

Mixing it for public good

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commercial stations. The second path is to mass produce low-budget, poorly developed educational and current affairs programmes. I fear the SABC has taken the low road with dated imported educational programmes filling up afternoon space, and the excellent 'Slabbert on Sunday' languishing as a well-kept secret, while the saga of John Bishop's moustache occupies its own headlines.

Do we need public service television? In the face of a multi-channel, free-market ethos world, is PSB still organisationally, financially and philosophically viable?

My answer is yes. National television is an institution in which we construct, distribute and consume symbolic forms. The market will undersupply programmes directed to groups who are relatively poor, the elderly, children, and minority language groups who do not provide safe consumer returns. Nor is it likely that commerce will fulfill the need for other culturally valuable services - scientific and communication research, education and other forms of cultural production.

The apartheid legacy has created a dire need for both formal and non-formal education. White Eurocentric cultural expressions have predominated; PSB is thus not a luxury, but a necessity.

PSB nurtures the public sphere as a means of serving the public good. It does so because it understands that while within civil society individuals pursue their own private self-interests, it is within the public sphere that they function as citizens. It is a fundamental principle that public broadcasting must motivate viewers as citizens possessing duties as well as rights, rather than as individual consumers possessing wallets and credit cards.

If we concede that such services are necessary in a democracy (however defined), we need to resolve two policy problems:

- how much should be spent on the provision of such services?
- how to ensure that the programmes offered meet the needs and desires of the audience(s)?

For public service programmes to be truly successful, three ingredients are needed: excellence in pre-production, presentation and the promotion of PSB.

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Changing institutions AND attitudes

A group of seven South Africans visited the United States recently to study the successes and failures of equal opportunity programmes in universities. AMANDA GOUWS gives an outline of one such programme.

BESIDES the need to address problems and to prioritise goals, equal opportunity programmes in certain universities are more than a means of putting disadvantaged people into positions they were unlikely to reach on merit.

They also represent an integrated effort to create diversity, by removing barriers which otherwise deny opportunities to large categories of people because of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

The main focus of our visit was on the practical issues around the implementation of equal opportunity programmes - the experiences of targeted groups, strategies and institutional arrangements, how to change institutional culture and overcome resistance, and how to develop curricula that include race and gender issues.

'While the institutional structures change behaviour, the development of culture is necessary to change attitudes.'

Equal opportunity and affirmative action are closely linked. Whereas equal opportunity is an anti-discrimination principle that usually makes employers comply with the law, affirmative action involves specific measures to redress serious disadvantages suffered by racial minorities, women and other designated groups. It aims at creating substantive equality. Affirmative action can be seen as a means to an end - a means to the advancement of minorities and women.

The tour took place under the auspices of the Equal Employment Research Project at the University of Cape Town. The campuses visited included Hunter College in New York, Spellman College in Atlanta, Rutgers University in New Jersey and the University of Madison, Wisconsin.

At the University of Madison, Wisconsin, the 'Madison Plan' set an example of substantive equality through the management of multi-cultural diversity. It was designed with the participation of teaching and administrative staff, students and commu-

nity leaders.

Started in 1988, the programme set in motion equal opportunities at every level of the university. This included:

- providing access through minority student recruitment and aid and enhancing the recruitment pool;
- providing a diverse education with an enhanced curriculum and bridging programmes;
- enhancing the recruitment pool for minority teaching staff;
- providing retention measures for faculty and pay equity; and
- providing a non-discriminatory environment through policies against sexual and racial harassment.

The plan aims not only to change the institution, but people's attitudes as well, through the creation of an institutional culture which is hospitable to women and minorities.

The Madison Plan is aided by state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, but a number of measures have been introduced into the university at the level of both staff and student recruitment.

Recruitment of students from low income families has been enhanced through a partnership between the university and the undergraduate student whereby costs are financed through a combination of grants, work and small loans. The goal is to serve 150 new economically disadvantaged students per year.

