

# President Thabo Mbeki receives Honorary Stellenbosch Degree

by Tom McGrenery, Communications Officer, ACU

**O**n 20 February 2004, President Thabo Mbeki received an honorary doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch.

Late last year the University announced that Mr Mbeki, as well as Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Professor Willie Esterhuyse, Antjie Krog and Johan Rupert would receive honorary degrees. Ramphele and Esterhuyse's doctorates were awarded in December and Krog and Rupert received theirs on 15 April. Due to President Mbeki's tight schedule as head of state, his honorary doctorate in commercial

sciences was conferred on him at a special ceremony as part of the University's year-long celebrations of the first ten years of democracy in South Africa. Mr Mbeki, who has a master's degree in economics from the University of Sussex, also holds honorary degrees from Rand Afrikaans University (1999) and Glasgow Caledonian University (2000).

Among the 500 guests at the special graduation ceremony were national and provincial representatives of the diplomatic corps, mayors, members of the Stellenbosch community, University Council and Senate members, as well as student leaders.

An additional element at the ceremony was the presentation of the University's vision statement. This was delivered by Professor Russel Botman (Vice-Rector, Academic) and five award-winning students, namely Marlize Schoeman, Michael Cass, Noel Jacobs, Elize Julius and Tamara Postma.

In presenting Mr Mbeki to the Chancellor, Rector Chris Brink praised the President's determination and consistency in pursuing the long-term goals he had set in order to fulfil the "tall order" of delivering on the policies set out by the first democratic government under Nelson Mandela.

*President Thabo Mbeki*



Photos courtesy of the University of Stellenbosch

*Left, Thabo Mbeki and the Chancellor Elize Botha; above with the Rector Chris Brink; below with his certificate.*

“In three areas especially,” said Professor Brink, “his contribution was of crucial importance: the achievement of a negotiated transition, the establishment of a sound and disciplined economy, and his leadership role in Africa and in the international arena.”

Professor Brink explained that, although it was not widely known, Thabo Mbeki had played a leading role in dissuading the ANC from the use of armed tactics, and was a key figure in the transitional negotiation process. His second important contribution was to set up a disciplined economic system, in the face of strong internal

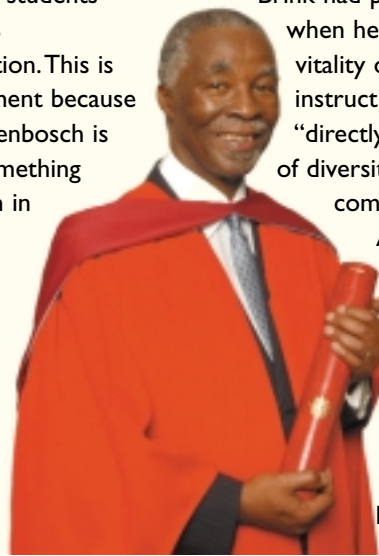
opposition, that placed South Africa on a sound footing in the global economy. Thirdly, he said, Mr Mbeki’s vision for Africa has “instilled a sense of pride and self-responsibility in citizens and countries alike... many world leaders regard him as a key mediator between the developed and developing world. As proponent of mediation and inclusivity, as the architect of a sound economic system and as leader with international stature, it is fitting for the University of Stellenbosch to honour Thabo Mbeki with the degree D Comm *honoris causa*.”

The event is representative of the great strides forward in inclusivity that the University of Stellenbosch has made since the abolition of apartheid. In 1990, white students at Stellenbosch outnumbered black students by over 17 to one. By 2003, black students constituted some 29% of the student population. This is an important achievement because the University of Stellenbosch is widely regarded as something of a flagship institution in the Afrikaner community.

“This University has great educational and symbolic value for Afrikaans speakers, as well as many people from other language groups,” said President Mbeki. “It is also an important national asset for our entire diverse society, and not just a particular group. Changes and practices at Stellenbosch are therefore closely watched and have a significant ripple or multiplier effect.”

