

CHAPTER III: THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATION

3.1 *Introduction*

The transformation of higher education must first, be conceptually located and carried out, within the broader process of South Africa's political, social, and economic transition. The broader process includes political democratisation, economic development and reconstruction and social policies aimed at redistributive equity.

This national trend, in turn, must be pursued within distinctive set of pressures and demands characteristic of the intensification of world-wide social relations and to multiple changes in the economy, culture and communication of advanced economies or simply **globalisation**. The associated "knowledge society" has particular implications for the higher education system. Particularly in the context of higher education, developments in information technology effectively break down national boundaries and those between institutions. Access to higher education is not necessarily determined by physical space and location.

These challenges have brought in their wake a new higher education policy framework committed to increased participation, greater responsiveness and increased co-operation and partnerships to which institutions are in the process of adjusting. This chapter will, therefore, explore the context of transformation on higher education based on the requirements of transformation of universities, the national trends, Africanisation and globalisation.

3.2 *Requirements of institutional transformation*

Whereas higher education and other institutions world-wide are grappling with adjustments to the times and are involved in intensive process of strategic

planning, the South African situation requires what Coetzee (1993:2) calls "a double or multiple-paradigm shift". Breaking out of apartheid, the higher education institutions have to meet considerable backlog imbalances and inadequate capacities. However, higher education institutions have a major role to play in promoting sustainable human development and creating the human capacities to make South Africa more competitive and enhance its development within a global economy that is increasingly characterised by financial concentration, economic liberalisation, the quest for good governance and rapid developments in information technology. The task confronting individual institutions is, therefore, overwhelming, as is the disparities between the historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged institutions.

One can safely assert, therefore, that all, or almost all, societies are now, and will become in the new millennium, learning societies, knowledge based societies. This fact will demand a profound shift in the definition and character of universities. The current trends and new challenges facing higher education imply to rethink its mission, identify new approaches and set new priorities for future development. The responses of higher education to a changing world should be guided by the following words which determine its local, national and international standing and functioning: relevance, excellence (quality), legitimacy and effects of globalisation.

3.2.1 The mission of the university

According to Esterhuyse (1992:27) liberalisation and democratisation processes have direct impact on the function and mission of the university as an academic institution. The core of this impact have been symbolised in the term "affirmative action" which implies that the legitimacy of traditionally white universities is not only to be determined by their research or teaching duties, but through policy implemented by this institutions based on the following:

- Accessibility
 - financial support

- general support
- bridging programs
- academic standards
- admission policy
- Relevancy of the curriculum, course contents and research priorities
- Sensitivity towards community needs in general and previously marginalised groups (socio-political) – to avoid discriminatory policies
- Empowerment of previously disadvantaged academic staff.

Esterhuysen (1992:27) added that these issues are never debated in a very rational and academic context, especially in white dominated institutions. These issues are given a political 'colour' and this is related to the fact that they are socio-political products. Lack of communication and discussions on these issues have led students from historically deprived communities in particular to be concerned about access, equity, the slow pace of transformation and perceived discrimination on campus. Students from the historically advantaged communities, supported by the traditional alumni base of these institutions, increasingly protested against the lack of protection of their 'historic role' at these universities and their growing perception of being "sold down" the line. The latter group also protested against the perceived "new forms of discrimination" against them, as administrations increasingly had to turn to the peculiar problems of poor students from historically deprived communities and racial conflict in residences where students from previously divided societies now have to live and work together (Coetzee, 1998:3).

The above-mentioned changes have major implications for the way universities fulfil their teaching, research and community development tasks and for the way management govern, manage and administer their higher education institutions. It represents nothing short of a paradigm shift or perhaps even what Coetzee (1998:3) believes is a multiple-paradigm shift. In addition, the complexity of striving for both excellence and relevance regarding teaching and research has been largely underestimated. These have put universities within the ambit of

polarity management. These challenges have to be confronted against the backdrop of a severe decline in financial resources, which has taken place since the early eighties. The latter decline, the growing debt at higher education institutions, both advantaged and disadvantaged, and the magnitude and complexity of the process of transformation, have put the management, staff and student leaders at higher education institutions under enormous pressure. Some institutions have been brought to the brink of collapse, while others are rendered extremely vulnerable (Coetzee, 1998:3,4).

3.2.2 The organisational structure

Since South Africa is in a state of transition and whilst the democratisation process is taking place, the process has a direct impact on universities with a focus on:

- restructuring of decision-making bodies like the council and the senate
- appointment or admission policies (non-racism, non-sexism, non-discrimination on the bases of religion)
- consultative and transparent structures between the university and the community and other interest groups.

These impacts occur mainly due to the fact that South Africa's universities are being financed through the public and taxpayers' money. That is why accountable and disciplined management is very important for universities. As a result, organisational structure of the university plays a very crucial role in the political democratisation with emphasis on accountability and transparency, and also the process of modernising development which plays a role not only in the setting of the hierarchical and authority pattern and value system but also by providing an effective management system (Esterhuyse, 1992:29-30).

3.2.3 The organisational culture, social structure and value system

As indicated in Chapter II, section 2.5, culture plays a role in the legitimacy and efficiency of a university as an institution. This include, among other things, gender, race, image, social responsibility and community involvement, and core values of university. These are issues that need a very transparent, all-inclusive negotiation forums for them to be acceptable to all (legitimacy). The process involved in order to reach consensus on structures and values can be a very painful learning process particularly in white dominated institutions due to the multi-cultural nature of South Africa. Questions that will be raised pertaining to organisational culture, value system and structure of a university according to Esterhuysen (1992:31) are very sensitive in nature particularly to the former Afrikaans universities. These sensitive issue deals with authority and power relations within the university as an organisation and between the university and other organisations and institutions of society like the church, private sector, cultural organisations and the state. This requires particularly for the former Afrikaans universities an intensive transformation. These universities feel uncomfortable with their location within the new political environment.

