

# Governance and Transformational Leadership Dilemmas for Merged Universities in a Democratic South Africa

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**Abstract:** *The relationship between higher education institutions, the state and society has always been precarious. Restructuring of South Africa's higher education placed onto the agenda the type of institutional leadership required to drive transformation, especially for mergers and incorporations involving historically disadvantaged universities (HDUs). Simultaneously, universities experienced leadership instability, public contestations, paucity of academic leadership, internationalization and globalization imperatives, mushrooming of virtual, private and corporate universities as well as "growing corporatization, rampant managerialism and state control", all of which colluded to render governance and transformational leadership of HDUs virtually intractable with dilemmas. State control of higher education appeared to contradict the requirement to adopt transformational leadership. But societal expectations for higher education institutions' performance have entailed leadership that is "all things to all". Whereas "pack" leadership is assumed to embrace qualities of team work, the ultimate responsibility for performance and/or non-performance of higher education institutions resides with individual leaders, whose freedoms of action are however tempered with, due to the extension of state powers. By definition, transformational leadership is diametrically inconsistent with over-bureaucratization and managerialism, because its qualities, principles and roles are characterised by charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. This article asserts that a democratic South Africa's restructuring of the higher education landscape was designed to establish parameters for enabling governance environment and transformational leadership, especially for merged HDUs. However, the state has incrementally legislated for extension of its powers over higher education sector, thereby creating inherent dilemmas for transformational leadership.*

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership; Governance; Historically Disadvantaged Universities; Mergers; South Africa

## Introduction

Dominguez-Whitehead (2011, p.1314) characterizes a democratic South Africa's higher education environment as a "climate of dissatisfaction ... (and) hotbed for strike and protest activity".

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Concurrently, as Cassim (2005, p.653) observes, post-1994 South Africa “has seen unprecedented changes in the higher education landscape” as restructuring policies of the democratic government were increasingly applied. A generally shared view of higher education is that the sector is by necessity in “a permanent state of change” because the state and society expect universities to generate solutions for perennial challenges and problems (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006). Transformation, or even creative change (unplanned), is “an inseparable part of organizations”; and, that in higher education has received intense and diversified consideration in recent times (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006, p.1). Universities are, per nature of their core business, required to be creative and innovative, ahead of both the funding-state, civil society and private business (Jansen, 2003; Mkandawire, 2005, 2011). Commonly, the state-university conflict revolves around authoritarianism, institutional autonomy and academic freedom (Jansen, 2003; du Toit, 2014); and, the African University has in general been subjected to “the incontinent insistence on conformity and sycophancy by authoritarian rulers” (Mkandawire, 2011, p.15).

Simultaneously as the South African tertiary institutions landscape was subjected to deep restructuring under circumstances of turbulence and uncertainty. To this extent, higher education governance entails ongoing exercise of principles and roles of transformational leadership necessary for ensuring that there is shared vision, team work and an enabling environment (Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Also, there are restructuring micropolitics as well as internationalization and globalization imperatives that shape universities of different histories, cultures, capacities and ideologies (Jansen, Habib, Gibbon and Parekh, 2001; Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Restructuring of a democratic South Africa’s higher education landscape, especially the merged HDUs, has entailed leadership that had to be, as it were, “all things to all” actors, inclusive of those internal and external to the institutions as well as the state. In this competitive and unforgiving environment, leadership of the HDUs has been challenged to “find the niche that is most compatible” with their institutions’ “inherent strengths” and “opportunities” (Nolte, n.d., p.135). Leadership of the HDUs is required to be transformative under the most testing political, economic, social and global contexts, and to create “learning organization”. Hence, Dr Mabelebele, CEO of HESA, notes that South Africa’s higher education sector involves “a complex and ever-changing” phenomena wherein “much is at stake” (cited in du Toit, 2014, viii).

In practice, “globalization affected institutional behaviour, processes and structures” (Levin, 1999, p.383 cited in Jansen et al., 2001, p.32). In consort with global trends, the post-apartheid democratization honeymoon of co-operative governance between the South African higher education institutions and the state became ephemeral (Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010; du Toit, 2014). Mergers in South Africa heralded complex institutional challenges because these institutions are “meant to redress past imbalances” out of institutions which entrenched inequality (Jack, 2007, n.d.). Besides, as Toni (2011, p.187) observes, “The higher education system was a reflection of how the South African society at large was to be politically administered”.

Beyond the production of human capital and manpower, universities poignantly epitomize development and nation-building vision (Jansen, 2003; Beckman and Adeoti, 2006; Mkandawire, 2005, 2011). Regarding the African University, therefore, the limiting “material infrastructure and academic freedom” have made the continent so opaque (Mkandawire, 2011, p.15). For the same rationale, political change in South Africa entailed complex transformation challenges for the higher education system (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). To this extent, merged universities were required to foster “new institutional culture and identity” under exceedingly complex challenging internal and external circumstances, especially the reluctance of the former Department of Higher Education to fund mergers (Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007, n.d.). The historical legacies were compounded by the merged universities’ thin resource base (Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007). There is no precedence for a democratic South Africa’s fragmentary racial higher education landscape, and the post-1997 restructuring has become a process of “groping in the dark”. Inevitably, restructuring of the governance of the higher education sector has experienced endless policy and legislative shifts from the 1996 “co-operative governance” framework to the 2012 amendments that extended the power of the state (du Toit, 2014). This article argues that governance of the post-apartheid South African University, especially the merged HDUs, is straddled with the oxymoron of co-operative governance, extension of state powers, institutional autonomy, academic freedoms and the requirement for transformational leadership, innovativeness and experimentation. The article will demonstrate that as democratization grew older, this oxymoron intensified.