President Mbeki went on to endorse the statement made in the University’s policy that diversity is a necessary condition for quality education. “True educational quality is based on the diversity of ideas. And diversity of ideas is strongly related to the diversity of people from different cultures and backgrounds.”

Mr Mbeki emphasised that Professor Brink had pointed the way forward when he said that the health and vitality of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at Stellenbosch was “directly related to the expansion of diversity within the university community and the use of Afrikaans as an instrument of empowerment, and not disempowerment.”



“Wanneer ek hierdie Eikestad verlaat, sal ek deur ons land reis, en uitreik na die hoogste bergpieke. Daar sal ek trots aan die wêreld verklaar, dat ek ook, *honoris causa*, ’n geleerde van Matieland geword het.”

“When I leave this Town of Oaks, I will travel through our land and strive to reach the highest mountaintops. From these I will declare with pride to the world that I too have become, *honoris causa*, a scholar from Matieland.”

President Thabo Mbeki  
20 February 2004

# Evaluating the Academy of Finland

ACU's Secretary General, Professor Michael Gibbons, explains the evaluation process and its relevance to Commonwealth countries.

With a population of five million, Finland is a small country. Its economic wellbeing depends critically on a stream of innovations that centre on knowledge produced through research. In economic terms, Finland is a success story – witness the international performance of Nokia. Many Commonwealth countries fit into the Finnish profile but not many have been as successful in generating economic growth through innovation. The role of the Academy (which functions more as a board of the research councils than a traditional European Academy) in this has been decisive. During the past ten years, Finland's academic reputation and capabilities have been regenerated.

There has been a significant shift in the meaning of 'competition' in science and technology policy over the last 15 years. At one time, policy focused on the operation of national systems of innovation; innovative performance was thus contingent upon differences within these systems. Now, as the forces of globalisation transform the national policy agenda, we hear the rhetoric of nations needing to compete in producing quality science that ranks with the best in the world. In Finland, this moved the Academy and the universities it supports to the forefront of science policy development.

Its aim was to generate a recognisably world-class scientific capability for Finland.

Working towards this objective in the 1990s, the Academy took a very strict – and at the time controversial – stand. Research policy was to be based upon excellence, determined through the conventional processes of national and international peer review. This was a heroic act of faith on the part of the Academy, because although in the long term research produces the knowledge

on which economic growth depends, in the short term this relationship is difficult to verify on a country-by-country basis. The upshot is that year by year research needs to be funded out of current, not

future, economic performance.

The decision to back research excellence using peer review as the determinant of quality has had a direct impact on the strategy and planning of Finnish universities, as the Academy not only expanded its responsive-mode funding mechanisms but also developed new research and centres of excellence programmes. This strategy reversed the earlier policy, which linked research to national objectives; a policy widely regarded as the root of the collapse of Finnish scientific credibility in the 1980s.

As might be expected, the new strategy impacted significantly on universities. For example, our evaluation revealed the emergence, albeit in its early stages, of a two-tier system: some university researchers were supported by the Academy while others, for whatever reason, were not funded. This tension arises because the Academy only pays for part of the research it supports; the university is expected to find funds for the remainder. Alas, core government funding has not grown in line with the Academy's funds. Consequently, rectors complain that Academy funding distorts the university's profile, inhibiting them from implementing their own strategies. Academy funding can also encourage the separation of teaching and research, as Academy-supported researchers pursue their research programmes, sometimes to the exclusion of all else. There is clearly much work to be done to correct this situation and the evaluation report recommends that the Academy must develop more effective links with the university sector.

As one of its key strategies, the



ACU Secretary General, Professor Michael Gibbons



*International Evaluation of the Academy of Finland*

Academy is committed to developing a culture of interdisciplinarity. The problem is how to move an essentially discipline-based peer review system in this direction. The changing nature of research – ever more open, with more actors, dealing with more complex problems – implies multiple meanings of excellence and therefore touches the heart of the discipline-based peer review system. The evaluation panel suggested introducing a dualistic peer review system in which excellence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for funding.