According to Esterhuysen (1992:25), questions such as the following must be asked:

- Who should govern the university?
- How should the decision-making process be structured?
- Who should participate in the decision-making bodies of universities?
- What are the rights and privileges of lecturers?
- What are the rights and privileges of students?

These questions deal with what could be termed politics of the university as an organisation and the problem of democratisation. This is a very complex but extremely important question to be debated in South Africa when one puts the issue of the transformation of the university on the agenda.

3.2.4 Historically white universities (HWU's) and historically black universities (HBU's)

Until the late eighties, South African universities were government aided, semi-autonomous institutions, except for a measure of financial control. They largely developed to serve the needs of a particular community or population group. Their unique characteristic was that they have settled into shape in the social order based on the principle of multinational development (Dreijmanis, 1985:25).

The educational crisis experienced by South Africa on a tertiary level and also at school level, was of a complex nature. There are a number of political dimensions to this crisis as well as a variety of other dimensions.

The issue facing higher education institutions is not merely a political problem, there are also structural problems, as well as problems of priorities. A university's legitimacy is not exclusively determined by the academic standards it upholds, but the quality of its teaching and the recognition of its research. However, it is also determined by the perceptions people have of its social structure, organisational culture and dominant values (Esterhuyse, 1992:25-27).

According to Esterhuyse (1992:27) the legitimacy crisis in which many American institutions, including universities, became entangled, was one of the reasons why affirmative action policies and programs were introduced. This particular issue has, in the case of South African universities, direct bearing on the crisis of legitimacy which South African universities in general, and Afrikaans-medium universities in particular, have experienced over the last couple of decades. These universities, especially the Afrikaans-universities, have come to be regarded as the flag bearers of apartheid ideology, providing intellectual support to a system that excluded the majority of South Africans from the corridors of power and privilege.

The educational crisis is, therefore, an extremely complex and multi-faceted problem and it includes the systematic erosion of the legitimacy of institutions

over the past decades. To transform the universities in such a way and also to restore legitimacy is not an easy thing. This rather generalising and selective review of some of the core issues in the debate on the university illustrates two very important points:

- i. The importance attached to the university as an academic institution and symbol of development, intellectual life and cultural achievement, despite the legacy of the past and the politicisation of education. This symbolic function of the university has remained intact in South Africa. Most South Africans attach great importance to university education and value of respected degrees.
- ii. The fact that the university, as a societal organisation is not a closed system or ivory tower, isolated from and immune to socio-political changes. On the contrary, it is an open system interacting with its environment and influenced by that environment.

3.2.4.1 The perspective of historically white universities (HWU's)

Through the emphasis on the Afrikaner struggle for independence and cultural identity, it was not surprising that the two main white population groups should have their own universities. The Afrikaans medium universities have been described as volksuniversiteite, linked to the ideology of volksnasionalisme. The volksuniversiteit expresses the volksgebondenheid (unity with the people) and a commitment by the university to it. It belonged to the volk and it was therefore supposed to serve the volk and the volk for it (Dreijmanis, 1985:25).

On the other hand, the English-medium universities tend to view themselves as open communities of scholars dedicated to search for the truth. In practice, according to Dreijmanis (1985:25), there was no sharp dichotomy, but rather more of a question as to which tendency prevails at which university at which particular point in time.

South African universities, notably the traditional so-called White universities, find themselves in a dramatically changing socio-political environment. How to remain true to the idea of a university and at the same time being a societal organisation, establishing relevancy and legitimacy in this changing environment, are challenge facing these universities.

Esterhuyse (1992:28) clearly stated that South Africa is in a state of transition. The concept transition does not refer to any kind of change, but a change of a very specific type which is expressed in the following definition: A transition is a structural transformation of society in all its dimensions, political, social, economical and educational, resulting in a complete change in the relations of power which existed in that society prior to the transition. Transitions are usually described as all-encompassing processes that include some other sub-processes.

With regard to transitions, he mentioned the following two points as noteworthy:

- i. Transitional processes affect every single institution and organisation of society. Processes of liberalisation, democratisation and socialisation in a political dimension necessarily have smaller effect in other dimensions and other institutions. These institutions, whether universities, churches, or private sector organisations, come under pressure to liberalise, democratise and socialise.
- ii. Efficient management of transitional or transformational processes requires, amongst other things, a clear understanding of what the guiding principles should be. Therefore, no university will survive the transition without serious consideration of the principles enunciated by the National Commission on Higher Education: equity, democratisation, quality, development, effectiveness/efficiency and academic freedom..

Principles laid down by politicians alone cannot determine whether Afrikaans should remain the medium of instruction in these institutions. This can be achieved through hard practices which include among other things financial

regulations. The way in which these institutions handle socio-political transition process, will depend on their institutional image and the way in which they place themselves within the socio-political contexts. It also depend on how the current government (or on how the next government will) perceive this Afrikaans universities. These universities cannot exclusively determine who they are and what do they want to be due to the fact that power in the form of financial and other resources will feature in the process as government is one of stakeholders in the process. The implications of transforming these universities also depend on the tendency of operationalisation (Esterhuyse, 1993:31,32).

3.2.4.2 The perspective of historically black universities (HBU's)

The English as well as the Afrikaans-medium universities have existed in a state of relative autonomy for couple of decades as indicated earlier on. But the historically black universities were specifically creatures of the doctrine of apartheid. In addition to the creation of the universities, the political agenda involved complete control of the educational terrain over the last 40 years. The results of which are still visible for everyone today.