### **Governance of Higher Education Institutions for Transformational Leadership**

Leadership of HDUs is faced with public contestations at all levels, including students, staff, community and so on. To this extent, a combination of phenomenology, interactionism and critical reflection theoretical approaches is appropriate for analysis of the complex terrain that leadership of the HDUs has to negotiate and navigate. Leadership of HDUs entails judicious mix of “pack” and individual capabilities. This theoretical approach is pertinent to determining the transformative character of leadership of the HDUs as well as to understand the governance environment within which they operate. Leadership is itself, notwithstanding assertion to the contrary, an exercise of individualized capabilities and qualities, which are themselves products of “everyday lived experiences” of interactions with those who are being led. HDUs, as social systems, consist of different personalities and characters, including those that may seek to halt and disrupt progress, be destructive without even knowing it, complaining about self-created problems, cause divisions and conflict, create wrong impressions, deluding themselves of roles and the perfectly honest, genuine and committed stakeholders. Whereas phenomenology caters for understanding individuals’ dependence on “subjectivities” to experience life as they do, the latter is intricately intertwined with transformative leadership’s “lived” experiences of formal and informal interactions in the processes of which interventions and transactions are made to redress historical legacies of injustices and inequity at HDUs. Furthermore, leadership of HDUs in South Africa should be understood in the context of both internal and external geopolitics; and, pragmatism dictates that a strong bias towards phenomenology

is imperative. Hence, the turmoil, instability and uncertainty embedded with transformative leadership of HDUs has been associated with continuous policy shifts and unending legislative changes that did not support the creation of learning organizations.

A series of factors shape and reshape higher education across the world; and, these include globalization, internationalization, reduction of public fund social investments as well as heightened focus on spending accountability and knowledge management approaches (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Theoretically, response and restructuring of universities would be expected to take variable trajectories because of the historical, cultural and ideological uniqueness of each institution. Commonly, universities have adopted nuance governance and managerialism approaches (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). To this extent, leadership of universities translates directly into successful institutional response or obsolescence. Thus, leadership of South African higher education institutions, especially the merged HDUs, has been confronted with teething challenges under conditions of turmoil and socio-economic instability as well as future uncertainty, to be constructive, effective, courageous, and bold, as well as to rely on self-belief, common sense, balanced judgment and to take control of the specific tasks at hand whilst remaining generalists (Nolte, n.d.; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010).

### **From Government to Governance**

Globally, the paradigm shift from government to governance has brought with vexed philosophical and ideological challenges for conceptualization of the relationship of the state with public entities such as state-owned enterprises and higher education institutions (Jansen, 2003; du Toit, 2014). Among other dimension of the ensuing conceptual contestations, especially in South Africa, is the notion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom for higher education. These considerations relate to contestations about the preferred form of governance. Arguments that the recent restructuring of the higher education institutions' governance is an attack on their institutional autonomy are dismissed on the grounds that South African higher education institutions have never enjoyed autonomy, both in principle and practice (du Toit, 2014). The shift in paradigm from government to governance involved reorientation of government as the centre to being "a powerful partner in a multitude of governing arrangements" and as part of "a process of redefining and reconfiguring the state" (Cloete et al., 2002, pp.90-91). The concept of governance hopes to capture the sense of "mutual dependence between state and civil society" (NCHE, 1996, p.172 cited in du Toit, 2014, p.26), especially endeavours to emulate corporate sector practice. According to Cassim (2005, pp.663-664), "As higher education moves increasingly into a more competitive, international 'education industry', universities compete for resources by adopting a 'market focus'". In this context, the concept of co-operative governance had hoped to emphasise the interdependence of social partners.

### **Managerialism, Over-bureaucratization, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom**

Higher education systems continue to be subjected to multiple factors including globalization, internationalization, technological developments, politics, economics and sociocultural dynamics (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). To a large extent, universities are forced to adopt private market ethos and to adapt to market philosophy, whilst traditional “distinctions between education and business, profit orientation ... (and) non-profit orientation, and students as clients, customers or consumers” increasingly blurred as the market gained primacy (Nolte, n.d.). Within this context, the traditional “centralized legal-bureaucratic management” of universities as well as the claim for institutional autonomy and self-management increasingly lost traction (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; du Toit, 2014). Based on the notions of institutional autonomy and academic freedoms, universities in South Africa have always sought to adopt “collegiality leadership model” wherein “decisions of academics, in relation to students’ marks, are rarely questioned .... Professors professed; deans led; councils governed; administrators administered; and students studied” (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011, p.1312-1313). Simultaneously, the concept of managerialism gained popularity wherein private sector business practices and approaches found increased application in public funded institutions such as state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and higher education. Among others, nuance managerialism included the introduction of total quality management, re-engineering, strategic management, continuous organizational renewal, competitiveness, performance management, balanced scorecards, budgeting cost centres, teamwork, setting goals and targets, control and monitoring mechanisms as well as efficiency requirements (Deem 2001, pp.10-11 cited in Nolte, n.d., p.124). Evidently, new managerialism translated into vexed challenges for university leadership because private sector market philosophy is not entirely applicable to public institutions. Already, there are insinuations that universities have become nuance hybrid of SOEs, notwithstanding the unresolved issues of appropriateness, effectiveness, usefulness and efficiency of new managerialism. Undoubtedly, the cultures, purposes and operational goals of the private and public sectors are divergent and, sometimes, irreconcilable.

The entry and mushrooming of corporate, virtual and private universities, which added complexity to the higher education landscape, is the clearest indication of the tacit acceptance that the private market ethos and philosophy are not entirely applicable to public social investment. However, the attendant shifts in the higher education systems entailed changes in governance and leadership thereof; therefore, “new managerialism rendered leadership and governance competency ‘an imperative for progress’” as well as for survival (Nolte, n.d., p.126). These governance changes have equally entailed changes in academic freedom as well as institutional autonomy and power (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; du Toit, 2014). That is, university restructuring is a response to both external and internal pressures for positioning and position-making, exacerbated by state-inflicted exposure to the rampant global economic neoliberalism (Jansen *et al.*, 2001; Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010).