This change must go hand in hand with parallel university developments, and so the evaluation panel recommended that the Academy establish a forum to allow closer collaboration with universities and other players in the national research system.

Alongside these developments, the Ministry of Education has expanded the number of PhD places as part of its strategy of developing research careers.



*The evaluation panel (left to right): Dr Ralf Pettersson, Professor Michael Gibbons, Dr Gretty Mirdal, and Professor Patrick Dowling*

Photos courtesy of Kari Sarkkinen

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The supply side of the problem has therefore expanded: currently, more than 1,200 PhDs are produced every year. The Academy provides opportunities for young researchers at the next stages, whether as post-docs, directors of programmes, Academy fellows or Academy professors but, as in many small economies, the problem is a scarcity of research-related opportunities. Firms need to examine how they might better absorb PhDs, and universities must consider how

to make PhD training more useful to those outside the university sector. The evaluation panel recommended that the Academy endeavour to incorporate “project careers” into its various programmes, as young researchers need to look beyond narrow academic careers when defining their futures. The increase in supply of PhD students meets only half of the problem. The universities and the Academy need to manage the demand side as well.

In 2003, ACU was asked to take the lead in the evaluation of the Academy of Finland. The evaluation panel, under the Chairmanship of ACU's Secretary General, comprised Professor Patrick Dowling (Vice-Chancellor, University of Surrey), Dr Gretty Mirdal (Professor of Psychology, University of Copenhagen and Chairman, Standing Committee for Humanities, European Science Foundation) and Dr Ralf Pettersson (Branch Director, Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research and Adjunct Professor of Molecular Biology, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm). The panel handed its report to the Finnish Minister of Education during a seminar at the House of the Estate in Helsinki in March.

You can obtain a copy of the report, 'International Evaluation of the Academy of Finland' at [www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/tiede/2004/opml6/opml6.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/tiede/2004/opml6/opml6.pdf).

**The evaluation panel made many more recommendations in its report, however the central issues are:**

- the need for connectivity amongst the various actors in the national innovation system; and
- the elaboration of peer review to accommodate interdisciplinary projects.

The panel's experience is that many countries are trying to cope with similar problems.

# Where has all the education gone in Africa?

**Dr Paul Bennell, Senior Partner at Knowledge and Skills for Development, describes his research project with Samer Al-Samarrai on the education and employment experiences of secondary school leavers and university graduates in four African countries – Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.**

**P**oliticians, planners, employers and educationalists universally accept the critical importance of high and middle-level 'manpower' in national development. At the same time, however, the spectre of mass unemployment among educated youth increasingly dominates policy discussions on education and employment in Africa. It is widely believed that young educated Africans are increasingly unable to find appropriate, training-related employment that effectively utilises the knowledge and skills acquired at secondary school and university. Stories abound of university graduates who are driving taxis, running tuck shops, working as clerks, etc. International migration, especially of university-trained professionals, is another much-discussed consequence of the lack of employment opportunities for educated labour. The AIDS epidemic is also expected to have a devastating impact on the educated labour force in countries with high rates of HIV infection.

These are major issues, all of which have far-reaching implications for human resource development in Africa. However, what is striking is how little good information is available that could inform policy-making with regard to both employment and education policy in these key areas. This lack of information has resulted in a plethora of unsubstantiated and often sweeping generalisations.

Well-designed and properly implemented tracer surveys are the best way of tracking the employment histories of representative samples of selected individuals. Our project traced specific cohorts of university and secondary school leavers who had completed their education during the last 20 years or so. The selected years

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for the graduate cohorts were 1980, 1987, 1994 and 1999. In this way, it is possible to build up a detailed picture of what these individuals have been doing since they completed their education. Over 5,000 people were successfully traced with high response rates. The surveys have therefore generated a mass of very detailed and accurate information.