If one considers the state of apartheid universities in this milieu, one will realise that we are still saddled with a considerable amount of apartheid baggage. A core of the university staff of both the administrative and academic sectors, were appointed not necessarily for their academic excellence but rather for their ideological allegiance, and today remain as obstacles of change, sometimes as symbols of mediocrity as universities try to be restructured (Reddy, 1992:19).

Financially too, these universities (in fact, all universities, but these universities in particular) face crippling difficulties. There is a lack of base and a lack of endowments. Therefore, during this process of restructuring of the universities, some redistribution of resources will be mandatory.

Given this history in context, it is necessary that South Africans advance a new vision of the university in the post apartheid era. This vision is encapsulated in the notion of "transformation" which involves much more fundamental and deep-rooted restructuring. It means a substantial and meaningful degree of popular participation in key initiatives. It means empowering the disempowered, and it also means the re-organisation of power relations and a focus on common interest rather than special interest. It addresses the issue of gender and racial inequality.

The historically black universities (and these could also be true with the historically white universities) that have been inherited were run along authoritarian and autocratic lines. They confined major decisions to elitists in the university and excluded the bulk of staff and students in the decision-making process. Traditionally, change has been implemented by council of wise men, and possibly outside bodies of consultants. That process should not be allowed to continue. In transforming universities, the structure of the university councils must be changed.

According to Reddy (1992:21), the historically black universities are also well placed and ideally suited to undertake the kinds of research that are relevant to the emerging South Africa, particularly in developmental, rural, gender and health issues. But while transforming these universities and changing to a new culture, South Africans need not to neglect the moral basis of our education.

3.3 *The social context*

Changing processes are not only fundamental and far-reaching but can also take a decade or longer. The characteristics of this processes are that the future is a moving object i.e. it is not stable and no correct projections can be made based on the past and the present. Transitions are being defined as structural transformation on all levels of society including politics, economics and education

level, which came as a result of drastic changes of power and authority relations that occur within a particular society.

When investigating the role of higher education in the context of social change, the question is whether higher education can or should serve as an agent of social change, or whether higher education merely reflects changes occurring in its societal environment. King (1967:83) poses that universities do provide "a powerful mechanism for the consolidation of or change of social structures", whereas Wolpe (1991:14) believes that education may be transformative of the social order.

At critical moments in the history of a number of nations the university was chosen as the most important agent of social and economic development. In developing countries and countries undergoing profound political, social and economic transformation, this role of higher education becomes critical.

Granted that education is a necessary condition for certain social processes, it is however, not a sufficient condition, and the structures and processes of educational change must be linked to changes in other social conditions and institutions. Furthermore, there are several limitations on higher education serving as agents for social reform. According to Perkins (1973:6-7) the role of the university as a social reformer or agent has been substantially overrated. The very nature, characteristics and mission of universities are the cause that they have more often been agents for stability and the status quo than for change and reform. "The responsibility for maintaining and refurbishing the cultural heritage, for adding to the existing body of knowledge preparing for employment, and for living a life for here and now – all this is essentially conservative" (Perkins, 1973:7).

A second limitation is the fact that higher education institutions are as much objects of reform. Societal transition will always be accompanied by changes in higher education, because society created higher education institutions and there

is continuous interaction to assure that the purpose of society and the missions of this society are kept in a state of related tension. It should also be kept in mind that fundamental values, such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, rationality and neutrality are stumbling blocks preventing higher education institutions from becoming powerful and effective direct agents for social reform.

Even though direct intervention in social reform by higher education institutions as corporate entities is not particularly prevalent, there are other, more indirect ways in which higher education could become involved in with social reform, e.g. through its access admission policies, or through the implementation of affirmative action policy. In the shift from elite to mass education, admissions have become a contentious issue, related to which important considerations must be taken into account that will help shape the future of society. The *democratisation of higher education* requires that attention be paid to *social justice, representation of minority groups, financial assistance for the underprivileged and academic support as part and parcel of admission policies*.

Another way in which higher education can contribute indirectly to social reform, is by formulating and implementing well-considered and practical affirmative action policies. By providing special opportunities to traditionally disadvantaged groups to become students, academic and administrative staff members, managers, members of governance bodies, etc., higher education institutions play an important role in restoring balance in a distorted society.

Higher education also influences society in a more subtle and indirect way through its 'products': those men and women who were exposed to the unique influence of higher education for a considerable period of time and in most cases were trained for some profession. The role that professionals play in social reform can be compared to a network or chain of influence, starting with the professional on the university. These professional network of people were trained largely at higher education institutions, public and private, in all sectors of

society and providing links between theory and practice, campus and workplace, that significantly contribute to transform our societies. The development of educated human beings is the most pervasive influence of higher education – what (Perkins, 1973:25) calls “the yeast in our social dough”.

As an instrument of societal critique, higher education has a distinctive role to play in social change. “If reform springs from the seed of discontent with what is, accompanied by a vision of what could be – then surely the university influence for reform is great, for it maintains a community in which diversity of such visions can openly exist” (Perkins, 1973:24). Higher education being an idealised community, its activities are to some extent removed from the pressures of living with the consequences of statements and actions, making it ideally suited to exposing misdeeds and proposing reform.

The capacity to effect social transformation depends, amongst other things on the social base of support and the established social structural and institutional conditions. In some countries higher education institutions do not enjoy a high level of acceptance and legitimacy in their community, a situation which will impede their functioning as change agents. Sometimes higher education systems and institutions themselves will first have to be transformed before they can effectively be involved in social transformation. In addition, a transformative role cannot be assigned to education functions without taking into consideration the political and economic conditions in which those functions may become effective (Wolpe, 1991:8-9).

