

CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Orientation

Change and conflict are features of the human environment. According to Sehgal (1991:6): "*Conflict is a theme that has occupied the thinking of man ever since the creation of universe.*" Conflict in particular is judged to be as old as human existence. However, the need for managing change and conflict effectively is more pressing and challenging than ever before. South Africa did not escape change. In addition to normal development and change that create conflict, e.g. technology, the major political change in South Africa creates more than the normal changes and conflict in society.

This could be attributed to recent political change in South Africa. All South Africans are today expected to live and share all the resources equally. However, the past has been different. Moraka (1997:1) indicates: "*For many years, until the 27th April 1994 when all inclusive democratic elections took place, South African communities were forced to live apart on the basis of colour, race and culture because of the previous laws of segregation.*" According to Cross, Mkwanazi-Twala and Klein (1998:3): "*South Africa was an extreme case where racial and ethnic differences were used to promote cultural pluralism and inculcate ethnic-nationalist identities.*" In addition, as pointed by Bradnum, Nieuwoudt and Tredoux (1993:204): "*Antagonistic racial attitudes have long been a central and determining feature of South African social history, leaving few aspects of human life unblighted.*" Thus things will not be as rosy as expected in the post apartheid South Africa because of hardened attitudes against racial integration.

A lot has still to be done to correct perceptions, hence the statement by Barr & Associates (1993:429): "*History would indicate that issues of race,*

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gender and cultural equality, and inclusion may well represent the most difficult challenges in human experience. Human beings of all cultures and all races tend to form a view of their world early in life, and some elements of that world view continue to influence their thinking and actions in spite of conscientious efforts to assimilate new information and experiences.”

In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:7), all South African citizens are equal before the law. However, that is the reality that has to be practically actualised in terms of equal provision of opportunities and facilities. In order to forge equality smoothly and successfully, the spirit of togetherness and an understanding that South Africans belong together have to be instilled into all South Africans. People, including students at universities, should come to terms with the fact that all resources have to be shared equally. However, according to Moraka (1997:36): *“Apartheid created two distinct worlds of students namely black and white.”* It therefore becomes problematic to integrate these cultures at universities, hence, Cross *et al.* (1998:3) indicate that South Africa is in the process of reconciling national unity and cultural diversity and further highlight the following obstacles: *“... (1) The presence of ethnic, linguistic or cultural minorities; (2) marked regional claim to autonomy or cultural identity; (3) the influx of migrants of heterogeneous cultural backgrounds; (4) socio-economic conflict arising out of unemployment or other socio-economic ills; differences of age group, gender, race and class...”*

Since students are members of various communities, which are affected by the above factors, they are also influenced by these factors. For instance, a student will identify with a specific student group that espouses and cherishes norms and values of a particular cultural group in society. They are subject to societal structural constraints and belong to various political organisations with specific ideologies. Hence, the existence of various student organisations. As a result, according to Cross *et al.* (1998:3) these differences *“... can often lead to social conflict or cultural*

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clashes between majority and minority groups, and the assertion by minorities of their will to preserve a separate cultural identity.”

Furthermore, all educational institutions are open to all races. As a result, student communities at universities become more culturally diverse. Student communities at universities are constituted by all kinds of people. This is not only the case with South African universities, but also in the USA as indicated by Barr *et al.* (1993:468): “*Students at institutions of higher education are increasingly diverse with regard to age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, attendance patterns, and living arrangements.*” Furthermore, Hoard, as reflected in the *Pretoria News* of 21 July 1998, indicates that: “*South Africa is a microcosm of cultural diversity, which also is the case with the American society.*” As a result he suggests that multiculturalism be taught as a subject in universities so that students can be afforded an opportunity to learn much about others. According to Bodibe (1998:4) students are characterised by the following:

- Political precocity on the one hand and political naivety on the other.
- Students who are ‘have nots’ and those who are ‘haves’.
- Students who are poorly taught (no culture of teaching and learning) and those who were well taught.
- Students who are politically and morally arrogant and those who have a guilt to expiate.
- Students who are race conscious on the one hand, and those who are racist on the other. In between the two groups are students who are becoming deracialised and deracinated.

In fact, the type of students that are currently enrolled at historically white universities still reflect the unfortunate consequences of the legacy of the past which culminated in the emergence of the privileged and the underprivileged, and subsequently led to the existence of black and white worlds.

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The opening of universities to all races has the fundamental implication of changing the entire atmosphere of an institution in order for it to suit all students from various racial and cultural backgrounds. Thus, fundamental changes have to be effected. Hence, Bradnum *et al.* (1993:205) indicate: “*South Africa is presently awash with currents of change. This change is hugely significant in its political and social ramifications, and it turns, in the fundamental sense, on the undoing of attitudinal patterns.*” According to Barr *et al.* (1993:469) the provision of truly equal opportunities for a culturally diverse student community is essential. It will require an institution to adjust existing policies, practices and programs in order to meet contemporary student needs. It is further extremely important that students not be expected to adjust to the old policies because they were basically catering for a particular cultural group.