## **Key findings**

Some of the study’s findings call into question the received wisdom about employment outcomes among these two key groups of educated individuals. In particular, most university graduates were in wage employment at the time of the survey in late 2001. And most were in jobs that are strongly training-related i.e., where knowledge and skills that were acquired at university are effectively utilised. Only between 1% and 3% of graduates was unemployed and looking for work at the time of the surveys in mid-to-late 2001. However, self-employment among university graduates was fairly rare.

International migration has also been less than expected. Around 20% of the 1980 cohorts of university graduates in Uganda and Zimbabwe were traced to overseas locations in mid-2001. The

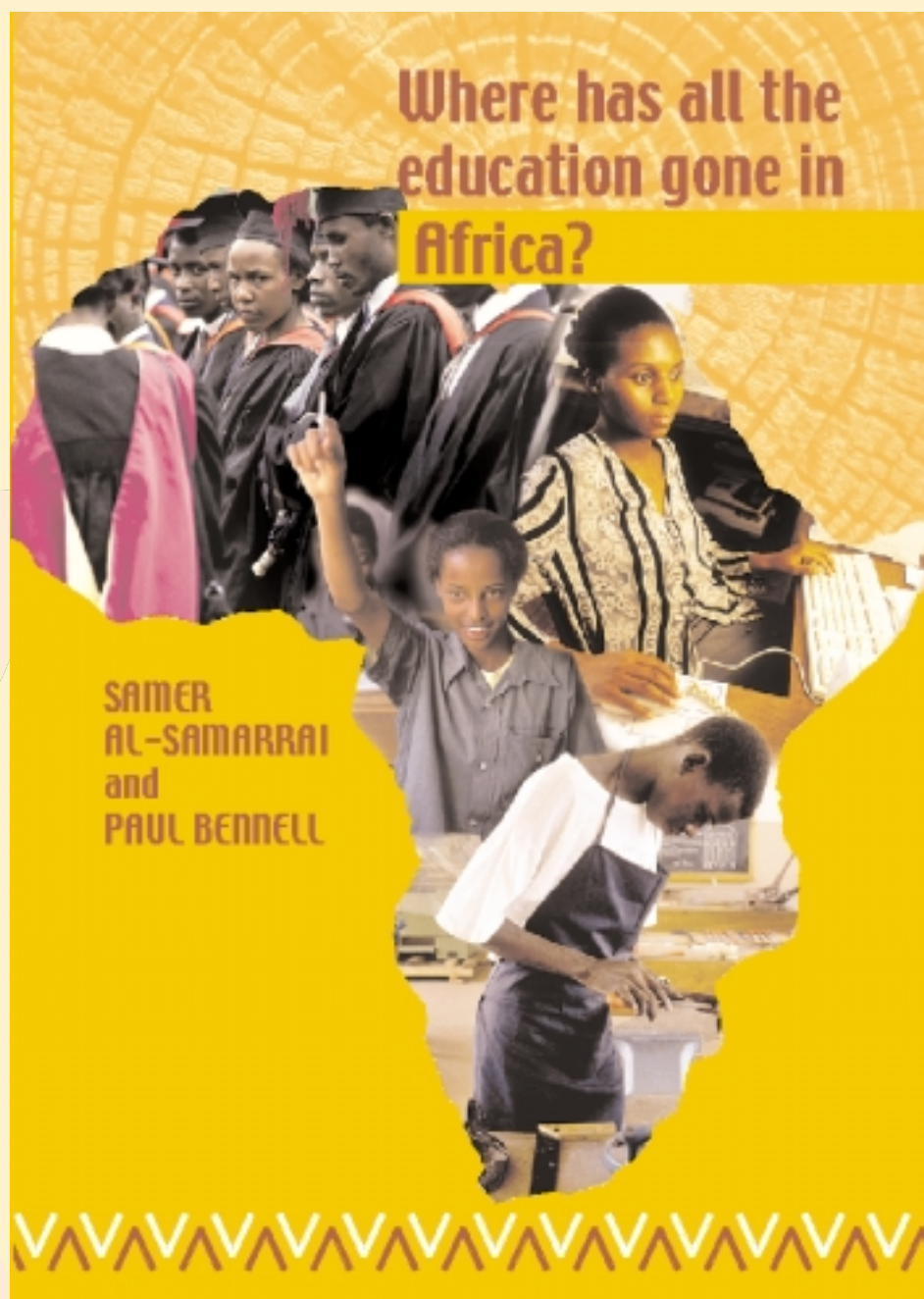
corresponding figures for Malawi and Tanzania are much lower – only 8% and 4% respectively. However, the brain drain has been persistently high for some professions, in particular medical doctors. In addition, in countries such as Zimbabwe which are facing serious economic crises, international migration among both groups of leavers is increasing very rapidly.