It is clear then that universities and other institutions of higher education are not immune to the effects of social and economic changes, nor to the reactions of governments to these. But even though these institutions are able to change, they are often not able to meet the pace of transformation as defined from outside, particularly by policy agendas set by governments. A precarious situation arises in a higher education system when considerable changes occur in its external environment, such as in the fields of finance, national governance

and structure, but those changes are not matched by internal reforms. It is of course expedient when the diversity created by changes in the external environment of higher education institutions is matched by the diversity in their internal environment. Evidently higher education should be involved in efforts to design and implement innovative strategies for coping with social change and transition. Murrel (1991:112) warns that if higher education fails to keep pace with these changes it may become irrelevant as part of the major formative enterprise in modern society.

3.4 Transformation of higher education in South Africa

From preceding arguments, it became clear that all stakeholders in higher education should view transformation as a paradigm-shift in the mind-set where in the process is accepted as a vital element in the survival of South Africa's tertiary institutions. Also, it is of importance to keep in mind that management of higher education institutions cannot do it alone – the process require transparency, skills and involvement of all stakeholders including staff, students and the community.

Table 1: An overview of transformation at South African Universities

NAME OF INSTITUTION	TRANSFORMATION STRUCTURE (BTF OR IF)	STARTED	CONVERTED INTO AN IF	IMPLEMENTATION OF AN IF	HWU OR HBU
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN	BTF	1994	YES	1998 (Interim)	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN WESTVILLE	BTF	1993	YES	1999	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE	BTF	1994	YES	1999	HBU

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL	BTF	1990	YES	March 1999	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF THE NORTH	BTF	1991	IN PROCESS	1999	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH WEST	BTF	1996	IN PROCESS	N/A	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF FREE STATE	BTF	1993	IN PROCESSX	BTF (Interim)	HWU
POTCHEFSTROOM UNIVERSITY FOR CHE	BTF	1994	YES	1999	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF PORT ELIZABETH	BTF	1993	YES	1999	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA	BTF	1993	YES	1999	HWU
RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY	BTF	1994	YES	1999	HWU
RHODES UNIVERSITY	BTF	1993	YES	1999	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH	BTF	1998	YES	1999	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF TRANSKEI	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA	UBTF	1996	YES	2000	HWU
VISTA UNIVERSITY	BTF	1994	YES	1999	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND	BTF	1993	YES	1999	HWU
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN CAPE	BTF	1994	YES	1999	HBU
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA	BTF	1995	YES	1999	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND	X	1996	NO PROGRESS	N/A	HBU
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA	BTF	1993	YES	1999	HBU

Over a period of more than twenty years several investigations into South African higher education have taken place, all of which to a greater or lesser degree

addressed governance, and more specifically, institutional governance. The main report of the commission of inquiry into universities, the Van Wyk de Vries Commission of 1974, referred to institutional governance under their recommendations on internal administration and management for the future. A particular concern of the commission was that "any transfer to the senate of functions proper to the council should be guarded against". Subsequently, one of the most exhaustive investigations ever done into the South African education system, the De Lange Commission of 1981, identified the co-ordination and rationalisation of control (governance) and management of tertiary education as a particular problem area (Fourie, 1996:3). However, none of these reports dealt extensively with governance.

The reports of two other significant investigations into the South African higher education system attracted widespread attention: the Education Renewal Strategy of the Department of National Education and the National Education Policy Investigation which was undertaken under the auspices of the National Co-ordinating Committee in 1992. The Education Renewal Strategy constituted a landmark in South African education policy by moving away from the organisation of and provision of education along racial lines, and stating that: "Race should not feature in structuring the provision of education in a future education system for South Africa and justice in the provision of educational opportunities must be ensured". For this reasons the Education Renewal Strategy could be regarded as the starting-point, albeit a very modest one, of transition of education in South Africa.

In addition to issues such as access, redress and development, the National Education Policy Investigation, paid a considerable attention to governance policies and policy options, including institutional governance (Fourie, 1996:4).

The first official investigation into higher education in the 'new South Africa' was that of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) which was established by presidential proclamation on 3 February 1995. The Commission

was charged with advising the government on “the restructuring of higher education ... to ensure the development of a well-planned, integrated, high quality system of higher education ... to address the inequalities and inefficiencies inherited from the apartheid era and to respond to the new social, cultural and economic demands” (NCHE, 1996a:1).

3.4.1 Key principles

The Commission has identified and adopted six key principles as overall guiding concepts in reshaping the South African system of higher education:

- **Equity:** the distribution of benefits must be impartial and fair and all persons who qualify on relevant grounds for the benefits in question should be treated equally.
- **Democratisation:** the structural and procedural arrangements of the processes in which decisions are made on policies and priorities, as well as on the implementation of plans and programs.
- **Development:** a set of programs or actions initiated and implemented to create the conditions for a system (or entity) to improve the gradual realisation of its potential.
- **Quality:** the maintenance and application of academic and educational standards, both in the sense of minimum expectations and requirements that should be complied with, and in the sense of ideals of excellence that should be striven for. In the case of higher education, international recognition is an important normative notion in determining and assessing academic and educational standards.
- **Effectiveness/Efficiency:** Effectiveness describes a system or an organisation which is structured and functions in such a way that it leads to desired outcomes or achieves desired objectives, with regard to content and quality. Efficiency, describes a system or an organisation which works well, without unnecessary duplication, overlap or other forms of waste and within the bounds of affordability and financial sustainability.

- **Academic Freedom/Institutional Autonomy:** the absence of outside interference, censure or obstacles in the pursuit and practice of academic work.