The recruitment of women and minorities onto the academic staff is a top priority. To retain faculty staff, child care, parental leave, spousal accommodation and mentoring programmes for women faculty are offered. When staff retire and resign they are replaced with minorities and women. Attempts are also made to change the profile of non-academic staff.

The appointment of an affirmative action officer with 'signing off' rights is a crucial component of the Madison Plan. She monitors the recruitment and appointment process. When an applicant is appointed she makes sure that the correct process was followed, that efforts were made to recruit



women and minorities and that the most suitable candidate was appointed. If she is satisfied she 'signs off', endorsing the appointment with her signature. She has the power to stop the hiring process if tainted and she also has an important watchdog function that goes beyond merely tending to complaints.

An enhanced curriculum is also offered to enable students to recognise, understand and appreciate cultural differences and to teach about the contributions of the many ethnic and racial groups in society. A compulsory undergraduate ethnic studies course has been introduced which is co-ordinated by a committee and taught by the best scholars in the university. Attempts are also made to integrate ethnic studies and women studies with the mainstream curriculum.

Student orientation and monitoring are key components of the attempt to change attitudes through the creation of a hospitable institutional culture and a non-discriminatory environment.

To make the campus a multi-cultural community where academic and social functions are combined, a multi-cultural centre has been established. The social functions encourage students to increase contact with others while the academic function is aimed at promoting appreciation of other cultures.

A system of individual mentors who are

sensitive to the needs of minority students as well as a series of tutorial programmes are offered.

It is important that institutional structures and policies lay the groundwork for the development of the institutional culture. The Madison Plan has managed to carefully integrate these two aspects. While the institutional structures change behaviour, the

'US universities also had to implement equal opportunity programmes in conditions of shrinking resources'

development of the institutional culture is necessary to change attitudes towards multicultural diversity.

The reasons for its success are varied. They include the strong commitment by the chief executive officer, Donna Shalala (now appointed to the Clinton cabinet), who is committed not only to the goals of the plan, but has ensured that the plan is implemented at every level.

In addition, a 'critical mass' of minority students and women has been integrated into the university so that they are visible and feel comfortable voicing their own concerns. Resources to reach the goals and constant fundraising help ensure that a plan of

this magnitude is implemented successfully.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, there is some resistance which originates mainly from four sources:

- from those who favour formal equality over substantive equality;
- from those who focus on merit and traditional criteria of academic standards (or admission) and not on goals and results;
- from those who favour a traditional curriculum (usually Eurocentric) over a non-traditional curriculum; and
- from some targeted students themselves who feel stigmatised.

What does all this mean in the South African context?

Apart from the need for a strong commitment by the top managers of any university to make a similar plan succeed in South Africa, legislation on a national level to act as a motivating factor is crucial.

Without legislation prompting non-discrimination, it is unlikely that some universities in South Africa will voluntarily take steps to implement equal opportunity programmes. The one university in South Africa that is in the process of implementing an impressive programme is the University of Cape Town.

South Africa is faced by the problem of the 'magnitude of numbers'. Programmes in the United States were designed to accommodate minorities (except in the case of women). To truly have equal employment programmes that are representative of the proportionality of groups in South African society, we shall need a reversal of numbers of teaching staff and students - something that cannot be done without massive resistance from a white minority and especially white men.

Furthermore, South African universities are experiencing serious financial problems and shrinking resources. Without resources such programmes are likely to fail. It is important to note that US universities also had to implement equal opportunity programmes in conditions of shrinking resources. This forced them to apply resources creatively and make important choices such as diverting funds away from certain areas and applying them in the pursuit of equal opportunity and diversity.

The most intractable problem to overcome is the attitudinal resistance from teaching staff and managers, especially middle-level managers, who have already decided that affirmative action amounts to reverse discrimination. Without their co-operation immobilism of affirmative action is a great probability.

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