet

transformed as they lack social transformation practices and resist change resulting in some not being able to address the needs of the stakeholders in a transformative manner; they are in the process of transformation as some managers are not addressing the needs of their subordinates in a transformative manner. The transformation theory was employed to underpin the understanding of social transformation whether is it a myth or reality and we found it as a myth because the managers resist change.

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