3.4.2 Central features of transformation

Central features for transformation namely; increased participation, co-operation and more partnerships, and greater responsiveness figured prominent throughout the commission's agenda. *Increased participation:* the move from an elitist to a massified system of higher education which implies a complete restructuring of the entire higher education system, including institutional change, changes in admission policies, content, curriculum and approaches to learning and increased integration and interaction with the wider community. *Increased co-operation and more partnerships* between higher education and other social actors and institutions – which is a movement away from academic insularity with reference to both governance structures and day-to-day operations. *Greater responsiveness:* the shift from closed to open intellectual systems in the academic arena, which means

- the development of a greater range of curricula, to incorporate the needs and values of non-elite communities
- the transformation of research functions to encompass new forms of knowledge production
- greater accountability, answering to the taxpayer and client/consumer on the cost-effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of course and research offerings (NCHE, 1996b:9-11).

In order for South Africa to succeed in the effort of nation building and development of its community and the country itself, and to improve its international image, it needs this kind of transformation principles and features.

3.4.3 Three macro-aspects of transformation

The commission's report suggests that, due to the imperatives of equity, redress and economic social development, there is a need for a single co-ordinated higher education system, co-operative governance and goal-oriented funding.

3.4.3.1 Single co-ordinated higher education system

This was also informed by the fact that higher education in South Africa is required to respond to a new set of demands as the new democracy clarifies its growth and development strategy enters the world economy on new terms and begins to tackle political, social and economic reconstruction.

The ineffectiveness, fragmentation and lack of co-ordination that characterised the inherited system, must be replaced by strong emphasis on co-operation and partnerships, linkages between higher education and other sectors of society and on developing mechanism and structures that steer the higher education system in a direction broadly in line with emerging national needs.

Higher education must also act rapidly to rectify the inequalities that permeate higher education provision, and moreover, higher education must be conceptualised, planned, governed and funded as a single co-ordinated system.

3.4.3.2 Co-operative governance

The proposals on co-operative governance has got implications on the level of control and management which emphasises a philosophy of co-operative management.

According to the commission's report (1996b:177), "co-operative governance is to be located within a legitimate state that is striving to become democratic and strong; strong in the sense of an assertive government bureaucracy that has the capacity, and a multiplicity of autonomous civil society constituencies which

acknowledge their different interests, maintain separate identities and acknowledge their mutual interdependence and responsibilities for attaining a common goal". To ensure co-operation, the different interests should be acknowledged and it should be accepted that tensions will remain.

The practical problems such as available financial resources, commitment of the university towards transformation and developing an effective higher education system as well as leadership to give direction to this, place a burden on the success rate of these proposals of co-operative management.

3.4.3.3 Goal-oriented funding

It is also important that the method in which the new system is going to be financed, should be given a new formula of subsidies different from the previous system. The new funding framework, according to the report (1996b:210-250), should be developed consistent with the principles of equity, development, democratisation, efficiency, effectiveness, financial sustainability and shared costs. It must support the realisation of the goals for higher education. The new funding framework should also support the development and establishment of a single national higher education system.

But, during any process of transformation, one (and particularly management) will always meet forces which will counter-act the progress made, and sometimes it is necessary that this forces should prevail as to give management direction.

3.5 *External forces of change*

3.5.1 Politics and student activism

Higher education and politics have a very close relationship. Universities have been highly influential political institutions since their emergence, in the sense that their members have been engaged, through their individual and collective decisions, in determining how the general social arrangements will be handled or

directed. The reason why campuses of higher education institutions are transformed into political battlegrounds can frequently be traced to the fundamental values of higher education (such as social criticism, rational thinking, search for truth etc.) Perkins (1973:24-25) explains that dissatisfaction among academics, and particularly students, with the real world that is too far removed from the ideal world, can flare up to revolt. Altbach (1993:21) remarks that universities have taken on "a political function in society – they often serve as centres of political thought, and sometimes of action, and they train those who become members of the political elite".

Staff and students are frequently not only the champions of political causes, but they are actively involved with broader social issues as well. The formation of the Southern African Student Volunteers (SASVO), for example, have seen students and teachers spearheading the struggle against pollution and environment degradation, violence against women, abuse of power, and have been vigorously promoting human rights. As a result the emphasis of student activism has of late been shifting to social engagement and community development.

Significant numbers of students are, however, still involved in political activism and students are demonstrating over perceived inequities in admissions and financial aid policies, tuition increases, and a growing number of racism. Amongst the hardest hit institutions in 1997, were University of Venda, which was closed for 11 days; University of North West, closed for two weeks, Technikon Eastern Cape, closed for 34 days and University of Fort Hare was closed for 21 days. Disturbances were reported also in 1998 at Vaal Triangle, Pretoria, Mangosuthu Technikon and also at the University of the North, Vista and the University of Western Cape (Shiba, 1998:21).

There seems to be two truths this country has to face. The *first* is that there is no such thing as free education. As reported in "*The Star, January 12, 1998*," the national student debt was well above R300-million. The *second* is that students

should not be denied the opportunity to acquire skills that will serve both the individual and the society. The question is how to reconcile these seemingly contradictory sets of facts. The answer lies in obligation. There is a need to establish a financing scheme for students (like the national student financial aid scheme). That puts an obligation on the state and universities. But they will need to secure private sector involvement. It, in turn, is not merely going to hand out money. That brings us to the obligation faced by students. They need to show their willingness to repay loans or offer compensatory services to society or sponsoring firms.

Student organisations, for their part, should consider channelling their energies more positively. Protests that lead to class disruptions and campus trashing do not help. The student message (of financial exclusion) has been heard. But that message has to fight the perception – created by students themselves – that there is overriding entitlement. There is not. And now those students are dealing with a sympathetic government and sympathetic university authorities, they need to demonstrate their understanding of the changed situation.

During periods of social and political transitions the influence of the political factor exacerbates. Particularly students can become not only vocal, but also even deadly opponents, whose actions could lead to the shut down of campuses or even entire system of higher education. Governance structures and/or their decisions very often are the target of students' protests, which have in numerous cases led to policy changes and even the resignation of council or senate members. The implications of this force for institutional governance are obvious.