As is the case in other tertiary institutions, the change in universities is further complicated by the financial factor. According to the Star of 8 May 1998 “*South African universities find themselves in the throes of change and transformation as waves of subsidy cuts and students debts rush over them.*” Furthermore, according to the Sowetan (1999:10): “Universities are once again confronted with the problem of unpaid tuition fees. Three institutions, the Medical University of SA, Durban-Westville and Zululand are owed a total sum of R125 million.” Subsequently, the situation calls for rationalisation of activities within a university. However, the crux of the matter is the correction of attitudes that were dented by the legacy of apartheid. Processes of changing rules and regulations as well as structures, may be easily done, but human attitude formally based on segregation remains. It embraces stereotypes and prejudices. Processes of transformation within universities are also intended to change attitudes so that the new dispensation of equality may be embraced and supported by all students. However, an attitude may practically be changed with time because people need to observe, witness and be convinced of a new order before giving it their support. Naturally, there are those who are not rigid in their beliefs. They may, because of negotiations, accept and support change.

Events in education convey an explicit message that we are far from correcting attitudes. Thus, the question of harmonising various cultural groups within universities is intractable. The prevailing perception is that of a zero-sum struggle. Cultures are intent on preserving their norms, values and traditions at the expense of other cultures. That results in serious resistance to change, while on the other hand there are serious attempts to effect change. The end result may be conflict.

It is a fallacy to think that new legislation and structures can immediately change attitudes. Immense effort has to be exerted in the process, which will gradually attenuate perceptions of superiority and inferiority. That could ultimately enable all South Africans, including students at universities, to cross the rubicon, to accept the fact that the new democratic dispensation in South Africa has no any other secret agenda other than to accommodate all South Africans citizens equally.

There are various factors that can cause frustration and conflict. For instance, according to Fyfe and Figueroa (1993:27): "*Frustration, alienation, conflict and a possible threat to cohesion are more likely to arise not just from difference or pluralism, but from injustice, inequality, exploitation, restricted freedom, discrimination, inhumanity and the like.*" However, multiculturalism is considered the basic factor in this study because of recent political changes which require all South Africans irrespective of race, colour, or creed to have access to universities and to use all educational resources equally. As a result, it is not possible for universities not to be involved in processes of change because of changing student communities. Actually universities have to be agents of change. According to Kabagarama (1993:2): "*Education has always been and continues to be an avenue for change.*" But there is serious resistance to that. Hence, the government's concern as indicated in the *Pretoria News* of 25 July 1997: "*The White Paper expresses a serious concern at the evidence of 'institutionalised forms of racism and sexism' and evidence of violent behaviour on many campuses.*" In addition, according to the report of the *City Press* of 31 May 1998, the then Deputy President Thabo

Mbeki, indicated that the necessary progress in redressing the inequalities of the past has not yet been made because "... South Africa was a country of two nations, the one black and the other white."

Student affairs has to continue functioning within this context wherein changes are effected in terms of changing the demographics of student communities, putting up new structures and correcting perceptions and attitudes. It remains the responsibility of student affairs to create an environment conducive to learning amidst all the changes and conflicts. That is also the case in the USA, as indicated by NASPA (1998:1): *"Today's context for higher education presents student affairs with many challenges. Among these are new technologies, changing student demographics, demands for greater accountability, concern about the increasing cost of higher education, and criticism of the moral and ethical climate on campuses. Institutions of higher learning are also influenced by social and political issues, including multiculturalism, personal responsibility, and equal opportunity."*

A host of literature exists on the management of change and conflict. However, very little has been written on managing change and conflict within student affairs at universities. This is why this research project will focus on the change and conflict management at universities from the perspective of the student affairs division.

Managing change and conflict within student affairs is a delicate activity, particularly at South African universities. This can be attributed to the fact that, as stated by Du Toit (1995:212), tertiary educational institutions in South Africa started to admit all racial groups from 1991.

As a result, skills that will facilitate effective management of change and conflict resolution are essential. It is therefore essential that student affairs officers be exposed to such skills and be prepared for the challenge of managing change and conflict effectively.

1.2 Demarcation of the study area

The management of change and conflict in historically white universities is aimed at creating an atmosphere for students which is conducive to learning. According to Upcraft and Barr (1988:1) student affairs management is “... *the process of organizing available human and fiscal resources to meet institutional and program goals in an efficient, effective, ethical, and fiscally responsible manner.*” Thus, change and conflict management by student affairs divisions is aimed at enabling students to be successful in education.

Some management principles and functions are the same for the management of change and conflict at universities as they are for all other education institutions. As a result, the management of change and conflict within student affairs at universities is justifiably embraced in educational management because it has everything to do with education. Managing various cultural groups to co-exist peacefully will contribute immensely towards the success of education.

This research project focuses especially on management of change and conflict resolution within student affairs, at historically white universities in South Africa. The following universities have been identified as historically white: University of Pretoria (UP); Rand Afrikaans University (RAU); University of the Witwatersrand (WITS); Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys (PUCHO); University of the Orange Free State (UOFS); University of Cape Town (UCT); University of Stellenbosch (US); University of Port Elizabeth (UPE); University of Natal (UN); and Rhodes University (RU).

However, only four universities, namely the University of Pretoria, University of the Orange Free State, University of Cape Town, and Rhodes University, constituted the sample. The first two, namely UP and UOFS represented the historically Afrikaans universities while the other two, namely UCT and RU, represented historically white English

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universities. This arrangement was prompted by time and financial constraints, as well as the intention to reduce the sample size in order to do the work more thoroughly.

