

Apartheid No More: Case Studies of Southern African Universities in the Process of Transformation. by Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela and Kimberley Lenease King. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2001, 173 pp.

Apartheid No More brings together eight in-depth case studies of various institutions of higher learning in South Africa and Namibia. These chapters meticulously analyze the state of university and technical education in these two democracies. Uncompromising in their historicisation, these essays explore the challenges facing contemporary Southern Africa. In their introduction, Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela and Kimberley Lenease King declare: “[w]hile there is a general consensus that the current system of education is inherently discriminatory, there are fervent debates concerning how to create a new system of education” (p. xix). The essays in this volume fearlessly approach the task of unpacking South African transformation politics. The authors address questions including how the new national legislation impacts higher-level education and on who should be the stakeholders. What does transformation mean for universities in South Africa? How does it relate to access for Black students? In what ways do access, curriculum planning and retention of incoming students relate?

The authors explore the contradictions that arise when such an appraisal is carried out. The case studies span the variety of universities in Southern Africa to reveal both patterns and revelations. Nicole Norfles, Rodney K Hopson and Sonjai Amar Reynolds unveil overwhelming similarities between the fates of Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs). These three chapters, without diminishing the magnitude of the challenges facing Black institutions nonetheless point to initiatives, which attempt to address these difficulties. Their evaluations bring together developments and highlight what could be established to enable these institutions to compete more equitably in a post-apartheid Southern Africa. Norfles, whose chapter focuses on the University of Zululand, as well as the multi-campus Vista University, cautiously celebrates the significant decreased financial burdens for applicants to institutions in the KwaZulu-Natal province. In addition, the author stresses the need to develop retention strategies for incoming students. Reynolds analyzes the successes of partnership programmes for staff and development between academic staff at Black Technikons in South Africa and faculty from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States. Together these chapters highlight the importance of responsive transformative initiatives targeted at both the students and the teaching communities of these institutions. As Hopson notes, if “the role of universities in research evaluation, information transfer, and technological development are vital to socioeconomic progress and growth” (p. 134), then “institutions of higher learning will need to produce creative and technological brainpower to liberate their people from poverty, disease, socioeconomic disparity, and ignorance in order to reap the full benefits of the emerging democratic state” (p. 135). Although his chapter focuses specifically on the Namibian context, his findings are equally appropriate to the South African situation.

The remainder of the essays in the collection address various dimensions in the transformation politics of Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAI) of both liberal and conservative Afrikaner moulds. In relation to these, the chapters pose detailed questions about the connections between access and transformation while placing these very categories under scrutiny. Can transformation be achieved simply by increasing the number of Black students and staff? How do institutional processes adapt to the requirements of the new era? Doria Daniels' interviews the Black academic staff at the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) reveal the gradations which exist even at a campus which has prioritised increasing Black staff numbers. Daniels' nuanced study cautions against short-sighted solutions and reveals that growing numbers, notwithstanding participation at this university, still involves negotiating for or hiring Black academic staff.

Ann E. Austin's and Mabokela's chapters explore the ambiguities of the transformation process at two other Afrikaans universities: Port Elizabeth (UPE) and Stellenbosch respectively. Austin argues that the triumphs of the UPE situation lie in its chosen path of moderate negotiation rather than revolutionary transformation. Her exposition suggests that the successes lie more in the commitment to negotiation than in the demonstration of extensive change to the demographic make-up of that institution. Mabokela shows the intimate relationship between the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism and education system structures in South Africa. She cuts to the core of the arguments for exclusive Afrikaans-medium instruction at Stellenbosch to reveal what they are really about. The central contestations are the battle for accessible language versus the maintenance of Afrikaans at the expense of most Black students' academic abilities. It is therefore characteristically fitting that the university most resistant to transformation should also defend the supremacy of Afrikaans medium tuition and its racist legacy.

The essays by King and Rochelle L Woods focus on the liberal University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Both demonstrate the existence of chasms between the university's claimed legacy of oppositional politics and its practices. Revealing its politics to be far more conservative, King argues "the strategies implemented in pursuit of transformation were adopted in a haphazard manner as the institution struggled to reconcile its 'liberal' image with its 'conservative' reality" (p. 88). Indeed, her research into historical documents regarding this university's relationship to the apartheid state casts doubt on the appropriacy of its claimed legacy. This historic discrepancy is in tune with current experiences of Black students at Wits, as Woods demonstrates. Her study exposes both the pervasiveness of different kinds of racism and reveals that every-day racism is rife and repetitive. Analysing different materials, King and Woods concur on their findings that the Wits' image and practices are very different.

Read together these excellent case studies offer varied research which traverses different aspects of South African tertiary institutions. What emerges is a broad image which assists in the generation of theory while suggesting achievable ways out of the quagmire. The collection's contribution is to the fields of African studies, history, sociology, race and ethnic studies, as well as to various fields in education studies. Mabokela and King's text will be equally valuable to policy makers, who will also find the concluding exploration of policy implications prudent.

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