3.5.2 Increased access, democratisation and educational expansion

Teichler (1988:24-25) identifies four major reasons for the expansion of higher education:

- rapid expansion of science and knowledge

- the belief that higher education expansion contributes substantially to economic growth by providing highly qualified person-power
- social demand, i.e. an increasing proportion of the population striving for higher levels of education in order to gain access to higher levels of occupational and social hierarchy
- the conception that higher education is a means of cultural enrichment or a sort of 'consumer benefit' which could readily be acquired

These reasons are probably almost universally valid, but in particular countries there may be additional stimuli for the growth in higher education student numbers, such as a high rate of population growth, universal access to primary and secondary education, an improvement in the quality of school education, the demands of the previously disadvantaged groups, e.g. women, rural population, ethnic or cultural minorities, etc. But whatever the reasons, the fact remains that student numbers all over the world are growing at frequently alarming rates (Fourie, 1996:106-107).

The forces of educational expansion and democratisation have to be reckoned with at institutional level and the influence of those forces on institutional governance could be critical. Expectations, tasks, and responsibilities become more numerous and varied (and contradictory!) in part because of the increased input of students, and the expanded output of graduates to job markets, that come with every step in the slide from elite to mass to universal higher education.

3.5.3 The financial squeeze

Closely related to the force of educational expansion is the financial squeeze that higher education is experiencing. On the one hand social and state pressure on higher education institutions to enrol large number of students is increasing, while on the other hand government funding for higher education is being reduced because of ailing economies. At the same time the cost of training each

individual student is increasing and academic staff are pressurising their institutions for higher salaries, because of the eroding effect of inflation which has led to lower standards of living for academics in many countries. Furthermore, industry and the private sector, with their higher salaries, form an attraction to many high-calibre academics. All these factors contribute to the situation in which a lack of finances constitutes the biggest challenges in all universities nowadays and is considered as a serious threat to their future, leading to their destruction in the present form (Fourie, 1996:109).

Whereas government subsidies are likely to remain the main source of funding for higher education institutions in most countries, institutions have been obliged to diversify their sources of funding because of these subsidies being insufficient to ensure the financial viability of higher education. Less dependence on government subsidies could give higher education institutions more freedom. Goedegebuure (1994b:336) argues that "there is certainly evidence to suggest that a diversified funding base enhances institutional autonomy and freedom of movement". It should be kept in mind, however, that a diversified funding base will be accompanied by accountability being demanded by a wide range of patrons which will in turn make the governance of institutions more complex. Another point of significance is the fact that budget allocation is a crucial legal competency, and if this is devolved to the institution it becomes a powerful tool of institutional governance that can be used to influence behaviour of faculty and other units.

3.5.4 The changing role of government

Why are universities always whinging about university autonomy? According to Makgoba (1997:215) university autonomy in general implies the freedom of the institutions to decide what to teach, whom to appoint and whom to admit. However, university autonomy over time has been abused by many institutions, to act as an exclusion principle and to divide society.

Over the past ten years or so, the relationship between higher education institutions and governments has undergone radical changes. The trend in many countries appears to be that the government's role is becoming more indirect, more supervisory and more incentives-based. It does not mean the role of the state is less important, but rather than continuing to be the main, if not exclusive, financier and provider in the higher education sector, the most important responsibility of the state is increasingly becoming the development of an enabling policy framework. In government's role the emphasis now falls on co-ordination, regulation, accreditation and the provision of guidance and incentives for both public and private higher education institutions, to assist them in meeting national training, research and service needs, i.e. the state in a supervisory role.

However, some researchers are of the opinion that, in spite of the ostensible emphasis on greater institutional autonomy and 'remote control' policies, the influence of government on higher education in the West has increased and is increasing. Neave and Van Vught (1991a: 253) argue that "in practice...the road to strategies of self regulations is only partially followed". The importance of political decision-making and the central role of government in higher education cannot be denied – at least for self-evident reason that government will always remain the largest and most important funder of higher education. In a modern, responsive higher education system, however, government should be only one of a series of authorities and constituencies that have to be taken into account. Although government influence on institutional governance is experienced more indirectly, it is a major fact to be reckoned with in most countries (Fourie, 1996: 110).

The reasons why universities guard autonomy jealously is simply to protect the very limited freedom they presently enjoy, in order to pursue the academic exercise with minimal state interference. *State interference* should be distinguished from *state involvement* in university matters. The latter is essential and generally welcome in the current situation, but the former is so destructive to

the whole university ethos that it should not be allowed to exist. Universities, with the history of the past government threats, inadequacies and inequalities are more than aware and more committed to participate and play a meaningful role in reconstructing and reconfiguring a new South African society. What they pleading for is the legislation that is facilitatory, enabling and liberating, rather than one that is inhibitory, disabling and bureaucratic.

Hence, the creative co-operative governance proposed by the National Commission on Higher Education is refreshing, unique, original and facilitatory. Co-operative governance is based on three assumptions: the differentiation and sharing of functions and powers; the separation and connectedness of policy-making, implementation and monitoring; and the multiple levels and facets of policy-making, implementation and monitoring between the government, the stakeholders and the university. Through co-operative governance, the available capacity can be diminished and mechanisms can be established where co-operative behaviour that is consensus-building can be fostered (Makgoba, 1997:218).

3.6 *Africanisation of higher education*

More and more universities in ex-colonies are attempting to indigenise their higher education so that it will reflect the culture and values of indigenous populations and become more responsive to the needs of local people. This indigenisation should be reflected in curricula, teaching and evaluation methods, staff-composition, research projects etc. The move towards indigenisation is in many cases the result of political forces which are pressurising higher education institution to relinquish their eurocentric or colonial models of higher education which have been prevalent in the ex-colonies, even after independence.