In South Africa too, managerial leadership or managerialism was occasioned by the restructuring of higher education (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). Under managerialism, the discourse of higher education blurs with that in corporate environment amidst nuance over-emphasis on “accountability”, “executive management” and “line managers” as part of “university governance jargon”, all of which translate into performance measurement, staff job vulnerability and insecurity, focus on competition and markets as well as “corporate management values, ideologies and techniques” (Gwele, 2008, pp.322-324 cited in Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011, p.1313). Managerial leadership approach has always been associated with tensions, power struggles, risk-prone decision-making and countless political considerations in governance (White, Riordan, Ozkanli and Neale, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011; White, Carvalho and Riordan, 2011). Dominguez-Whitehead (2011, p.1325) concludes from a study of Large Merged Universities that “new managerialism apparent at institutions of higher education has disrupted traditional collegial governance structures and has pitted management against staff (including academic staff), leading to antagonism and distrust”.

### **Governance of Higher Education Institutions**

Nolte (n.d., p.124) observes that higher education institutions are involved in “the creation and advancement of knowledge” but that they “are generally poor ‘learning organizations’ themselves”. To this extent, Jansen et al. (2001, p.32) draw from Scott (1998) to characterize university as “creator, interpreter and sufferer” of globalization pressures and forces. A democratic South Africa’s restructuring is a direct response to such pressures and forces (Jansen *et al.*, 2001; Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). The restructuring of universities through mergers has been complex and challenging, with the result that the requirement to foster new institutional culture and identity is placed on the back seat (Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Addressing historical and geographical challenges of merged universities on a “thin resource base” entails “boldness and zeal” in collective “pack” leadership that focuses on institutional goals (Jack, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). As a result, “provision of leadership in mergers of public institutions is more complex than in the private sector as these are mergers of ‘equals’” (Jack, 2007, n.d.). In South Africa, mergers of HDUs entail creation of “new institutions with new identities, structures, cultures, reward systems, information processes and work designs” (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006, p.2). As Vinger and Cilliers (2006, p.2) put it, “transformation is purposefully planned to change organizational structures and relationships, (whilst) crevice change is unplanned and occurs through a natural course of events”. That is, mergers necessitate transformation, which is a planned enacted change, rather than “crevice change” (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006); however, they both require transactional and transformational leadership and governance.

Besides individual personal qualities, leadership capabilities required to deal with the challenges of HDUs depend on public policy and material resources that involve income, investment and assets allocated to education and research (Marginson, 2010). However, all these necessities are suboptimal

and subordinated to culture, history and geography. Even the knowledge power of HDUs “is partly shaped by history, geography and scale, partly a function of investment and of language power, and affected also by less tangible cultural factors such as the will and the freedom to create” (Marginson, 2010, p.6972). South African mergers created a complex and challenging higher education institutional landscape (Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Whether the mergers were “cogent or hazy” (Jack, 2007), they continue to require transactional and transformational leadership.

### **Universities: Interstices of State and Society**

Higher education operations are simultaneously global, national and local because they are everywhere “nested in national government” and “shaped by patterns of social investment”, with much decision-making controlled by the state or framed through national public interests and political contexts (Marginson, 2010). But in the modern era, university academia matters “if only because they are significant in the interstices between the state and civil society” (Mkandawire, 2011, p.22). Unavoidably, as Marginson (2010, p.6972) observes, the global higher education landscape is in a state of flux; and, the fragilities in developing countries should not be surprising. Tertiary institutions, therefore, continue to require public funding to be sustainable, amidst a plethora of teething challenges. Working at university is often characterized as “working within a contentious environment” (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011, p.1313). As a result of their situation in the interstices of state and society, universities are plagued by disruptive protests and strikes occasioned by dissatisfied students, academics and support staff (Oxlund, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). These incidents of protests and strikes add to the complexity faced by universities, with implications for institutionalized managerialism as well as transactional and transformational leadership.

Higher education institutions create space for critical public discourse with the result that universities are, for example, often brutally repressed and financially strangled under authoritarianism (Jansen, 2003; Mkandawire, 2005, 2011). Equally, authoritarianism and democratic political systems create stressors, albeit of different kinds, for universities. Hence, as Mkandawire (2011, p.22) observes,

“The collapse of the educational system, the parlous state of Africa’s publishing industry and the academic rituals and traditions of footnoting and citation, the self-inflicted misrepresentation by the many buffoons that somehow strutted and fretted on the centre stage of African politics ... the cumulative effect of all this was tantamount to self-erasure”.

Given that the system of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa consists of enduring colonial and apartheid legacies (Tilak, 2011), it has rendered the notion of self-selection deeply paradoxical as decisions are unavoidably shaped by cultural (relating to legacies of ethnicity and race as destinies), ideological, historical and geographical factors about the establishment and geographic location of universities made (Jansen, 2003; Jack, 2007). It is under the same conditions of changing relationships between the higher education institutions, the state and society that leadership of South Africa’s HDUs has been challenged, sometimes unfairly, to achieve a judicious mix of “intelligence

and experience” as well as exceptional “ability to see (and foresee) diverse components” of their institutions as business, “as a whole and to assess rapidly what is important” (Nolte, n.d.).

Whereas Tilak (2011, p.29) notes that “public financing of higher education is still the best and most prevalent method of developing strong and vibrant higher education systems”, du Toit (2014, p.1) notes that twenty years of concerted comprehensive restructuring of higher education in South Africa have seen the Department of Education (now Department of Higher Education and Training) interventions meet with responses, from stakeholders such as Higher Education South Africa (HESA), that reveal in the process that this country has “reached a critical juncture in the governance of higher education, a belated moment of truth – even if its precise nature remains to be clarified”. Leadership of HDUs has to therefore ensure that universities have to “both remain legible to ... various stakeholders and (to) become responsive to a pervasive rhetoric of innovation and entrepreneurship” (Kniewel and Sheridan-Rabideau, 2009, p.36). Institutions of higher education are required to achieve specific national and international objectives; and, their leadership is required to create and recreate them into learning organizations (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Therefore, leadership of higher education institutions is increasingly placed under complex challenges occasioned by these institutions’ changing relationships with the state, societal and global actors (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011; du Toit, 2014).

