

## CHAPTER 3

### ASSEMBLING, ORGANISING AND INTEGRATING THE DATA

*...researchers who acknowledge the educative nature of carrying out research are likely to adopt more participatory methods and may place less emphasis on seeking objective data and more on feeding back preliminary findings to enable practitioners to learn from research knowledge as it is generated. Constructing research as 'educative' has ethical implications and has effects in terms of the quality of outcomes, for example through its ability to fine-tune findings to the field of study and increase their impact on practice, perhaps with less emphasis on producing generalisable findings (Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p. 8).*

#### 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss and outline my theoretical positioning as a researcher as well as the design and methods employed to carry out this study. In addition, I discuss the various research instruments used and substantiate my reasons for doing so. I also outline the methods utilised to organise and analyse the many pieces of data collected for my study. I discuss issues such as the credibility of my study, its limitations and the ethical considerations of the study. Finally, I discuss the path that my research took and some of the unforeseen developments (some good, some not so good) during the course of my study.

#### 3.1 Positioning the research

Given that my study sought to better understand underlying meanings to HEIs' responses to the imperative of internationalisation, and given the "dual development challenge" that they are faced with, I approached my research from an interpretivist paradigm and a constructivist approach to knowledge generation. The interpretivist paradigm is relevant because of my belief that individuals and groups are interpretive beings who are in a "constant state of reconstruction of their worlds" and consequently that "individuals and groups define knowledge not merely through an objectively situated context such as research projects but also through the historical and social situations in which individuals find themselves" (Tierney, 1996, p. 15). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that "all research is interpretative..." and "...guided by a set of beliefs about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 19). My stance as a researcher is such that in this research I sought to locate the research respondents within the context of their own environments in order to comprehend how they understand and interpret this environment.

In terms of my constructivist positioning, I follow the belief that there are multiple realities, that the researcher and respondents co-create and construct understandings, and that a

naturalistic set of methodological procedures are needed as individuals seek to make sense of their experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 21). As such, one must seek the meanings (Charmaz, 2000, p. 255) behind individual actions and beliefs. It is through the seeking and interpreting of such meanings that knowledge is produced (ibid). In this sense, I focused on meanings in context and within the natural world of the research respondents (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525). Hence my data collection instruments sought to understand meanings that respondents ascribed to the imperative of internationalisation in the HE context.

Overall, I followed Merriam's (1998) contention concerning the understanding of meanings in context in a natural world. In this regard, she (ibid) argued that "[h]umans are best-suited for this task (as opposed to numbers) – and best when using methods that make use of human sensibilities such as interviewing, observing, and analyzing" (p. 3). This positioning thus informed my research design, methodology and system of data interpretation, as I describe them below.

### **3.2 Research design**

My chosen research design follows that of a qualitative case study research method. My particular case was the University of Pretoria. I chose a single case study because I wanted to analyse how individual agents (i.e. HEIs, their functioning parts and individuals within them) construct the realities of internationalisation, as well as to examine their roles in global and national development. I thus set out to explore and analyse how UP manages its internationalisation within the context of the dual development challenge according to the multiple realities and beliefs of its constituents. Also, as Stark and Torrance (2005) suggest, the particular, descriptive, inductive and ultimately heuristic value of case studies also makes them a valuable tool in qualitative research. In addition, by utilising a case study method I follow Bryman's (2001) argument concerning the focused and intensive nature of case studies, and thus suggest that my study was a more focused and intensive examination of the interactions between internationalisation of HE and the dual development challenge at the single case institution, than it may have been if it were a multiple case study.

Also, in choosing one HEI to analyse, this relationship has allowed for more focus on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those involved in the process of internationalisation at UP. This has offered a greater promise that the research findings will make a significant and new contribution to the existing knowledge base and practice within the field of international education overall (Merriam, 1988, p. 3). I also follow the argument

that “an important purpose of case studies is to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the group or individual being observed” (Rothe, 2000, p. 82), and argue that this has been done in this case.