Morsy (1993:xi) defines imitation or dependency as the cultural and linguistic gap that exists between most universities in developing countries and the milieu they

are supposed to be serving, the gap being widened by the other gap between what is produced by higher education (knowledge, skills) and the needs of societies around it. This phenomenon is not confined to developing countries, although, because of historical factors, it is more prevalent there.

In developing countries the inclination towards imitation leading to dependency can be attributed to a blind determination to maintain standards, almost at any cost. In the name of maintaining academic standards, knowledge was transformed from something that the university produced to something whose consumption it facilitates. In the name of defending a universally-defined standard, education was reduced to a training process.

Makgoba (1997:221) says the request for transforming governance principles, culture and structures, the curriculum, the campus trashing and occasional abducting of administrators at universities are correlated, in public's perception, to the lowering of standards. "However, educational standards through our history, have rarely acquired precision or scientific meaning. They have been dictated largely by and tightly linked to the socio-political order of the day".

Concurrently, to becoming indigenised, universities in developing countries should play their role in opening up the perspectives of their students to problems of a global and universal nature. This also includes promoting inter-continental unity and international understanding among the objectives of the truly African University. In a world that is becoming ever smaller, higher education institutions will have to turn their attention to addressing global problems and co-operate with other institutions on both national and international levels in order to try and solve some of these problems and make the world the better place for all to live in.

What is Africanisation? There has been much talk of Africanising our universities, but nobody has been able to explain what this would entail in practice. The cynical, and perhaps realistic, view is that Africanisation means

nothing more or less than replacing white administrators and academics with black administrators and academics (Makgoba, 1996:114).

According to Makgoba (1996:115), Africanisation is the process for defining, promoting and transmitting African thought, philosophy, identity and culture. It encompasses an African mindset or mindset shift from the European to an African paradigm. It also involves incorporating, adapting, integrating other cultures into and through African visions and interpretations to provide the dynamism, evolution and adaptation that are so essential for survival and success of peoples of African origin in the global village. "By inclusivity, Africanisation is non-racial".

An African university should be one whose cultural and philosophical foundations are located within the African paradigm in its values and ethos. Like all traditional roles of a university (created by and for society) it should pursue knowledge with social responsibility. It should strive for excellence and high standards of teaching, research and community service. Its curricula and culture should reflect the culture of Africa in its fullest sense that is diverse, dynamic, accommodating and tolerant.

In educating and training future critical scholars and citizens, the major focus should be Africa; be it political, economic, health, educational or science (Makgoba, 1996:115).

In a direct rejoinder, Sono (1996:119), a fellow African academic refers to knowledge knowing no geographic boundaries and to the absence of a "Makgoba university" anywhere in the world other than, perhaps, Confucianised universities in China.

According to Moulder (1995:7) Africanisation of universities is about changing the composition of student, academic and the administrator bodies. This includes also the changing of the syllabus, the curriculum, the whole way in which

teaching and learning are organised. Moulder (1995:7) suggests that the criteria that determine what is excellent research should also be changed. "Someone who pleads for Africanising our research programmes is not pleading for the lowering of standards, but simply asking that South African focus on problems that have their roots and significance in Africa. All of this requires a theory of organisational change".

Encouraging the implementation of Thomas Kuhn's theory particularly in higher education institutions, Moulder (1995:7) says at the heart of Kuhn's theory is the idea of a paradigm being simply a set of assumptions. "Change the set and you change the view, and a whole new way of looking at things may emerge. If we want to Africanise our universities we will have to adopt a new set of assumptions".

Other seminal idea behind this theory is that a paradigm shift occurs because of anomalies that are generated by working with assumptions that seems to be in order but are actually full of tensions and inconsistencies. This give rise to ad hoc solutions which do not address the root of the problem and a crises arises. The only way out is to adopt a new paradigm.

If one looks at South Africa's infrastructure, business practices, railways and roads, monetary system, television presenters and disc jockeys, cell phones, pension funds, labour relations, restaurants and even Parliament ... all the evidence suggests that the lifestyle generated and aspired to by South Africans of all colours is more middle-class Euro-American than anything else. It would seem, then, that if our "Eurocentric" universities do somehow Africanise, they will be the only institutions in society to achieve this ... unless of course the key to transformation is about symbolism rather than substance.

Therefore, the question: "how many other components of South African society have been Africanised?", can help us to define the concept 'Africanisation'. For higher education to succeed in this process, major reforms and innovations may

become necessary. The role of institutional governance in initiating and facilitating indigenisation of institutional programmes and research, but at the same time establishing an international reputation for their institutions will become increasingly important.

3.7 International trends on higher education

An international review of university reform during the past two decades reflects several issues which South African higher education belatedly confronts as it breaks decisively with its apartheid past and becomes a global player. The reconstruction of a university system worldwide is taking place around the concept of "performativity" in an increasingly competitive international economic world. University knowledge is being redefined by governmental insistence on a certain kind of 'product' from universities. The outcomes of this for universities are the redefinition of the university's function as an instrument of economic development; the shift towards a supervisory model by the state and the subsequent marketisation of the university; a new context of academic quality and the displacement of an academic ethos by a culture of managerialism. This patterns in higher education policy and practice have created a new context for the university (Lemmer, 1998:15).

3.7.1 Economic development

Keenly aware of international competition, governments called on universities to promote regional and national development and ensure economic efficiency. Higher education must be restructured to meet the "needs of an increasingly technological economy with the capacity to participate in rapidly changing global context and to prepare for integration into the competitive arena of international production and finance (RSA, 1997b:1-10).

To address this crisis, policy makers suggest an apparently simple solution: higher education should produce an indigenous supply of able and highly qualified person power, particularly in areas of science and technology and management which are considered the engines of progress.