Black students have, since the opening of these universities to all races, enrolled in large numbers. For instance, according to the audit by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation, as reflected in the *Sunday Times* of October 17 1999, the movement of African students to Afrikaans universities (UP, RAU, PUCHO, US, UOFS) grew by 1 117 percent and by 94 percent at historically white English universities (WITS, UCT, RU, UN, UPE). On the other hand, the number of African students at formerly disadvantaged universities (University of the North, University of Fort Hare, Medical University of South Africa, University of North-West, University of Transkei, University of Venda, University of the Western Cape, University of Zululand, University of Durban-Westville) dwindled by 9 percent and at UNISA by 11 percent. The audit further indicates that many black students are still enrolling in distance education programmes at these universities. According to the audit "... *the increased diversity has affected student life and politics.*" Thus, the above-mentioned universities have experienced, and are still experiencing, drastic change in terms of student demography. In view of the fact that white student traditions have been established over the years at the historically white universities, change has to be effected in order to accommodate other race groups. These institutions could not escape cultural conflicts. As a result, it has become extremely important to focus on what has to be changed and how to do it, and how to manage conflict.

Furthermore, this study will focus on multiculturalism which, according to Tulloch (1991:998) "... *refers to the constitution of various cultural, racial and ethnic groups.*" The co-existence of various groups in terms of culture, race and ethnicity necessitate constant assessment of inter-cultural relations because discrimination is likely to take place as groups may be tempted to contest for supremacy.

According to Neher (1997:6): *“Increasing diversity within organizations leads to questions involving discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, cultural or national origin, and presumed physical disability.”* That will also be the case within a student community. All these forms of discrimination and should be investigated by way of establishing causal factors, how they can be avoided and finally how communication and good relations may be improved. In order to be addressed properly, each of these forms of discrimination will require time. For instance, discrimination on the basis of religion will require a thorough study and research on the existing religions, the dominant religion, establishment of discrimination and what can be done to harmonise existing religions.

1.3 Problem statement

The study is based on the following identified problem which is best stated in the form of a main question and sub-questions:

1.3.1 How can change within student affairs at historically white universities in South Africa be effectively managed to the extent that cultural conflict within student communities is either avoided or effectively resolved?

1.3.2 In order to arrive at relevant and practicable solutions to the above main question, answers should be provided to the following sub-questions:

- What is the present situation in historically white universities in terms of the demographics of student populations, student leadership structures, student affairs personnel, life in the residences and language policy?
- What does management of change in historically white universities in South Africa entail?

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- How can conflict in historically white universities in South Africa be avoided or effectively managed?
- What are the views of various stakeholders in universities regarding change and conflict?
- What mechanisms can be employed for the smooth facilitation of change and effective management of conflict?

1.4 Hypothesis

Substantial consultation, communication, inclusive participation of stakeholders and racial representation within student affairs personnel corps may ensure successful processes of change and thereby avert or resolve cultural conflicts effectively.

1.5 Aim

The study intends to:

- 1.5.1 establish the impact of perceived threats and cohesion to the possibility of peaceful processes of change and the avoidance and/or resolution of cultural conflicts; and
- 1.5.2 provide strategies which can be employed for the smooth management of change and the avoidance and/or effective management of conflict in managing student affairs at multicultural universities, by way of:
 - sketching the current state of affairs of historically white universities in South Africa in terms of student demographics;
 - undertaking a literature study on change management at universities;

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- undertaking a literature study on conflict management at universities;
- providing guidelines for efficient and effective management of change and conflict.

1.6 Research methods

The following research methods will be employed in the process of this study: Literature survey and empirical research. The literature survey is intended to portray a global situation regarding the concepts of change and conflict. However, special attention will be paid to universities. Through the empirical research method, facts on current situations in historically white universities with regard to change and conflict in student affairs, as managed by student affairs personnel, will be established.

1.6.1 Literature survey

Primary and secondary sources will be consulted. This includes books, magazine and newspaper articles, reports, published and unpublished papers as well as legislation.

An extensive study of the above sources will contribute to determining appropriate definitions of various concepts such as change, conflict, multiculturalism and university. Furthermore, global perspectives on the following issues will be enhanced: what type of change should be effected within a given situation, who should be involved, how and when it should be effected, monitoring of a change process, how to establish whether there is conflict, who should be involved in a conflict resolution process, types of conflict, conflict resolution process and what should be done in case of a deadlock.

Consultation of the above sources will lay the foundation for the empirical research.

1.6.2 Empirical research method

The following strategies will be used: questionnaire, and autobiographic (personal experience).

The results of this research project indicate that the theoretical information alone cannot generate recommendations for the effective management of change and conflict resolution. Both theory and facts on the actual situation in universities will facilitate the formulation of recommendations for effective management of change and conflict resolution. As a result, empirical research methods are indispensable for this research project.

1.7 Research programme

This study comprises six chapters, which deal with the aspects as indicated in Figure 1.1:

- Chapter 1

The following aspects that form the basis of this study are discussed:

Orientation

The background of the study, which enhances the reasons that necessitated this study, is provided.

Demarcation

The study is about managing change and conflict within student affairs. As a result, motivation is provided as to the relevance of this study in educational management. Furthermore, information is provided regarding the following aspects: Problem statement, hypothesis, purpose of the study, research methods and explication of concepts.