Sadly, though, cumulative mortality is very high. In particular, very sizeable proportions of the 1980 graduate cohorts in Malawi (25%), Uganda (33%), and Zimbabwe (18%) were deceased by mid-2001. While not all this mortality is due to HIV/AIDS, the epidemic probably accounted for 60-70% of these deaths. Overall mortality for the 1987 cohorts ranges from 18% in Malawi to 9% in Tanzania. Around 3% of the 1994 cohorts in Uganda and Zimbabwe had died by mid-2001 compared with 1% in Tanzania and 6% in Malawi. Cumulative mortality among the 1999 cohorts is 1-2% in all four countries. Generally speaking, the cumulative mortality rates for school leavers are two to three times higher than for university graduates.

The received wisdom is that the employment outcomes for female graduates and school leavers throughout nearly all low-income Africa are generally much worse than for males. The tracer surveys show however that this generalisation is no longer valid among the four case study countries. With the exception of Zimbabwe, the gender gap with regard to the incidence of wage employment has been completely or almost completely eliminated. However, the large gender imbalances in university enrolments in the four survey countries have not changed appreciably over the last 20 years.

Finally, African graduates are concerned about the relevance and quality of their university training. Given the strongly vocational nature of the degree programmes that were selected for this study (agriculture, commerce, engineering, education, and medicine), university training should be highly relevant. However, less than 20% of the 1990s graduates in the four countries felt that this was the case. The overwhelming view is that their degree programmes were too theoretical and there were far too few opportunities for 'learning by doing' through industrial attachments and other types of practical activities.

Calls to improve the relevance of university education are of course not new. But the need for university training that imparts knowledge and skills that are directly relevant to the developmental challenges facing low-income countries in Africa and elsewhere is greater than ever. In particular, there must be a clear focus in all degree programmes on service delivery for the poor. This includes not just appropriate knowledge and skills, but also building commitment to fighting poverty. More generally, the deterioration in the quality of university education in many African countries has far-reaching consequences



that have still not been properly recognised by most governments and donor agencies.

If you would like a copy of the report, please visit [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/pvty/pvwhateg.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/pvty/pvwhateg.html).

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# Rebels with a cause?

Professor Bryan Gould examines the UK government's struggle to introduce top-up fees and asks if it was worth all the effort.



Photo courtesy of University of Waikato

*Professor Bryan Gould, Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Waikato*

No one can doubt that the British government had to pull out all the stops in order to deflect backbench opposition to its proposals for variable tuition fees. Ministers made concession after concession to try to ensure the majority they needed.

The result is a Higher Education Act that is hemmed in with safeguards and constraints. Measures are in place to ensure that the poorer students will, in effect, pay no tuition fees. Universities that regard themselves as elite and are likely to charge the highest top-up fees will be placed under an obligation to widen access. The £3,000 upper limit to top-up fees will be rigorously maintained, with various safeguards to

ensure that future Parliaments will not easily abandon the limit.

The government is therefore able to argue that the measure is a necessary and thoughtful attempt to resolve the increasingly painful dilemma of tertiary education throughout the advanced world – the need to reconcile the huge rise in the importance of, and demand for, tertiary education with the reluctance of the taxpayer to fund the provision needed to meet that demand.