### **Transactional and Transformational Leadership**

There are multiple types and styles of leadership including transactional, transformational, self-developed, principle-centred, “failing-forward” and laissez faire (Bass, 1998; Northouse, 2001; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006; Jack, 2007; Zuber-Skerritt, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skeritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). But nuance paradigm of action learning and action research for leadership development emphasizes the collaboration, personalized relationships, cross-cultural communications, democratization and humanization of the leadership of higher education institutions above rationalization, control and over-bureaucratization (Jansen, 2003; Zuber-Skerritt, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skeritt, 2009). Whereas “pack” leadership relies on the ideals of team work, leading is in the final analysis shaped and reshaped by strengths and weaknesses of leaders, relating to “cognitive, affective, motivational and interpersonal” characteristics (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006, p.7). Leadership is overwhelmingly qualitative and it involves learning and participatory processes, collaborative strategies, humanization and democratization of higher education (Jansen, 2003; Zuber-Skerritt, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010), which are all slippery and difficult to observe and/or measure with accuracy. In South Africa, state interventionism complicated university leadership due to the pervasiveness of market competition, managerialism as well as internationalization and globalization imperatives.

Transactional leadership involves exchanges of contingent rewards and management by exception between leaders and subordinates (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006). That is, beyond rewards, transactional



leadership relates to active and inactive corrective criticism as well as negative feedback and reinforcement (Northouse, 2001; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006). On its part, transformational leadership inculcates trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leaders whilst motivating subordinates to perform more than originally expected through the four basic "I's": idealized influence (charisma); individualized consideration; intellectual stimulation; and, inspirational motivation (Bass, 1998; Northouse, 2001; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006). On the bases of these four basic components, transformational leadership communicates an appealing vision with simple symbols and images in order to focus the efforts of subordinates, raise their emotions to emulate and identify with leaders, coach and encourage them with supportive feedback, delegation and advice for their personal development, as well as raise awareness of problems and the requirement for creativity, innovation and ability to take measured risks (Bass, 1998; Northouse, 2001; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006). Inevitably, change leads to anxiety, anger, depression, tension, disenchantment and helplessness (Bass, 1998; Northouse, 2001; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006), among other challenges, which transformational leadership is assumed to be capable of addressing.

Focus on leadership entails that these institutions "embrace well-established management principles and practices", strategic and "exemplary" human resources management as well as meaningful and suitable organizational control mechanisms (Nolte, n.d., p.135). Among other things, leadership is required to simultaneously be intelligent, experienced, substantially self-confident, effective, progressive, constructive, innovative, courageous, bold, decisive, generalist, specific, directive futuristic as well as being capable of perseverance, taking control, exercising balanced judgment, rely on common sense, taking calculated risk, promote experimentation in uncharted territories, adopt unconventional solutions, defy odds and holding positive mind-set (Nasser and Vivier, 1993, p.154 cited in Nolte, n.d., p.134). Whereas the requirement for effective leadership is self-explanatory for higher education institutions, the expectation to adopt an empowerment approach that motivates, coach, encourage, provide vision and direction is not always an automatic result of effective leadership (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Notwithstanding the vogue of "pack" leadership, leading "cannot be shared under all conditions" because some circumstances require "directive" and "task-oriented" qualities in individual leaders.

Taking from Balster (2002), Chipunza and Gwarinda (2010) assert that transformational leadership, which can be traced back to the concept of transactional leadership, provides the framework, principles, character and roles that are required for the governance and management of mergers and incorporations involving South Africa's HDUs. Whereas transactional leadership relates to exchange and promise of rewards for effort as well as responsiveness to immediate interests of the subordinates, transformational leadership "involves charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration" (Bass, 1990 and Balster, 2002 cited in Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010, p.2). The four characteristics of charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual

consideration encapsulate the qualities, principles and roles of transformational leadership (Lowe and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010).

Charismatic leaders are capable of instilling pride, respect and trust in the institution's stakeholders by vigorously ensuring that the vision and mission are commonly shared (Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Also, such leaders set and communicate high expectations, use symbols "to focus efforts and expresses important purposes in simple ways" (Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010, p.2). Furthermore, transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation "to promote intelligence, rationality and careful problem solving" (Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino, 1991 cited in Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010, p.2). Finally, Chipunza and Gwarinda (2010, p.2) asserts that "The transformational leader gives personal attention, treats each employee individually and coaches and advises, thus giving individualized consideration to employees". Drawing from analyses of the four characteristics of transformational leadership, Chipunza and Gwarinda (2010, p.2) formulates four transformational roles of leaders as follows: developing shared vision and defining its value and principles; communicating strategic direction and clarifying its content and meaning; empowering subordinates by allowing them decision-making authority and access to information relevant for supporting progressive change, as well as rewarding them for risk-taking and innovativeness; and, developing capacity for change, preparing subordinates for readiness to participate in transformation through skills training as well as catering for their emotional well-being. Primarily, transformational leadership inspires subordinates to exert effort and perform in accordance with the change required. A sense of security will enhance self-worth, emotional anchorage, self-esteem and personal strength among subordinates (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007).

Vinger and Cilliers (2006) adjudge laissez faire leadership as a non-leadership style because higher education institutions, as organizations, are involved in change, planned and unplanned. Leadership needs, therefore, to be actively involved in mobilizing, inspiring, instilling confidence and focusing the efforts of subordinates on the vision of the institution. Given that change is itself dynamic, it requires constant management; and, laissez faire leadership "abdicates responsibilities and avoids making decisions" (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006, p.2). Transformational leadership is enterprising, communicative, open-minded, inspirational, capable of pep talks, knowledgeable of macro- and micro-environment, recognizes the significance of continuous information gathering, committed to lifelong learning and education, and able to clearly articulate an appealing vision (Bass, 1998; Northouse, 2001; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006). Institutions are, however, perpetually trapped in red tape, fixed hierarchical bureaucracies, rigid adherence to policies and procedures, avoidance of dysfunctional conflict and taking mistakes and failures as normal occurrences of learning. Equally, being forthright is often criticized for being "inconsiderate, inhumane, disrespectful, unreasonably confrontational, 'devilish', not caring, and lacking people skills" (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006, p.6). Notwithstanding the notion that transformational leadership involves acting "too perfectionist" and "compulsive", Vinger and Cilliers (2006, p.6) argues that "if being forthright was perceived as being genuinely wanting to achieve the organizational objectives, manage change effectively and efficiently, and create functional conflict,

then it constitutes a strength". Higher education institution literature show that knowledge economy concentrations which refer to "effective synergies between higher education and research, government policies, industry and above all, evolving global cities" (Marginson, 2010, p.6972) are inextricably connected to culture, history and geography. The South African society consists of multiple diverse cultures and histories in all dimensions of life. Hence, democratization has entailed restructuring and transformation of higher education system (South Africa.info, 2014), which was dominated by mergers and incorporations legislated in 1997 (Answers Africa, 2014); and, transformational leadership has been a necessary and sufficient condition for transformation of merged HDUs.

### **African University and the Global Knowledge Economy**

With the ascendancy of the global knowledge economy, as Tilak (2011, p.5) asserts, higher education in Southern Africa has ironically remained "fragile" with "a weak base". Simultaneously as Africa recorded the "fastest growing university population in the world", the vogue of democratization and extensions of greater freedoms in the continent re-invoked philosophical and ideological discourses on education, in general, and the African University, in particular (Mkandawire, 2005, 2011). Democratization struggles renewed interest in higher education, widening "intellectual space for academics", providing "respite from the suffocating atmosphere of authoritarianism" and giving "greater political protection to universities as institutions" (Mkandawire, 2011, p.24). But expansion of the higher education system in Africa involved "mushrooming of private universities and centres of excellence", whose intellectual sustenance continues to paradoxically depend heavily on public universities (Mkandawire, 2005, 2011). Universities have, historically, proven to be resilient in the face of instability, turbulence, turmoil, uncertainty, authoritarianism, tribulations and so on, largely due to unwavering commitment and dedication by faculty and students (Jansen, 2003; Mkandawire, 2005, 2011; du Toit, 2014). The African University too require transformational leadership to navigate the dialectical dilemmas occasioned by the internal and external geopolitics.

### **Restructuring South Africa's Higher Education Sector and Extension of State Powers**

With political democratization in South Africa, higher education institutions too came to "grapple with transformation and with reinventing themselves" (Cassim, 2005, p.664) because the sector was exposed to the global knowledge economy (Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Additionally, the sector faced "a plethora of challenges" including national financial aid system, poor graduation rates, student housing and faculty management (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011, p.1310). Consequently, there was urgent need to establish "a unifying organizational culture, requisite for dismantling cultural, identity and hegemonic boundaries that are residues of the previously racialized South African higher education system of the apartheid era" (Toni, 2011, p.187). After mergers and incorporations, South Africa consists of 23 universities that are classified into three categories: traditional theory-oriented, universities of technology and comprehensive universities (White, Riordan, Ozkanli and Neale, 2010; Tilak, 2011).

Restructuring led to the creation of several mergers of HDUs with previously “white” institutions. Given the diversities of cultures, histories, ideologies and geographic locations of the merged institutions, a variety of teething challenges confronted their leadership. HDUs leadership came to be confronted with challenges relating to student finances, race and gender bias, security, politics and such other operational dynamics. Notwithstanding the renewed focus on teaching and research, leadership of merged HDUs was expected, sometimes unfairly, to open doors for all students who came from poor households whilst having to obey intake quotas, business ethos and limitations of both public funding and physical infrastructure provisions. Furthermore, HDUs leadership was required to ensure that the core business of these institutions proceed unhindered. Importantly, HDUs leadership was required to ensure that these institutions operate and compete at the same level with those of the formerly white tertiary institutions, notwithstanding the uniqueness of their environments, cultures, histories, ideologies and geographic regions.

The major institutional management challenge for merged universities is, according to Nolte (n.d., p.135), finding “the niche that is most compatible with the institution’s ... inherent strengths and the opportunities that exist in its environment”. This article holds that leadership of merged HDUs was never a smooth process and that it was clouded with teething challenges. Therestructuring burden was devolved to merged HDUs’ leadership amidst paradoxes related to “co-operative governance”, “institutional autonomy” and state control (Nolte, n.d.; du Toit, 2014). Paradoxically, the extension of the powers of the Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) to intervene goes beyond those institutions that are unable to address their own affairs with management and governance crises to embrace the rest of the higher education sector (du Toit, 2014). Simultaneously, the DoHET further complicates the environment in which leadership of higher education institutions is required to take control, make judgments and use common sense as well as be decisive, responsive and effective, when principles of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, public accountability and co-operative governance are restructured against them. To this extent, leadership has been required to play a critical role in the creation of learning organizations as well as the attendant institutional performance and/or under-performance amidst “conditions of turmoil, socio-economic instability and future uncertainty” (Nolte, n.d., p.134).

### **Shifting Higher Education Policy in a Democratic South Africa**

Restructuring of South Africa’s higher education landscape under the democratic dispensation, remains an unresolved moot point. Whilst the restructuring re-invoked questions of institutional autonomy and “co-operative governance”, it has also altered the sensitive relationships between the state and higher education (du Toit, 2014). Jansen’s (2004, p.5 cited in du Toit, 2014, p.2) observation reveals a paradox of a “gradual but systematic erosion of historical standards of autonomy that were ingrained within the institutional fabric of universities, thus redefining conceptions of institutional autonomy as the state systematically acquires new forms of power over the universities through a series of policy and regulatory-based incursions”. Within this testing environment, leadership of HDUs too is required to take control, have self-believe, be decisive, effective and responsive, focus

simultaneously on specifics and the general picture, make judgments, display common sense, demonstrate intelligence and experience, and “be all things to all” in order to create learning organizations (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen, 2003; du Toit, 2014). Whereas notions of “pack” leadership have been commonly flouted for theoretical convenience, pragmatism dictates that leadership of HDUs have come down to individual responsibilities and qualities. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the multidimensional dilemmas that the higher education environment has presented to the leadership of merged HDUs under the democratic dispensation. Accordingly, the Chief Executive Officer of HESA, Dr Mabelebele, has recently called for scholarship engagement in such leadership matters (see du Toit, 2014).

Transformation of the higher education systems in South Africa can be traced back to the 1996 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) Report, the 1997 White Paper on A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, the 2000 Council on Higher Education’s (CHE) Shape and Size of Higher Education Task Team Report, the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education and the 2012 amendment of the laws (Nolte, n.d.; du Toit, 2014). The 1996 *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation* culminated in the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* (Department of Education, 1997). But restructuring of the relationships between higher education institutions, the state and society is specifically traced back to the 1997 *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, which was amended through the *Higher Education and Laws Amendment Act 23 of 2012* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012). The latter instituted major legislative changes in South Africa’s higher education environment, such as the extension of the Minister’s powers to intervene, dissolve Councils and appoint Administrators for higher education institutions under a variety of guises including “poor or non-performance” or “maladministration” (du Toit, 2014). Even with these amendments, the DoHET (2012) however acknowledges the basic principles set in the DoE’s *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* thus: “It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to manage their own affairs... (and that) Diversity and flexibility are important aspects of institutional responses to varying needs and circumstances”. To be precise, the governance and management of South Africa’s higher education institutions was made more complex through the extension of the powers of the Minister of the newly named Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) in the 2012 amendment of the laws (du Toit, 2014). The National Working Group on Education of the Ministry of Education (MoE) recommended in 2001 the reduction of South Africa’s 36 Universities and Technikons to 23, which was to be facilitated through mergers and incorporations (Jansen, 2003; MoE, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). These early changes in legislation marked an unambiguous state intention to regulate and improve the efficiency of higher education (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). To this extent, as Barnes (2006) purports, the discourse about restructuring shifted from desirability to feasibility.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2001) describes the proposed plans for mergers and incorporations in the National Plan for Higher Education Policy with the provision that the new universities will require new visions, missions and cultures. Regarding governance of the merged

universities, the MoE (2003) merely stipulates that it is important not to have leadership and management vacuum in the process of executing mergers and incorporations. That is, the MoE's (2003) primary governance concern relating to mergers and incorporations was focused on managerial leadership. The policy shifts during the democratic era have occasioned fundamental changes in the higher education environment, creating in the process virtual turmoil, instability, uncertainty and unpredictability for leadership of these institutions. Inevitably, these interventions were construed as the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DoHET) statement of effective interference in the governance of higher education institutions. Rather than create advantage for the leadership of merged HDUs, these legislative measures have instead compounded the dilemmas embedded with the environment that entails transformational leadership and creation of "learning organization". Equally, these interventions exposed conceptual deficiencies in "the principles of institutional autonomy, public accountability, academic freedom and co-operative governance" (Dr Mabelebele, CEO of HESA, cited in du Toit, 2014, vii). Importantly, they further complicated the duties and roles of leadership of merged HDUs because restructuring of powers had paradoxical discrepancies with the requirements for transformational leadership to take control, be decisive, make judgments, use common sense, be effective and responsive, recognize the general picture whilst acting on specificities of circumstances. DoHET's 2012 amendments have inescapably altered the dynamics of leadership of merged HDUs, given the precariousness of the relationships of state and society as well as the imperatives of balancing competing demands, interests and goals and challenges of globalization, internationalization and micropolitics.

HESA's observation, relating to the 2012 legislative amendment of laws governing the higher education sector in South Africa, was that they posed "a threat to the institutional autonomy of universities in an attempt to bring them under the direct control of the Ministry" (cited in du Toit, 2014, p.2). Restructuring of South Africa's higher education sector placed onto the agenda the type of leadership required to drive the process of transformation, especially for mergers and incorporations involving HDUs. Simultaneously, there was leadership instability, public contestations, paucity of academic leadership, neoliberal globalization, mushrooming of virtual, private and corporate universities as well as "growing corporatization, rampant managerialism and state control" of the higher education system, all of which colluded to render leadership and management of HDUs virtually intractable. Analysing restructuring of the University of the Western Cape (HDU), Jansen et al. (2001, p.35) observe that "The problem with the marketization ... and the preparation of a higher education landscape ... is that this discourse co-existed with calls from the state for greater cooperation among regional institutions". Co-operative governance of South Africa's higher education was proposed in 1996 by the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE); however, the state appears to have always modified the practice (Symes, 2005, p.25 cited in du Toit, 2014, p.4). In fact, it is often argued that the 1997 *White Paper*, the 1998 *Higher Education Act* as well as its subsequent legislative amendments and the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) did not conform to the proposed co-operative governance (Jansen, 2003; du Toit, 2014). In 2002, the Task Team on Governance in Higher Education of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) cautioned that continued

use of the notion of co-operative governance when it no longer applied could cause confusion and hinder policy development and good practice (Jansen, 2003; du Toit, 2014).

According to the Vice-chancellor of the University of Johannesburg, Dr Ihron Rensburg (2013), the net effect of the 2012 amendments is to erode universities' autonomy and transform them into state-owned enterprises (cited in du Toit, 2014, p. 2). Du Toit (2014, p.3) has however disputed these observations on the grounds that South African universities have "never managed to achieve anything like institutional autonomy, neither in principle nor in practice". Given that the 1997 legislation provided for co-operative governance of higher education institutions, du Toit (2014, p.3) holds that this foundational framework of the post-apartheid democratic governance of higher education "has explicitly ruled out institutional autonomy as a basic right, just as much as it abjured the state's prerogative for direct control of universities". As Dominguez-Whitehead (2011) puts it, one of the major changes in the restructuring of South Africa's higher education has been in the series of merger of 19 institutions between 2000 and 2005, which have evidently become costly and protracted (Barnes, 2006; Maistry and Ramdhani, 2010; Oxlund, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). Whereas policy shifts have always had an appearance of transformational promise, restructuring of the higher education in South Africa has been bedevilled by experiences of disempowerment (Oxlund, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011), which preclude the exercise of transformational leadership. Concluding her inaugural lecture, Mkandawire (2011, p.25) eloquently demonstrates the strong connection between university, state, society and development thus:

"... the crisis of the African university is closely related to the crisis of development. Consequently, 'bringing development back in' will require a revitalization of the African University, its internal functioning and its relationships with the global world knowledge. The African University matters to Africa. .... All this immediately places a heavy burden on the African University itself. And if Africa will have to run, the university will have to sprint".

According to Nolte (n.d., p.135), "South African institutions will have to take into account the course charted for higher education in the National Plan ... and the new Higher Education Policy". But the environment for restructuring is disabling because of the inherent multivariate dilemmas.

### **Dilemmas of Governance and Transformational Leadership of HDUs**

Literature on higher education posits that "the quality of organizational leadership is a critical variable not only in shaping institutional micro-politics but in affecting the capacity of universities to respond to the relentless demands of the state under conditions of globalisation" (Jansen, Habib, Gibbon and Parekh, 2001; Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). This observation has been true for a democratic South Africa where government has adopted a variety of legislative instruments to restructure the higher education landscape (Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010; du Toit, 2014). Dominguez-Whitehead (2011, p.1310) observes that "Higher education in South Africa faces a plethora of challenges" including internal strikes and protests as well as the context of rising expectations" occasioned by "recent higher education policy developments, newly institutionalized managerialism, and broader socio-economic implications". As the Chief

Executive Officer of Higher Education South Africa (HESA), Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele, notes, higher education balancing act involves a variety of dimensions, including complementary and competing interests, dependent and interdependent goals as well as common and opposed goals between higher education institutions, the state and society (cited in du Toit, 2014). Added to these challenges, as Dr Mabelebele asserts, are the “issues such as increased funding, maintaining academic standards, increased levels of institutional efficiency and effectiveness” and so on (cited in du Toit, 2014, vii). At times, the changing higher education landscape in South Africa as responses to globalization, state and societal imperatives tended to redefine students as customers (Nolte, n.d.; Jansen et al., 2001; Jansen, 2003; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). The most enduring challenge, though, especially under mergers, has been the requirement on the higher education institutions to create and recreate themselves into “learning organizations” through effective or transformational leadership (Nolte, n.d.; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006; Jack, 2007; Zuber-Skerritt, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). It has been in this context that the role of leadership of higher education institutions has been critically significant over the past twenty years of democracy in South Africa, especially for the HDUs. But HDUs transformational leadership has been clouded with intractable dilemmas.

Mergers and incorporations of higher education sector in South Africa took place under testing challenges, which Chipunza and Gwarinda (2010, p.2) classify into five categories as follows: increased leadership instability; divergent views on leadership roles; conspicuous paucity of quality and credibility of academic leadership at HDUs; absence of minimum systems for implementation; and, “growing corporatization, rampant managerialism and state control”. Whereas the MoE (2003) raised concerns that there should be no leadership vacuum, the merger and incorporation plans of the CHE (2001) did not specify the type of institutional leadership required. For this reason, the principles and characteristics of good governance required by policy for mergers and incorporations involving HDUs was left to the institutional leadership. However, it was always clear what the leadership of the new merged HDUs was required to achieve, because implementation of guidelines for good governance was not an end in itself. Among other things, leadership of mergers and incorporations was required to have the necessary qualities and credibility to successfully manage the process of transformation, address issues of institutional leadership itself. There was acceptance that to be successful, mergers dependent on the leaders’ management of the transformation process, especially in the preparation, communication, support as well as building of leadership commitment and alignment to the imminent changes (Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010).

According to Vinger and Cilliers (2006), leadership of South Africa’s higher education institutions, especially under mergers, has become intense and diversified with attempts, in some cases, to distinguish leaders from non-leaders, transformational from ineffective leaders. Notwithstanding acceptance of the potential for success through “pack” leadership, teamwork is not always everything, especially under South Africa’s merged HDUs because of the deep-seated contestations of the higher



education public sector. But “pack” leadership is identified as a unique style for South Africa where it is necessary to almost always adopt a “mixture between benevolent dictatorship, cultivated autocracy” as well as “shuttle collaboration” because the allowance for opposed viewpoints and contestations should make for nuance “perspectives, unusual, counter-trend ideas” rather than marginalization of weaker actors and tolerance of divisive conduct (Nolte, n.d., p.134). The prospects for survival of higher education institutions in South Africa, under circumstances of turbulence, instability and uncertainty, came to be dependent on transformational leadership, without which the sector would become precarious (Jansen, 2003;Vinger and Cilliers, 2006;Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Studies of leadership of South Africa’s higher education institutions show that perceptions about the lack of transformational leadership are not accurate (Jansen, 2003;Vinger and Cilliers, 2006;Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Indeed, merged HDUs may have become precarious if they had lacked “appropriate leadership” (Jansen, 2003; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Vinger and Cilliers,2006).

South Africa’s higher education institutions have been associated with multiple types of leadership including transformational, self-developed, principle-centered, “failing forward” and pack leadership (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006; Jack, 2007; Zuber-Skerritt, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skeritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). The perception that there was lack of transformational leadership in South Africa’s merged HDUs has not been supported by real life evidence (Jansen, 2003; Vinger and Cilliers, 2006;Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009;Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011). The nuance paradigm of action research and learning for leadership development emphasizes collaboration, personalized relationships, cross-cultural communications, democratization and humanization of the leadership of higher education institutions above rationalization, managerialism, control and over-bureaucratization (Jansen, 2003; Zuber-Skerritt, 2007; Louw and Zuber-Skeritt, 2009). Jansen *et al.*, (2001, p.37) conclude that “The loss of institutional autonomy is real, given the regulatory framework imposed by SAQA, the CHE and the Department of Higher Education”. The imposition of corporate style management such as in the Executive Deans, has meant that “the regulatory role of the state, the expanding role of markets and the influential role of international agencies” would become primate whilst institutional autonomy and academic freedom are undermined (Jansen *et al.*, 2001, p.37). At the core of managerialism is the nuance requirement that higher education sector be managed as business. But the applicability of managerial leadership to merged HDUs has always been questionable on the grounds that it involves a virtual transplant of principles of the business environment into the public sector. Essentially, governance of merged HDUs required “strong and visionary leadership” (Jansen, 2003; Fernandez, 2005; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). According to Zuber-Skerritt (2007, p.1003), “In higher education in South Africa, as elsewhere, the human heart is the heart of the matter of leadership development”; for this reason, it is imperative to understand how leadership of HDUs “integrate the human dimension with the social and economic dimensions and goals of higher education”. That is, leadership of merged HDUs is expected to “integrate heart and head in a holistic way ... combine soft

and hard” management strategies in order for leaders to “serve as role models, mentors, coaches, co-learners, co-researchers and co-leaders” (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007, p.1003).

There is justification to assume that transformational leadership characteristics, principles and roles are pertinent to managing change for merged HDUs. However, the external and internal environment relating to micro-politics, neoliberal globalization, corporatization, rampant reverence for managerialism, increased state control, is not enabling. In this context, it becomes virtually impossible for transformational leadership to find and establish appropriate public spaces for risk-taking, innovativeness, boldness, decisiveness, self-believe, experimentation and so on. How are transformational leaders expected to inspire nuance institutional culture of merged HDUs in the context where there is dearth of appropriate legislation, tacit encouragement of divisiveness, stimulation of divergent views of the vision and mission as well as deliberate political interference and state control of governance? Given the insistence on the application of democratic principles, transformational leadership faces serious dilemmas relating to how to create commonly shared distinct institutional culture of merged HDUs with, sometimes, contradictory cultures, procedures, systems and policies held by faculty whose geopolitical self-imaginary remains frozen in the past. As Chipunza and Gwarinda (2010, p.3) put it, a common cultural identity “develops on the basis of shared vision and mission, strategy, policies, systems and procedures”, which have to a significant degree been contested and complicated by the dearth of appropriate legislation and the increased state interference in the governance of HDUs.

Even where transformational leadership was attempted, merged HDUs did not have the required minimal systems and/or experience; and, there is negligible international practice of transformational leadership in higher education from where lessons and advice could be drawn. The most fundamental challenge of transformational leadership has been that leadership itself had to change on ongoing basis because it was not supposed to be the end product by itself. However, such leadership instability was political and state controlled. In the process of transforming governance of HDUs, these institutions virtually operated as SOEs rather than higher education entities. The MoE’s (2003) requirement for good governance does not seem to acknowledge that the creation of the attendant structures, processes and systems require that the institutional leadership become transformational as defined through the four characteristics of “charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration” (Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010, p.2). With state control and interference, amidst competition and decreased public funding, expectation of transformational leadership in merged HDUs is not only unfair, it is also unrealistic. The state has to create an enabling environment within which transformational leadership can be executed for successful restructuring of the merged HDUs. It is not surprising that the state is now unbundling one of the most complex of the mergers, the University of Limpopo. Indeed, the factors underlying the demerger do not involve the lack of transformational leadership qualities, skills, characteristics, principles and roles. To the contrary, the University of Limpopo has since 2005 been a vibrant public space with pronouncement and refinements of nuance vision, mission and culture, experimentation, risk-taking, innovativeness,

intellectual inspiration and stimulation, boldness, strong and decisive management as well as individual consideration of employees.

This article accepts that there is no lack of transformational leadership in South Africa, instead it is the neo-libertarian statism, corporatization, exposure to globalization, increased state control and interference in governance of higher education sector, as well as the requirement to apply free market business ethos in the deeply different public sector environment that are at the centre of the poor performance of some of the merged HDUs. To be successful, governance of merged HDUs should avoid rationalization, managerialism, state control and over-bureaucratization in order that transformational leadership could, if we could draw from Zuber-Skerritt's (2007, p.1003) formulation, re-humanize the new institutions through democratization and collaborative strategies which place emphasis on personal relationships, cross-cultural communications, integration of heart and head, judicious mix of soft and hard tactics as well as process and knowledge management, wherein leaders serve simultaneously as "role models, mentors, coaches, co-learners, co-researchers and co-leaders". Transformational leadership can capably integrate human, social and economic dimensions in the governance of higher education because all across the world, including in South Africa, "the human heart is the heart of the matter of leadership development" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007, p.1003).

### Conclusion

This article rejects the insinuation that South Africa's restructuring of the higher education was bedevilled by the dearth of effective transformational leadership. The DoHET has on its part reinforced reverence for managerialism, which thwarts the scope for innovativeness, imaginativeness, risk-taking, application of common sense and experimentation required for the transformation of merged HDUs. Consequently, merged HDUs have experienced internal micropolitics of restructuring, exacerbated by internationalization and globalization imperatives as well as neoliberal state fiscal austerities and controls. As Jansen *et al.*, (2001, p.37) observe, South African University restructuring could in the final analysis "signal a decisive triumph of the neoliberal state where the logic of markets ... and state interventionism ... might, simply and effectively, resolve the fate of weak universities". This article asserted that the fate of merged HDUs, under the ongoing internal politics and external pressures, depends exclusively on leadership styles adopted; and, transformational leadership would ensure survival and, in most cases, outstanding performance. However, the article concludes that the potential for transformational leadership of merged HDUs has faced intractable governance dilemmas of a disabling environment diametrically opposed to qualities of charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Merged HDUs would inescapably underperform if transformational leadership is not allowed adequate public scope for pragmatic exercise.

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