- **Chapter 2**

The following aspects of change are discussed in this chapter:

- How people are affected by change.
- Change process.
- What or who causes change in universities.
- What causes resistance to change.
- How to minimise resistance to change

- **Chapter 3**

An in-depth literature study on the following aspects of conflict:

- Causes of conflict in universities.
- Types of conflict.
- Managing conflict in universities.

- **Chapter 4**

A scientific survey of management of change and conflict in universities will be conducted. To achieve this, empirical research methods will be employed. A questionnaire, structured interviews, autobiographies as well as critical and participant observation will be used.

- **Chapter 5**

In this chapter an analysis of the empirical research study is provided. A description as well as an explanation of the data, which is contained in Chapter 4, is provided.

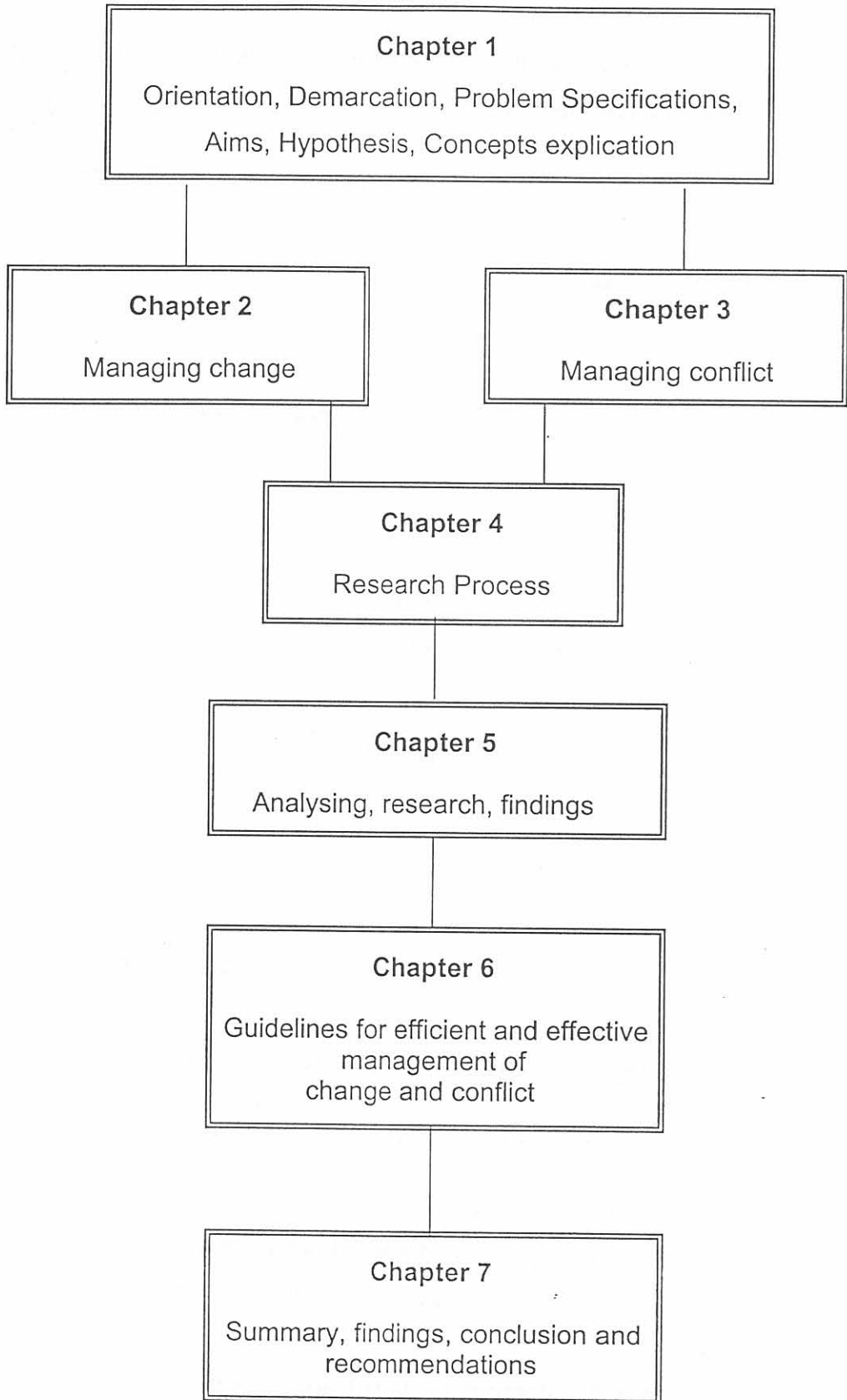


Figure 1.1: Study programme

- Chapter 6

Guidelines for efficient and effective management of change and conflict in universities will be developed on the basis of the research findings.

- Chapter 7

In the final chapter, summary, findings, conclusion and recommendations will be made.

1.8 Explication of concepts

1.8.1 Change

According to Sarien, Khandelwal and Sharma (1992:153): *“Change is a natural and universal phenomenon. In fact there is nothing which remains unchanged; whether climate, season, environment, culture and health, human nature and expectations as well as needs, all change over a period of time, the process being gradual in some cases and very fast in others.”*

Bennett, Crawford and Riches (1992:10) indicate that *“... change is about altering both practice and organization, and individuals’ perceptions of their roles and responsibilities.”*

According to Whitaker (1993:49): *“Change involves moving from a present state to a different future one.”*

Judson (1991:10) states that change is *“... any alteration to the status quo in an organization initiated by management, that impacts either or both the work and the work environment of an individual.”*

It is further important to note the following characteristics of change as highlighted by Bennett *et al.* (1992:111):

- need;
- clarity;
- complexity;
- quality; and
- practicality.

There may be various forms of change but according to this study two basic and fundamental forms of change, as provided by Dlamini (1995:39), namely evolutionary and revolutionary are noted. Burrell and Morgan (quoted in Donald & Lazarus 1995:53) refer to these forms of change as regulatory change and radical change.

Even though various definitions of the concept change are given, the process of doing things differently is generally considered to refer to change. Doing things differently enhances the development of new perceptions. Without changing old perceptions it may be difficult to realise new developments or they may not be realised at all. Thus, a paradigm shift is essential because the successful development of new attitudes, creation of new structures and policies and practical implementation thereof will depend thereon.

1.8.2 Conflict

According to this research study, both the concepts *change* and *conflict* supplement each other. One concept may lead to experiencing the other. For instance, in a situation where change is effected there are people who are for change and those that are against. For example, when student traditions are to be changed for the sake of establishing new traditions which will accommodate all students from various cultural and racial backgrounds, students that own the existing traditions may resist change. Consequently, conflict may be experienced as those that need change may also push for change. On the other hand, conflict may lead to major changes being effected.

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Donohue and Kolt (quoted in Holton 1995:5) define conflict as “... a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals.” According to Goldsmith (1977:29) conflict is “... the experience of pain or the threat of pain in interpersonal relationships” and “... the primary way of achieving intimacy.” Furthermore, according to Bercovich (1984:3) “... conflict denotes overt, coercive interactions in which two, or more, contending parties seek to impose their will on one another.” Sehgal (1991:3) indicates that: “Conflict is defined as a process which begins when one party (who may be individuals, groups or organisations) perceives that the other has frustrated or is about to frustrate some concern of his or hers.”

Conflict can either be positively or negatively experienced. It is possible for an individual, people or an organisation to benefit from conflict. According to Sehgal (1991:6): “Conflict is valued negatively in an organisation, if it becomes manifest and the goals and actions of subunits are blocked and frustrated. Conflict is valued positively, if individuals and groups are spurred by a spirit of healthy competition and are able to achieve both personal and organisation objectives.”

Various definitions on conflict are provided, but they all revolve around one thing, namely differences in perceptions and needs and ways that are used to satisfy the needs. Conflict is experienced in any given group of people, even though a group may be mono-cultural. Perceptions and needs can be expressed in terms of norms, values and traditions.

1.8.3 Communication

According to Neher (1997:18) communication entails sharing a fact, a feeling, an intention or a suggestion in order to act. Kabagarama (1993:28) refers to communication as “... the heartbeat of human interaction.” According to Walton (1994:29/30) all the elements that constitute culture,

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such as language, age, gender, race, education and experience, influence communication. According to Goldsmith (1977:30): "*Communication is really aimed at presenting ourselves and our ideas to others.*"

Taking the above definitions into consideration, communication would mean putting a message across. Communication is a process. Before attempting to transmit a message, a number of things should be done first. The message has to be clearly formulated and a well thought out method of verbal transmission (in the case of verbal communication) and appropriate body action (non-verbal communication) should be ensured.

1.8.4 Culture

Various definitions of the concept *culture* are provided below:

According to Moraka (1997:25) "... *culture is an identified common way of life. It embraces all the aspects of life such as language, gender roles, religion, behavioural norms and values.*"

Furthermore, according to Fyfe and Figueroa (1993:19): "*Culture refers to a system of values and to a conceptual system, to a system of behaviour and to a communication system, which have been socially constructed and are socially transmitted as part of a group's heritage and as the framework and medium of its life.*"

Walton (1994:7) states that: "*Culture is a pattern of values and beliefs reflected in outer behaviors.*"

According to Jensen and Chilberg (1991:362) culture is "... *a shared system for thinking, communicating, and organizing the actions of a group of people.*"

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Gudykunst and Kim (1984:212) indicate that culture "... defines an entire cognitive framework for its participants and thus carves out its own categories of understanding the external environment."

Cross *et al.* (1998:11) state that culture can be viewed as "... the vehicle through which social groups develop distinct patterns of life and express their social and material life experience. It is the way social relations within a group are structured and shaped, as well as the way this is experienced, understood and interpreted." Hence, the conclusion by Cross *et al.* (1998:11) that culture is "... the overall expression of the way of life evolved by a people in its attempts to meet the requirements of existence in its environment, that is, a people's social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious forms and modes of organisation which together, distinguish it from other people".

Furthermore, Cross *et al.* (1998:10) conceptualise culture as apolitical and political. The first perspective of culture as apolitical, acknowledges the differences in society. However, as indicated by Cross *et al.* (1998:10): "*It underplays divisions, conflict and exploitation and stresses harmony and stasis.*" Therefore, as indicated by Sole (quoted in Cross *et al.* 1998:10) cultures develop "... as a simple and unproblematic accretion of values and traditions by a type of 'group mind'."

Thus, any group of people, whether monocultural or multicultural, monoethnic or multiethnic may determine their way of life and as a result develop their own culture. Activities such as attitude towards other people, interests and ways of doing things, which will indicate who a person is and identify her/him with a particular cultural group, are in fact culture. Thus, culture introduces an individual, a group of people or a race because knowledge and understanding of aspects of culture is knowledge and understanding of a particular group or race.

However, more often culture is based on racial lines. Thus, in this case, culture becomes political. That can rightly be attributed to the historical

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background of South Africa when people could not by law be integrated because of racial differences. According to Cross *et al.* (1998:127): “*Race is unquestionably the primary point of reference in South Africa. Through apartheid it has acquired an instrumental reality, particularly in the way it has organised and specified people’s day-to-day realities.*” However, it is important to understand that on the basis of the various definitions of the concept culture, people determine culture and it evolves from time to time. As a result, any group of people, irrespective of individual members’ racial or ethnic backgrounds, can start their own way of living, which amounts to their culture. For instance, the gay community has its own way of living despite the fact that they are from different racial and ethnic communities. Hence, according to Cross *et al.* (1998:10): “*The individual and society are seen as existing in an organic, reciprocal relationship.*”

According to Cross *et al.* (1998:10) culture cannot be neutral nor can it be separated from politics. As a result the more diverse our politics are, the more diverse cultures will be. It is true that political ideologies can determine a particular culture for people particularly when they are backed by statutes as was the case during the apartheid era. However, it is maintained in this study that since the dawn of the new era of democracy the trend will evolve from attaching culture to a particular ideology to understanding it as a way of life acceptable to any person irrespective of racial, ethnic, or ideological background.

Culture is a purposeful way of life, intended for the achievement of specific goals for a particular group of people. According to Walton (1994:8): “Any culture that is formed over time by a group of people has accepted behaviors, expected behaviors, and eventually, traditions.”

1.8.5 Diversity

Diversity, cultural diversity and multiculturalism have become buzzwords for students and academics.

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According to Arredondo (1996:15): "*Cultural diversity and multiculturalism are still viewed by many as references to ethnic and racial minority persons.*" These concepts explain differences that are based on group identity. Both concepts acknowledge the existence of cultures that are different. The acceptance and respect of cultures as they are is advocated.

However, cultural diversity enhances cultural groups which exist within a particular macro ethnic or racial culture. According to Walton (1994:21) cultural diversity enhances nationality/ethnicity, age, gender, race, religion, special orientation, physical abilities, where one lives, occupation, education and personality - for example: physically disabled, gay communities and gender. Thus, according to Arredondo (1996:15) "... *diversity refers to individual human differences.*" Smith (quoted in Brown & Bodibe 1998:4) defines diversity as "... *the variety created in any society (and within any individual) by the presence of different points of view and ways of making meaning which generally flow from the influence of different cultural and religious heritages, from the difference in how we socialize women and men and from the differences that emerge from race, class, age, (sexual orientation), (national origin), and developed ability...*"

From the above definition of the concept diversity, the following aspects, which characterise diversity, arise:

- age;
- race;
- culture;
- economic situation;
- political orientation;
- language;
- gender;
- mindset;
- unions;

- ethnicity; and
- disability.

Basically, differences in opinions and the way of doing things as well as physical appearance bring about the existence of various groups. That is consequently, diversity. It is experienced within both monocultural and multicultural societies. According to Daniel (1994:14) "*Diversity thus goes beyond race, gender, age, physical attributes, language and nationality; it extends to education, personality, lifestyle, values and function.*"

1.8.6 Student affairs

Student affairs is often referred to as student services. Both concepts, as indicated by Moraka (1997:18) are synonymous and they mean "... *the provision of support services for students while attending at educational institutions.*" Present and future needs of students are integral components of student affairs. According to NASPA (1998:1): "*Creating learning environments and learning experiences for students has always been at the heart of student affairs work.*" Student affairs, has as its mission, to ensure academic success for students by promptly addressing obstacles in the lives of students. Hence, according to Rentz and Saddlemire (1988:18) "... *as an applied professional field, student affairs has been and probably always will be primarily concerned with immediate needs and current problems.*"

The role of student affairs will differ from one university to another, basically because of differences in backgrounds and mission statements. According to Barr *et al.* (1993:14): "*The most important factor that determines the shape and substance of student affairs is the mission of the institution.*" Even though different approaches may be adopted in student affairs, the primary aim, which is to serve the needs of students and to ensure the implementation of a university policy, remains. Student affairs has to ensure that university policies are not disregarded or

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contradicted in the process of addressing the needs of students because that may lead to chaos since such policies are meant for the welfare of students. Hence, as maintained by Moraka (1997:19), student affairs is best described by the fulfilment of the following needs of students:

- Admissions
- Registration
- Financial assistance
- Accommodation
- Intercultural interaction
- Orientation
- Health services
- Counselling
- Social services
- Student development
- Sport
- Discipline
- Disabled students

The role of student affairs can best be guided by principles of good practice in student affairs, as provided by NASPA and ACPA (1998:9):

- Engages students in active learning.
- Helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards.
- Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning.
- Uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance.
- Uses resources effectively to achieve institutional mission and goals
- Forges educational partnerships that advance student learning.
- Builds supportive and inclusive communities.

1.8.7 Student affairs management

General aspects of management will be applied in the management of student affairs. However, the focus will be on student activities, which have the academic activity as the first priority. According to Upcraft and Barr (1988:9) “... *management in student affairs consists of creating an environment where good people can do good work.*” Such an environment can best be created, they argue, through planning, supervising, organising, delegating, co-ordinating, evaluating and using resources effectively. In addition, taking into account the diversity of cultures within student communities, it becomes the responsibility of student affairs to harmonise various cultural groups and to create an environment wherein all students are equally treated irrespective of culture. The implication is therefore that student affairs management is a continual struggle for the creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning. Both policies of the university and the needs of students are taken into consideration in managing student affairs. According to Khock (quoted in Husen & Postlethwaite 1994:5797) “... *as an applied field of professional practice, student affairs is primarily concerned with the immediate needs and concerns of the institution and students.*”

The main emphasis of managing student affairs is to harmonise the needs of students with the policies of a university. As a result, the foundation of the management of student affairs will be laid by the following two basic assumptions as provided by Husen and Postlethwaite (1994:5797) “...*(a) the institution’s educational missions are pre-eminent; and (b) student life policies and practices should enhance and be consistent with the institution’s educational philosophy and purposes and promote attainment of students’ learning and personal development objectives.*”

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Upcraft and Barr (1988:10) identified the following factors, which influence student affairs management:

- **Organisational structure**

There are various structures including student structures within a university. A clear knowledge and understanding of all these structures, the substructures and who reports to whom is essential.

- **Decision-making**

Student affairs practitioners should be in a position to identify those persons who can influence decisions through consultation, compromise and co-ordination.

- **Goals**

The student affairs division should formulate goals which are congruent with the vision and mission of a university.

Efficiency and effectiveness in attending to student issues will, among others, depend on the following factors:

Firstly, partnership with students: Student affairs practitioners should manage the affairs of students in partnership with students. This type of partnership should be characterised by transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and consensus. Student affairs practitioners should constantly be in touch with students and obtain their views. The lack or absence of an appropriate partnership can have an adverse effect on the management of student affairs because students will not trust those who do things on their behalf without their involvement. A Student Representative Council (SRC) should be accepted and respected as partners not only with student affairs practitioners but with top management (Council and Rectorate) as well. It is essential to involve

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them in their capacity as elected leaders. That should be done for the purpose of inclusiveness and not because it is convenient and politically correct to do so.

Secondly, efficiency and effectiveness in managing the staff within the student affairs division. Student affairs, is a big division with a sizeable personnel corps. The members of staff have to be professionally managed to bring about efficiency and effectiveness within an institution. According to Upcraft and Barr (1988:39) “... *management starts with people, and managing them in a way that produces results is critical to a manager’s success of the student affairs enterprise.*” Positivity, which will bring about high staff morale, should be fostered because without it staff members may cause chaotic and disruptive situations, particularly when taking into consideration that student affairs is actually the pulse of a university. The satisfaction of students has to be guaranteed by all members of staff. This does not imply that staff members would always have solutions to the needs of students. It has mainly to do with the right attitude of attending to student needs. It becomes essential that members of staff be assisted where possible to have and maintain good human relations. Hence, Upcraft and Barr (1988:40) indicate that “... *getting the job done for students and the institution requires maintaining high staff productivity and high staff morale...*”

According to Upcraft and Barr (1988:40) the management of staff will include the following four steps:

- recruiting;
- orientation and training;
- supervising; and
- performance evaluation.

Only the recruiting and selection process will be discussed since it is very central and important for a multicultural university, particularly in the

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current transformational era in South Africa. There are different cultural groups within universities which are to be handled by staff members. As a result, the recruiting and selection process has to be multicultural in nature. Furthermore, people who are recruited and ultimately selected have to have an exposure in cultures other than their own and most importantly, they have to be accommodating of other cultures and respect them. Thus, according to Barr *et al.* (1993:9): “*Student affairs professionals are called upon regularly to articulate and help create the ideals of multicultural communities marked by respect, trust, and the comfort needed by students to optimize their academic priorities.*” Racist staff members will hamper the process of harmonising various cultural groups within a student community. It is therefore clear that the process of recruiting and selecting is not an easy one. Upcraft and Barr (1988:41) indicate that “... *diversity within the profession complicates the situation.*” The following steps, as indicated by Upcraft and Barr (1988:41) are important to be considered when recruiting and selecting:

- Know what the job is.
- Know what you are looking for.
- Act affirmatively.
- Check references.
- Develop a screening process that is clear to everyone.
- Make sure candidates are fully informed.
- Develop an interview plan.
- Share information and decide.
- Offer, negotiate the contract and hire.
- Inform successful candidates as soon as possible.

1.8.8 Multiculturalism

According to Tulloch (1991:998) multiculturalism refers to the constitution of various cultural, racial and ethnic groups within a society. According to Arredondo (1996:16) “... *multiculturalism refers primarily to culture,*

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ethnicity, and race.” Multiculturalism does not only acknowledge ethnicity, race and culture, it goes further to advocate positive and equal acceptance of others irrespective of their cultural, racial or ethnic background. Thus it is not permissible for a majority culture to seek to absorb minorities. That in it guarantees the protection of minority cultures.

1.8.9 University

The word *university* is derived from the Latin word *universitas* which means the *whole world*. That explains the universality of a university. According to Lockwood and Davies (1985:32) the nature of a university is twofold: Firstly, it is autonomous because of its key functions such as “...by the concept of academic freedom and the possession of distinctive competence in regard to the conduct of teaching and research.” Hence, Hodgkinson and Bloy Jr (1971:53) indicate that the university “... emerges as a place where any issue of human significance can be considered intellectually without limitation.” Secondly, the university is dependent on the society because of being “... accountable to, and economically dependent upon ... society.”

A university has the following fundamental tasks:

- Teaching

According to Lockwood and Davies (1985:31) the purpose of the university is the pursuance of teaching. Lipset and Altbach (quoted in Nkomo 1983:21) state: “*The university has the fundamental task of teaching complex skills in science, technology, management and administration; and to engender a capacity for leadership and responsibility...*” It is the responsibility and the task of a university to impart scientific knowledge, contact teaching and distance learning.

- Research

Nkomo (1983:23) indicates that "... *research and development would be key and strategic components in the university system.*" The search for knowledge is one of the core businesses of a university. Lockwood and Davies (1985:31) state that the university strives to serve society. According to Oosthuizen, Clifford-Vaughan, Behr and Rauche(1981:1) the word research does no longer mean "... *pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge, truth for the sake of truth, but now has an outspokenly pragmatic character and means the investigation of functional processes with a view to their practical application*".

- Social obligation

As indicated above, it becomes apparent that it is not possible to divorce a university from society. According to Lockwood and Davies (1985:31) the university is intended to serve society. A university prepares people out of the society for the society. That is the first relation between a university and society. The second, which is equally important, is undertaking projects within society. Therefore, keeping trend with the needs of the broader society is important for a university. Higgs (1991:165) indicates that in its service to society, a university has "... *to submit to constant critical scrutiny and review that society's institutions, policies, goals, value systems, and its self image (real and imagined)*".

Therefore, a university should be developmental, functionalistic and society oriented. Its activities should largely be determined by the needs of society. However, as indicated by Nkomo (1983:23): "Emphasis in each university, in each country, will vary in accordance with the socio-historical experience and national priorities." As a result, a university changes along with society. It should, as a result of its research processes, be involved in historical changes of society. It should play a leading and guiding role or otherwise it will render it irrelevant.

1.8.10 Multicultural university

According to Adler and Sue (quoted in Arredondo 1996:19): "*Multicultural organizations are entities genuinely committed in words as well as actions to diverse representation throughout the organization at all levels.*" Equal representation on the basis of culture, race and ethnicity is a requirement. A policy of an organisation should be in such a way that it ensures representation of present cultural groups, encourages occupation of positions and further protects and develops all stakeholders by way of empowering them.

A university in the context of South Africa, who has become known as the Rainbow Nation because of her diversity in culture, race and ethnicity, becomes multicultural provided its student and personnel communities are representative of the entire population of South Africa.

A multicultural university will have a multicultural student community. A multicultural student community refers to a student population which is constituted by various groups of students with different cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds. They do not even know much about other people's cultures. They come from communities that are still far apart from each other. Differences in language, gender roles, religion and ways of worshipping in the case of those who belong to the same religion, behavioural norms and values, characterise a multicultural student community. According to King (1998:8) for student affairs professionals to play a relevant role in a diverse student community, the following issues have to be dealt with:

- Student affairs professionals need to become more culturally competent, to have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to understand and work effectively with diverse groups of students.
- The profession needs to more aggressively recruit diverse students for professional preparation programs and to student affairs staff positions.

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Thus, student affairs professionals who serve the above-mentioned student community should be culturally representative as well, so that the various needs of all the cultural groups within a student community are catered for. The danger of a culturally unrepresentative staff could as well be the non-deliberate exclusion of activities of other cultural groups basically because of not being informed of such activities.

A multicultural university is also characterised by the provision of multicultural education which, according to Leicester (1989:26), is an anti-racist education. According to Bennett (1990:11): "*Multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs, and seeks to foster cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world.*" To add to the above-mentioned aims of a multicultural education, Duhon-Sells and Pitts (1994:16) indicate the following as two major aims of a multicultural education, namely "... *to educate students so that they will acquire knowledge about a range of cultural groups and develop the attitudes, skills, and abilities needed to function at some level of competency within any different cultural environment... and to reform the total school environment so that students from diverse cultural groups will be able to experience equal educational opportunities.*"

As defined above, multicultural education is aimed at the total eradication of all forms of discrimination. It seeks to accommodate all cultural, racial and ethnic groups equally.

Thus, a multicultural university will reflect the following characteristics:

- multicultural education;
- multicultural student community; and
- multicultural personnel.

1.9 Summary

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, Chapter 1 has laid the foundation for the research. Attention was given to the following aspects:

- **Orientation of the study:**

The importance of this aspect lies in the fact that it provides information on the situation that necessitated this research. An understanding of what the research project will be about is also enhanced.

- **demarcation:**

It offers limitations that may be experienced and the field of study to which the subject under research belongs.

- **Study programme:**

An indication of how the research will be structured is provided. Thus the various chapters of the thesis are outlined.

- Further light is shed on the following aspects: Problem statement; hypothesis; purpose of the study; research methods; and explication of concepts.

The next chapter will focus on providing details on the aspects of change, such as what brings about change in universities, how change should be facilitated and how resistance to change can be minimised.