The government can also argue that their scheme has been shorn of the features that have made similar schemes in other countries so objectionable. The protection for poorer students and the relatively light regime for repaying the loans that so many students will find necessary mean that the British scheme can be distinguished from those, for example, in Australia and New Zealand. Recent figures from New Zealand show how easily student loan schemes, driven by regular increases in tuition fees, can become monsters.

In New Zealand, student debt has now reached NZD\$6 billion and is projected to rise to over NZD\$14 billion by 2020. By that time, it will have become the government's single biggest asset. The average repayment time for

male students will be 13 years and for female students 26 years, prompting a legal challenge designed to outlaw the scheme as discriminatory.

Anti-tuition fee rebels in the UK can be grateful that they are unlikely to have to deal with draconian outcomes of this kind, but their opposition to the proposals, stemming as it does from more fundamental considerations, will no doubt remain.

The rebels will be inclined to ask three major questions. First, why, at a time when the importance of university education to the national future has never been clearer, is it regarded as a private good for which the individual rather than the community should pay? If the taxpayer is required to fund compulsory education and a whole raft of other fundamental services, should the same obligations not be expected in respect of a service which equally serves the public good, is no longer the preserve of a small elite, and is now availed of by a large proportion of the population?

Secondly, whatever safeguards are put in place, there is an obvious dissonance between the claim that the government wishes to improve access and its assertion that the best way of doing this is by raising the cost of university education. It seems inevitable that a significant part of the population will be deterred from going to university by the prospect of incurring a life-long debt.

Thirdly, if some universities, by virtue of their status and reputation, are willing and able to charge more than others (and no-one should place too much reliance on the current limit on

“Why, at a time when the importance of university education to the national future has never been clearer, is it regarded as a private good for which the individual rather than the community should pay?”

*Professor Gould*

top-up fees) how can we avoid an increasing nexus between the most desirable universities and those best able to pay for access to them? The outcome seems all too likely to be a narrowing rather than a widening of the recruitment base of our great universities – something that might be assumed to be anathema to the present government.

These questions are unavoidable while governments around the world fail to recognise that tertiary (or post-compulsory) education is well on the way to becoming comprehensive and universal. It would be ironic if the persistence of the outworn view that university education is a private good enjoyed only by a privileged minority should be a self-fulfilling prejudice and

result in a university system that is accessible only by those with deep enough pockets.

The more extensive the palliatives put in place to avoid this outcome, the more starkly revealed is the truth that the funding of university education is, or should be, a community responsibility. Why bother with increasingly expensive exceptions and safeguards, which serve only to create further inequities and uncertainties and to increase the cost to the taxpayer, when it would be simpler and safer to adhere to good practice, policy and principle?

*Professor Bryan Gould is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Waikato and was previously a member of the UK Labour Party's Shadow Cabinet.*



Photo courtesy of Brian Morrison

*UK Education Secretary Charles Clarke at ACU's conference last year*

“ If some universities, by virtue of their status and reputation, are willing and able to charge more than others, how can we avoid an increasing nexus between the most desirable universities and those best able to pay for access to them? ” *Professor Gould*

## ACU Awards

### ACU's Titular Fellowships available in 2004 are as follows:

- Hong Kong Jockey Club Fellowships
- University of Wales Swansea Fulton Fellowship
- Worshipful Company of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales Fellowship
- Wighton Fellowship in Engineering
- University of Manitoba Fellowship
- George Weston Limited, Canada, Fellowship
- University of Oxford Fellowship
- Jacky McAleer Memorial Fellowship
- George and Jean Southam Fellowship

Each award is worth a maximum of £5,000. To be eligible, applicants should be nominated by the executive head of their institution. The deadline for applications is 31 May 2004.

Other available Awards include:

- First Time International Conference Grants – Dr Anastasios Christodoulou Awards
- British Academy/ACU Grants for International Collaboration
- ACU/FCO Chevening Programmes in Human Resource Management and Public Relations



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Further award details and application forms are available on the ACU website, [www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk)