



Call for Applications for PhD study for Academic Staff
Social Inclusion in Higher Education
NRF Funded Project

Higher Education holds the promise of contributing to intellectual, cultural, social, economic and political development, and to equity, democracy and social justice. Institutions of higher learning have the potential to offer powerful opportunities for fostering the economic and social advancement of members of disadvantaged and marginalised social classes and groups, for promoting understanding of, and respect for, difference and diversity and forging social cohesion. This promise only holds true, however, if the members of these social groups can both access and succeed in tertiary study. Only 12% of black youth participate in higher education (Scott et al 2007, p10) and the graduation rate of whites in comparison to blacks remains in the region of 2:1. After five years of study, 56% of the 2000 cohort of higher education students had dropped out of the system (Scott et al 2007, p12). While we have, as a sector, had some limited success in ensuring equity of access to higher education, our success in ensuring equity of outcomes has been negligible. Attempts to understand and theorise this problem have largely comprised small scale, qualitative studies. This project will bring a large scale, multi-method approach to the issue. The boundaries of the study are a concern with undergraduate teaching and learning at public universities of all institutional types in South Africa.

This project, led by Professor Chrissie Boughey, seeks to contribute to the development promises of higher education by exploring the interplay of structural, cultural and agential conditions and mechanisms in South African institutions of higher education from which teaching and learning events and both students' and academics' experiences of those events emerge in order to better understand how teaching and learning can be improved in order to ensure access to success for greater numbers of black students.

The research question is: What structural, cultural and agential conditions and mechanisms related to teaching and learning give rise to the inclusion and exclusion of students in South African higher education? This question subsumes the following sub-questions:
How do disciplinary knowledge/knower structures and their associated practices serve to include or exclude students?
How does the construction and practice of teaching serve to include some students and exclude others?

Applications are invited for PhD study within this project. Successful applicants will receive R40 000 p.a. for three years to cover fees, attendance at Doctoral weeks and other research associated costs. They will participate in a community of researchers comprising fellow doctoral scholars and experienced Higher Education researchers from seven South African Universities. The PhD studies will be undertaken using a shared theoretical framework and the scholars will enjoy the support of fellow researchers and a panel of supervisors.

Applicants should be employed by any public university in South Africa. Applications close on 10 January 2011. Interested people should contact Sioux McKenna for project details and the application process.

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