Furthermore, higher education policies from a wide range of countries converge in their steering of university education and research, often via preferential funding, towards the physical sciences and technology, complemented by professional subjects (Lemmer, 1998:23). In line with this growing instrumentalism, the White Paper on Higher Education (RSA, 1997b:1-10), similarly, single out the "need for graduates in career oriented courses, science, engineering and technology so that higher education can "yield a good return to the nation".

According to Taylor et al (1997:77) cited by Lemmer (1998:25) education systems are being made objects of macro-economic reform, with educational activities turned into saleable or corporated market products as part of national efficiency drive.

A shift to an economic role is also emerging in less developed countries, where universities are becoming fundamental tools of progress in a very different way from what used to be proposed by the humanistic approach to development. Previous educational objectives, such as improving literacy and fulfilling cultural needs, are now subsumed and made the condition for the larger aim of competition in a new informational-international economy.

Neave (1995:56) observes that the discourse in higher education policy has changed so drastically that it is less part of social policy (rather) it is increasingly viewed as a sub-sector of economic policy. This also implies in the South African context with higher education being a sub-element of various overarching economic policies, RDP and GEAR.

3.7.2 Institutional Autonomy

Currently, the vital question is "how the academic community can preserve its autonomy in the midst of the tumultuous changes at the national and international levels, and the requirements of modern society which are causing a shift in emphasis from absolute autonomy to increased accountability. Autonomy is inconceivable without accountability and the duty to provide services, according to a balance to be sought between the two concepts (autonomy and accountability).

How can universities be persuaded to comply with the performative purpose which policy makers now envisage as their replacement? The answer partially lies in a shift from state regulation (control) of higher education to state supervision. External forces like the government as the principal policy-making and funding agent together with other sources of finance, obviously exert a powerful influence on institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Internationally, the most dramatic changes in this regard have been occurring in Eastern and Central European countries where a return to principles of academic freedom and university autonomy has been brought about by the democratisation of society. The old centralisation and total state/party control of higher education have been abandoned in favour of a decentralised system based on full university autonomy. While universities now have the right to determine their own affairs, they are also fully accountable for their results. In many other countries too, the move from a state control system to a state supervising system has been accompanied by an increase in institutional autonomy and growing demands of accountability (Fourie, 1996:115).

Ironically, state offloading is usually accompanied by granting greater self-regulation to a university, which should devise strategic plans in line with national goals. Lemmer (1998:26) warns that such institutional self-regulation should not be misconstrued as greater autonomy. It is rather a mutation of autonomy, an autonomy conditional to institutional performance contained in performance

indicators. The latter may relate to cost, student throughput, research contracts, ratings compared with other institutions and, in the South African context, evidence of redress. The adoption of performance based allocations of public funds as suggested in the White Paper will be used to steer the development of the system in accordance with the national goals.

3.7.3 Academic quality

In higher education, evaluation has been a common practice for many years. State control involved an evaluative dimension for the purpose of validation and the recognition of courses. In institutional context, the assessment of individuals for promotion purposes has been a widely accepted procedure.

A most recent development is quality assessment in terms of regular evaluation of institutional performance. This kind of quality assessment is often tied to the demand for increased accountability that follows a growth in institutional autonomy. The strong emphasis on quality assessment in higher education which is evident in many developed countries, is also partly due to the concern that higher education has declined because of the combined effect of educational expansion and the financial squeeze (Fourie, 1996:118).

Quality assessment implies that there are differences in the quality of institutions of higher education. Quality assessment can be used to penalise poor performance, or reward best practice and lift institutional performance. The degree of institutionalisation of quality assessment mechanism differs from country to country. In a number of countries it is in the planning stage, whereas in others it already well entrenched. For this purpose state quality assessment bodies have in some cases been created. For institutional governance structures as the highest decision-making organs, performance assessment results do provide vital information, but these procedures could at the same time endanger

institutional autonomy and academic freedom, and confine the powers of these structures, particularly as far as the introduction of innovations is concerned.

3.8 Conclusion

“When we are offered the opportunity to fundamentally change things we usually fight it.” Human (1998:16-17)

This resistance is often at its fiercest and at its most irrational in public institutions of higher education. “If we could only channel the same energy we spend on resisting change into exploiting change, we would not only be able to achieve real objectives more quickly, but we would also become happy in the process”. Continual resistance to change leads to a pessimistic and defensive culture, one in which everything except the person who is unwilling and afraid to change is blamed. This is because people are creatures of habit and equilibrium, who are comforted by stability and certainty. We go out of our way to protect our habits and routines; we put great effort into ordering our lives so that there are no surprises and few challenges. We do this by organising ourselves into secure and predictable routines that don’t take too much thought (Human; 1998:16).

The context of change may be almost impossible to define, while its directions and effects may be equally difficult to predict. Yet change is an irresistible factor for the country, for society, and for the tertiary education system. The tempo with which change occurs in society will inevitably dictate the speed with which the university’s function, and hence its appraisal system, will have to be appraised and adjusted. To presume that an evaluation system can be implemented and allowed to run without regular assessment of its effectiveness and without regular change is one of the best ways of guaranteeing the long-term irrelevance of a tertiary institution. The willingness of a university to appraise and alter its mission could well serve as a measure of its desire to remain relevant to society it purports to serve.

People believe in given paradigms and have deep and enduring emotional attachments to them, to the extent that those who are invested in a particular paradigm will make all manner of cosmetic adjustments to that paradigm (change its terminology, adapt its mechanisms, improve its image, modernise it) rather than actually question the fundamental assumptions on which it is based. It is therefore, important to realise that people have an extremely strong attachment to that which is known. It is relatively easy to make cosmetic changes; it is difficult to root out a culture of hierarchy, graft, secrecy, nepotism and privilege only for a select few.