Finally, supporting my argument that an individual case study is valuable, and specifically speaking in terms of the South African context, no comprehensive internationalisation strategy or policy governing or directing the internationalisation process exists at South African universities. As such, each university is engaging in the process differently. Thus, given the unevenness of the HE terrain in terms of economic viability and academic credibility, and the absence of the possible evenness afforded by a guiding policy document on internationalisation, the value of a multiple comparative study is limited. I argue that an in-depth study of a single institution is likely to offer an in-depth understanding of internationalisation of HE. This might in turn offer some guidance to the policy development process and might also assist with cross-comparison and analysis across the spectrum of universities in the future, while allowing for a more focused and in-depth exploration of individual institutions and their engagement with internationalisation. It is also useful to look at an individual university as a case study because it allows for an exploration of inter-institutional similarities and differences with respect to how internationalisation is conceptualised, engaged with and addressed within one institution.

I was therefore not concerned with making or claiming to make my case study generalisable to other HEIs in South Africa or abroad. However, I do expect and suggest that the study will deepen understanding of and assist with explaining the interactions between internationalisation of HE and the dual development challenge elsewhere, and not just at the case study institution. In the light of the above I chose one specific public South African university, the University of Pretoria (UP), as a basis for researching the responses to the dual development challenge.

UP was chosen as my case study university for at least four major reasons, which also validate it as a viable and useful case to analyse my research questions. First, as a historically Afrikaans-medium university, UP has been a major site of institutional transformation since the advent of the new democratic South Africa. As a largely Afrikaans-medium institution – and one that has been historically perceived as being politically conservative and simultaneously powerful in the context of apartheid South Africa – the challenges facing UP, and particularly its international endeavours, in the democratic dispensation of a post-

apartheid South Africa would be unique. I therefore suggest it is useful to examine how internationalisation plays a part in the institution's transformation agenda, and its particular responses to the dual development challenge.

The second primary justification for UP as a valuable case study for my research is linked to the previous justification in terms of UP's historical legacy and reputation. As the institution seeks to distance itself from the negative aspects of its history, and thus to present a new public image, it has been guided by a written and verbalised motto that it seeks to develop "international competitiveness and local relevance". The transition from its historical positioning of being politically conservative and powerful within the context of the apartheid South Africa, to where it now seeks to position itself publicly as an internationally competitive and locally relevant university, therefore offers useful insights into internationalisation of HE scholarship. Thus, this widely proclaimed mission of transformation positions UP as a viable case to understand the role of internationalisation in that mission.

Third, UP is a viable and valuable case study because the process of internationalisation, as I have defined it herein, was in the midst of unfolding as I commenced this study. This offered me an excellent opportunity to observe how the process was unfolding and to present questions to those involved in the process as it was happening. The combination of observations and interactions (through interviews and document analysis) with UP stakeholders helped to develop and support the richness and depth of my findings around the process at the institution. Thus, since the ambitions of internationalisation were present at UP, it offered an opportunity to engage with those ambitions and to attempt to analyse if those ambitions were being realised.

Finally, although I fully recognise and acknowledge the limitations of choosing a case based on convenience, I chose UP partially because I was situated at UP as a post-graduate student and thus had access to its people, documents and offices directly involved in and related to the internationalisation process. Even give this limitation of choosing UP because of my physical situation within it, it is the combination of these four major rationales for utilising UP as a case study that together strengthen and support my decision to study internationalisation within the context of my research questions at this particular university.

I was concerned with how internationalisation was unfolding within this case study university at an institutional level as well as within the faculties/departments, and how the process at this institution was interacting with the dual development challenge. In choosing the faculties with which to focus my investigation, I utilised the Faculty of Education (EDU) and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS), because they are two of the larger faculties at the university (in terms of student enrolment), as well as two of the faculties that engage in a measurable and visible amount of international activities (which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6). Also, these two faculties are found on two different sides of the academic discipline spectrum – namely, social sciences and natural sciences.

By utilising one faculty in the social sciences and one in the natural sciences, I suggest that my study has yielded some interesting comparisons in terms of how and why internationalisation is unfolding in the two areas of discipline. These comparisons have added to the overall contribution of my study and may help to open doors for broader research and discussion on internationalisation of HE, particularly at an institutional level. By utilising UP (and its faculties) as a case study, and analysing its responses to the dual development challenge, I make the argument that my analysis has a heuristic value in that it should illuminate the reader's general understanding of internationalisation at the HE institutional level, and what can be understood from its interactions with the dual development challenge (Merriam, 1998, pp. 13–14).

### **3.3 Data collection**

The data in my qualitative case study was collected by combining the use of several research instruments that are useful given my theoretical positioning described in section 3.1. As such, the research instruments used to collect data for my study include: in-depth document reviews of both primary and secondary data; semi-structured and unstructured interviews with stakeholders, including HE policy-makers and university leaders, managers and practitioners; and participant observations which were recorded and collected in a research log book and journal which I kept. By utilising this combination of data collection instruments I was able to produce raw data that came from a variety of sources and with a variety of interpretations, viewpoints and perceptions, and ultimately to triangulate the data, which led to richer findings and conclusions. The triangulation of the various data has allowed me to produce a more comprehensive list of notions and perceptions, which has generated new knowledge about individual and collective meanings and motivations concerning internationalisation, and its actual and potential interactions with the challenges

posed by the national developmental needs and global integration ambitions of HEIs. Given the research design and these data collection methods, the following is a closer look at the various data collection instruments that were utilised in this study.

### **3.3.1 Document review**

Documents reviewed and analysed included key South African HE policy documents from 1994 to present, international and regional documents and reports that discuss global developments and strategies relevant to internationalisation of HE, as well as UP institutional policy documents, speeches, conference presentations and statements from its stakeholders. The document review also comprised my reviewing some of UP's international institutional contracts that have taken the form of memoranda of cooperation or memoranda of understanding. Although convenience sampling is not the most reliable form of sampling and runs counter to the normally expected rigours of scientific inquiry (Denscombe, 1998, p. 17), I had access to these contracts at UP. A scan of what they actually stated was therefore useful in my overall analysis and provided me with some further points of reference on how those involved with the drafting of these contracts viewed the role of such contracts in addressing the dual development challenge.

In my review of documents (specifically at UP), approximately 14 strategic UP documents, including annual reports and strategic plans, were thoroughly reviewed and analysed for their relevance to my study. A list of questions used to summarise these documents can be found in Appendix 6. This review allowed me to gain insight into the development of ideas, values, policies and strategies of UP that related directly and sometimes indirectly to its internationalisation process. As such, reviewing these documents also allowed me to cross-compare what is written in policy and strategic texts at UP, with what its leaders and stakeholders say about internationalisation. This in and of itself was a useful and insightful process, which I suggest lent itself to a deeper analysis and understanding of my research findings discussed in the final chapter of this study.

### **3.3.2 Interviews**

Thirty individuals were part of my interviewee pool. In interviewing these individuals, a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews (May, 1997, pp. 112–113; Rothe 2000, pp. 95–96) was conducted with each from the first interview in October 2005 to the

final interview in November 2006.<sup>5</sup> Interview respondents were chosen based one or more of the following two criteria: their roles as drivers of national and/or institutional policies related to internationalisation; and/or their having been referred to me by previous interview respondents. The interviews lasted from 35 to 90 minutes, depending on the time permitted according to the interview participants' schedules. In many instances more time was needed than the interviewees had available and/or additional questions came to mind after the interviews ended. In these instances I was given permission by most interviewees to follow up with additional questions electronically – which I did on numerous occasions. The combination of my face-to-face interviews and the question and answer sessions conducted via email after those interviews, produced a rich collection of stakeholder insights and observations. A list of the interview respondents along with the dates and times of the initial interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

Interview respondents were asked permission to be quoted verbatim and to use their names and professional designations in the study as I was concerned with confidentiality issues. If they agreed to the use of their names they were requested to sign a letter of informed consent, a copy of which is found in Appendix 3. Each interviewee was also given a chance to review the sections of my thesis in which they were quoted and to offer clarifications and/or revisions to their comments.

A sample of my interview questions is found in Appendix 4. This list is not exhaustive given that I was able to add additional questions and take away others depending on the individual interviewee and the varying trajectories that our conversations took. In interviewing individuals, I had differing purposes according to their professional positions and relationships to UP and its internationalisation process, and/or internationalisation and HE in South Africa broadly. The goal was to include a wide spectrum of UP stakeholders and others with potential insights into HE in South Africa, and particularly HE and internationalisation at UP and broadly.

As stated, I used a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. First, to ensure that I was given responses to specific questions that were critical to my study, semi-structured interviews were conducted in which I had a prepared list of questions that I asked the respondents (Rothe, 2000, p. 96). In addition, this use of semi-structured interviews

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<sup>5</sup> Two interviews were conducted in 2005. However, the majority of the interviews were conducted in 2006. See Appendix 1 for a list of interview respondents and dates of interviews.



wherein I asked specified questions to specific individuals, also allowed for contrasting and comparing answers from other interviewees as well as from documents reviewed for my study. In order to allow me to have more freedom to probe between and beyond the answers given by interviewees to my prepared questions and to allow me to enter into more of a dialogue with them (May, 1997, p. 111), ample opportunity and time was given for follow-up questions and for the conversations to veer off in other directions.

As my study sought to proceed further than simply the stated responses to the dual development challenge of HE and to discuss meanings and motivations behind them, on a few occasions the interviews were unstructured. I allowed the interviewee to begin to speak on the general subject of internationalisation and asked questions as they emerged and when they were needed to keep the respondent on track. According to May (1998) this method of unstructured interviews also lends itself to "...flexibility and discovery of meanings, rather than standardisation, or a concern to compare through constraining replies by a set of interview schedules" (p. 113). Also, I followed the argument that as the unstructured interviews would unfold, I would be able to negotiate my way through the interview while developing a picture of the meanings that emerge from the participants, which would reflect their interpretations of the events and/or phenomenon being studied (Rothe, 2000, p. 95). Finally, in using unstructured interviews, the interviewees had more opportunity/freedom to talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference. It also assisted me in attaching meanings to their responses, but in the interviewees' own words and understandings of the issues being discussed (May, 1998, p. 113).

Utilising these two types of interviews allowed for a more comprehensive set of data for analysis. The varying answers to the same questions (semi-structured interviews) and the unstructured conversations and dialogue with other respondents produced a wide spectrum of insights, perceptions and opinions that were crucial to my analysis.

In conducting interviews at UP, careful attention was paid to including a wide spectrum of individuals at the university and in the two faculties utilised. As such, the following members of the UP community were interviewed: two members of the university council; four members of the university executive management; the director of the Research Support and Development office (significant for reasons which will be shown in subsequent chapters); two university deans; three members of the international relations staff; and 13 heads of



department (HODs) across two faculties, who also teach and conduct research in their various individual and collective disciplines.

In order to help place my case study HEI within a proper national context – and thus to solicit input from national level HE stakeholders that were particularly relevant to internationalisation of HE – interviews were also conducted with representatives of several national agencies. The agencies represented by these interview respondents are policy-making, statutory and/or research-based agencies influencing HE policy and practice in South Africa. Interviews were specifically conducted with two individuals working in areas of international relations and HE at the South African Department of Education, two individuals at the National Research Foundation (NRF) and one individual at Higher Education South Africa (HESA). There are other national level agencies that may have had an impact on my study; however, in speaking to stakeholders and from my document review and analysis, it was obvious to me that these three national agencies had significant impact on internationalisation of HE in South Africa, and that there was some relationship between their policies and actions and those of UP in terms of internationalisation.

One other national agency which I was unsuccessful in interviewing was the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST). However, the NRF is largely funded through the DST, and its internationally oriented programmes stem from DST guidelines and policies. This allowed me indirectly to note some of the relationships between the DST and the case study university, through the insights and evidence gathered from the NRF. In addition, I reviewed one of the major DST policy documents which, at least from a policy text standpoint, provided some useful insights and data from this department and which assisted me in this study.

### **3.3.3 Participant observation**

Rothe (2000) states that “case studies typically make use of participant observation in one form or another...” (p. 82). The participant observation in my study primarily took place during much of the first two years of my doctoral work as I assisted in UP’s Corporate International Relations (CIR) office. The main purpose of the participant observations were to help me better understand internationalisation “on the ground” at UP and to help support and/or refute information that I read or which was told to me during formal interviews. I was often able to attend meetings as well as to interact with the CIR staff and with members of the university’s executive while they were discussing issues of internationalisation. In these

interactions, I observed conversations and meetings as well as reviewed and even assisted with the development of pertinent documents which provided insight into the university's motivations for making decisions relevant to my research. The information gathered was recorded and noted in my research diary, discussed in section 3.3.4 below.

I recognise and acknowledge that my work in the CIR might have put me in a situation where it was sometimes difficult to separate my practical work from my research. However, by utilising the various research instruments and triangulating the findings from such instruments, the research findings do speak for themselves. As such, my contention is that some of my personal beliefs only contributed to the analysis of the data in terms of my theoretical positioning highlighted in section 3.1. There are also ethical considerations of this type of data collection, which I discuss in section 3.6 below.

### **3.3.4 Research diary**

Throughout the course of this study, I kept a diary to record personal observations, impromptu discussions and notes from other interactions with stakeholders. In this diary I also recorded thoughts that came to me at unconventional times, such as late at night, at the dinner table, in the shower and at other moments when I was not particularly thinking about my research. Many of these moments were captured on the nearest notebook, post-it note or scrap of paper that was lying around. I later recorded these thoughts in my research diary and used them when appropriate in my analysis. In addition, I recorded moments when I had shifts in thinking, made decisions to change or adjust interview questions, made decisions to change parts of my data collection or methodology and other significant moments of change in the research process. Many of these changes and thoughts are mentioned in the next section where I discuss developments in my research that happened along the way.

My diary entries provided important notes and insights as I proceeded through my data collection and analysis, and helped me to recall important details of interviews and other situations that were relevant to my study, which I may have not recalled otherwise. In following Altrichter and Holly's (2005, p. 25) arguments concerning the value of research diaries, my inclusion of these reflections, ideas and raw pieces of data into a research diary enabled me to undertake ongoing analysis and to fill in gaps in crucial areas of my study.

### **3.4 Data organisation and analysis**

One of the most challenging parts of developing this doctoral thesis was deciding how best to organise the data. As outlined in Chapter 2.7, the primary framework which I chose to utilise was the developmental settlement theory. In terms of a systematic approach to analysing my data as I collected it and ultimately when the last piece of data was collected, I followed what May (1997) suggested in terms of the need for the research to “...focus upon the data in order to understand how people go about their daily lives and compare each interview in this way to see if there are similarities” (p. 125). In focusing upon my data, as I described in the previous chapter, I utilised the developmental settlement theory as an expansion on Subotzky’s (1997a and b and 1999a and b) and Smythe’s (1995) notions of a settlement.

The entire approach to my data analysis was done interactively, concurrently and cyclically or, as Hatch (2002) describes, I took an iterative, recursive and interactional approach to my data analysis. By doing so – particularly during the period that encompassed the various stakeholder interviews – specific incidents, thoughts and emerging themes were documented and categorised in an ongoing manner, while compiling data using the various instruments described herein. The following is indicative of the procedures I utilised for analysing the data gathered from the various instruments used in this study.

#### **3.4.1 Organising and analysing documents**

Aside from the background and scholarly literature that I read in preparation for my study, which can be found in Chapters 1 and 2, once my research questions were finalised and my theoretical framework developed, I began to comb through documents relevant to UP and particularly to its internationalisation process. In reviewing these documents I was specifically looking for information on goals of UP’s internationalisation, the role of internationalisation at UP and the expressions of internationalisation at the university that were intended to help it meet its goals. In doing so, I was also looking for such things as the context in which the document was written, as I expected that to play a role in better understanding UP’s internationalisation ambitions and practices. A summary of the questions I used to assist me with the analysis of each of the documents reviewed is included here as Appendix 6. The information gathered from my search and analysis of these documents helped to inform and shape some of my interview questions and prepared me for discussions with UP stakeholders on issues of internationalisation at the university. Additionally, this information was useful in terms of cross-referencing and triangulating data, which I discuss further shortly.

### 3.4.2 Organising and analysing interviews

In terms of organising the information from my stakeholder interviews, the first step was to transcribe the interviews which were recorded during each session. I chose to take up the task of transcribing my own interview tapes as opposed to having a professional transcriber do so. In personally transcribing the interviews, I follow Bong's (2002) argument concerning the benefits of transcribing one's own transcripts as allowing one to become more familiar with the content of each interview (p. 6). It is the resultant familiarisation with the content of the interviews that best allowed me to link the stakeholders' responses to literature and strategic documents and other materials that I reviewed as part of the study. Transcriptions of interviews were done after every five interviews conducted. This allowed me to highlight recurrent themes, similar statements and contradictory statements made in the stakeholders' interviews and to list them according to categories.

Once the final interviews were all transcribed and I had my initial list of recurrent themes from the stakeholder interviews, I read articles and instructions from various sources about the process of coding and utilising complex data analysis software to help organise the information I had placed into the various themes. I considered for a time using such software, but in the end I made the decision that I would become even more intimately familiar with my data and some of the subtleties within the data by continuing to organise it manually and further developing the original categories into sub-categories on my own. I thus engaged in what Bong (2002) terms as the "slicing" (segmenting), "splitting" and "splicing" (categorising and subcategorising) of my data (p. 8). This meant that after identifying initial themes which emerged from my interview transcripts, I listed those themes and then began to develop sub-themes. These sub-themes were tabulated and recorded. For instance, when seeking to understand the factors influencing UP's internationalisation, I developed lists of external and internal factors (which I called PITs or pressures, trends and influences) according to the data I gathered. In developing my lists of PITs as initial themes, I came up with approximately 41 PITs. Afterwards, I broke these down into sub-themes based on the similarities and differences among them. Once this was done, the data was then able to be categorised into smaller and analysable units, ultimately culminating in the data concerning UP's internationalisation, which I have presented in this study. This process of listing and tabulating themes and sub-themes also allowed me to go back through each interview and to break down the resultant themes further, which ultimately facilitated my analysis of the interviews in my mind (and on paper) in a way that lent itself to a more thorough analysis and

understanding of the trends in my data. It also assisted me in the end to be able to present my data in a way that was coherent and readable and which spoke to my theoretical framework.

### **3.4.3 Organising and analysing participant observations and research diary**

Information from the participant observations that were recorded in my research diary was not subject to detailed analysis, nor included as definitive categories in my analysis. This was primarily because much of the information gleaned from these observations was gained during meetings and conversations in which I did not formally request an interview or request that I be able to use individuals' words or actions in my research, as I had done with my formal interviews. Thus, as stated elsewhere in this chapter, the main purpose of the participant observations was to help me to better understand internationalisation "on the ground" at UP and to help to support or refute information that I read or which was told to me during formal interviews, thus triangulating data from the various sources. The information gained from these observations was therefore very useful to me as I analysed my data, since it added richness and depth to the context of internationalisation at UP.

### **3.4.4 Integrating the organisation and analysis of data**

After completing the steps above to organise and analyse the data produced from the various collection instruments, the data was organised according to the prominent themes and sub-themes that emerged. Through intensive and multiple readings of the various data sources and information gathered, I was able to cross-reference emerging themes with one another and was ultimately able to develop the broad themes into a coherent presentation of the case based on the trends that emerged. Once the cross-referencing of the data was completed I placed the broad themes and emergent themes first within the context of existing literature, and second within the chosen theoretical framework (developmental settlement theory). It is this intensive, multi-phase analytical process that allowed for the analysis presented in the final chapter.

## **3.5 Credibility**

In following with the tenants of the interpretive research methodology, I utilised data from a variety of different sources and employed a number of analytical methods (outlined above) in order to strive for credibility. I also solicited data and input from as many of the key stakeholders as possible who were directly relevant to my study, but who represented various departments and responsibilities at the case study university and within South African HE. These additional stakeholders are clearly outlined in the "Research plan of action" section.

The use of varying data collection instruments including the document reviews, interviews, participant observation and research diary also allowed me to better analyse the relationships between actors, documents and situations, and created an opportunity for the triangulation of my data (Barbour and Schostak, 2005, p. 44). This triangulation contributed to the credibility of my study and its findings, as well as to the theoretical understanding of the research topic.

However, since it was not feasible to include *all* stakeholders, some voices that may have impacted on my study were not heard. In addressing this shortcoming, I suggest that the breadth and depth of the interviews and data collected through other means, as well as the resultant triangulation described above, have allowed for the presentation of a deep enough pool of data to validate appropriately the various data streams and allows my study to present a significant, credible and viable case study, which will assist with a better theoretical understanding of the topics of this study. Finally, I followed Patton's (2001) advice that qualitative researchers are obliged to monitor and report on their analytical processes and procedures as truthfully and fully as possible (p. 440). I have attempted to do this throughout the study and argue that this has also contributed to the credibility of my study.

### **3.6 Limitations of the study**

There are many ways that one can approach a study on internationalisation of HE. However, since I have described in this document what my study goals and objectives are and how they differ from existing studies on the topic, it is equally important that I make clear what my study does not seek to do, and thus its limitations (Vithal and Jansen, 2003). Given this, I would like to be clear that my study is *not* intended to:

- provide an in-depth analysis of what globalisation is and how it impacts HE. Globalisation is a complex phenomenon with economic, political, social and cultural implications. As argued elsewhere in this document, globalisation has numerous implications on HE as well. Given this complexity, and that the aims of my study are to discuss the process of internationalisation of HE (which I have conceptualised as a response to globalisation), my study will not focus on globalisation. Instead, globalisation will be referred to only when analysing it in terms of how internationalisation of HE is being utilised as a response to its implications for HE.
- provide recommendations on how internationalisation of HE should occur at an institutional or national level. As I have argued, one of the marked limitations of much of the internationalisation of HE literature is that it focuses too much attention

on the contextualisation, rationalisation and expressions of internationalisation, and not enough empirical evidence is offered on aspects such as its relation to the challenges faced by HEIs in a globalised society.

In addition to the above statements concerning what my study does not aim to do, there are also three major limitations that I would like to highlight concerning my study, namely, development, regional and African development and generalisability.

- *Development:* Although the issue of “development” is often equated with so-called developing countries, it is important to note that development can also have implications for so-called developed countries. For example, challenges like equity between women and men or between people of different races are as much an issue in so-called developed countries such as the US, albeit with varying outcomes, as in South Africa. While my study will focus on South Africa, a mid-developed country, it is important to acknowledge that development is needed in so-called developed countries as well.
- *Regional and African development:* Although my study does discuss and highlight issues around increased regional and continental engagement on the part of my case study of an HEI, the focus of the study is not on this aspect of development. My study, as I have highlighted elsewhere, is concerned with two areas of development, namely the global and the national. I do speak in one section about the regional and continental engagements of my case study institution, as one of its motivations for internationalisation. However, this is the limit of my discussion on regional and continental engagement, and I will leave the further and more in-depth analysis of the increasing regional and continental engagements of the case study institution, and institutions in South Africa and in other parts of Africa, to future researchers. While I acknowledge this limitation of my study, I believe it does not detract from the depth of the analysis that I present concerning global and national development as two sides of the “dual development challenge”.
- *Generalisability:* The issue of generalisability is ever present in social research, especially when one university is chosen in lieu of 23 others, as is the case with my study. Henning (2004) notes that “...readers will be able to extract from a well-written report those elements of the findings that they find to be transferable and that



may be extended to other settings” (p. 4). In other words, although my study sought to be as inclusive as possible when selecting interviewees, reviewing documents and other exercises of analysis, I acknowledge that I am not arguing that my findings are generalisable across all of the HE landscape. Instead, I sought to gather data and insights, and thus analyse, so that I could interpret and report them in a way that the readers of the study will be able to draw conclusions from my analysis and findings and “extend them to other settings”. In addition, my study did bring in voices from outside the case study university through my document analysis of non-UP documents, as well as my interviews with national level stakeholders. As such, while I am not claiming generalisability of my study, I do suggest that the depth of the data gathered and the theoretical analysis of it will provide a broad conceptual framework that will be useful to others in furthering understanding of internationalisation of HE in general, and its interaction with national development and global integration specifically.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Given the nature of this qualitative research study and that I utilised interviews and participant observations that might divulge individuals’ names and organisational affiliations, there were certain ethical issues that I needed to consider carefully. In considering these and other ethical issues of my research inquiry, I attempted to inform interviewees properly of the intended uses of the data captured. I also gained written consent from interviewees and respondents where names and organisational affiliations might have been used to add strength to statements and responses given (Henning, 2004). In addition, I provided interviewees with an opportunity to verify their statements when names and organisational affiliations were used in the study. Although not all interview respondents took this opportunity, my ethical duty as the researcher was fulfilled by making this offer.

However, to ensure further that I did not implicate any one person who may have made what could be considered as “controversial” remarks, and in keeping with the request of some of my interview respondents, there are some instances in my presentation of the responses in this text where I did not use a person’s name. In these instances, I may have simply stated that a member of the university leadership, or a member of the faculty leadership, stated or argued the following, and then I proceeded with inserting that statement. This is not to say that one may not be able to figure out through the context in which an interview response is given, what position or whom a person might be. However, it makes some of the interview

respondents more comfortable if I do not use their name in my text, and I do not believe that this takes away from the depth and credibility of the data presented and analysed herein. Finally, in keeping with these ethical considerations with regard to the interview participants and the use of their names and so forth, I asked each participant to read and sign an informed letter of consent prior to the interviews. A draft of this letter can be found as Appendix 3.

In terms of the ethical considerations concerning my participant observations, I was keenly aware that while observing I might hear and see things that people would expect would remain in confidence. As such, in my study I have refrained from directly quoting people when information was gleaned from my participant observations. The information that stemmed from my participant observation and “corridor speak” was therefore used mainly for background and for assisting me in better understanding aspects of the workings and rationales of UP’s internationalisation process.

### **3.8 Personal observations and developments during my research journey**

As with any study where human respondents are involved, there were many developments that occurred over the course of my data collection and analysis that in some way or another impacted on the direction of my study and/or helped me mature as a researcher, and thus played a role in my ongoing intellectual quest. Many of these developments are methodological and have been well documented, but just as many, particularly when conducting qualitative research, are personal and specific to the researcher and to his or her research. Likewise, my positioning as the researcher in relation to those with whom I interacted in the collection and attempted collection of my data also produced developments that may have impacted on my study and its resultant findings. The fact that these various developments impacted on my study sometimes in ways that are visible and sometimes in ways that influenced how I approached the study, makes it useful for me to reflect on those developments.

The research diary that I used to keep track of such developments as well as to record my participant observations was extremely useful in monitoring any changing developments. I began writing down and tracking my observations and thoughts prior to actually beginning my research field work and before developing and defending my research proposal. As such, many of the thoughts recorded in the diary were useful not only as I collected and analysed my data, but also as I developed my research proposal and even began thinking about what ultimately became my PhD thesis topic. Although I did not keep track of every thought and

observation that I had along the way that related to my thesis, I did record about 20 journal entries. The first observation/journal entry was made on 25 May 2005 and the last was dated 25 November 2006. The following is not an exhaustive list/discussion of my personal observations and/or changes during the course of my research, but they are some of the observations that most impacted on my research process and on me as a researcher as I progressed through the study.

### **3.8.1 My relation as an international student to the respondents**

During the course of my data collection I began to wonder if the fact that I was an international student conducting this research in South Africa was playing a role in the types of answers I was receiving from my mostly South African respondents (a few foreign nationals who are faculty and staff at UP were also part of my interviewees). I often walked into interviews and after hearing my accent the respondent would ask me “are you an American?” I would answer “yes, I am from the United States”. After this, I would wonder how that question was going to impact the rest of the discussion.

As the interviews progressed and there would be “praises” for internationalisation, I would wonder whether they were praising internationalisation and talking mainly about its benefits as opposed to its shortcomings, because I was a product of internationalisation myself. I am still not positive whether or not this question on my part can be answered, but I did decide to deal with it by adjusting some of my interview questions to attempt to solicit some not so positive answers about internationalisation and its role for South African HEIs. For instance, instead of asking respondents simply to talk to me about the positives and negatives of internationalisation, I would separate the question and ask them first about positives and then about negatives. I would also specifically bring up a criticism of internationalisation; for example, when South African researchers go abroad for sabbaticals and/or to spend time at an international university they often do not come back (i.e. brain drain), and would ask them to speak specifically about such issues.

### **3.8.2 Interviewing skills**

Another interesting personal development during the course of my study was my evolution as a more efficient interviewer (e.g. getting to the questions and discussions that I needed to address my researcher questions), and my comfort level with being an interviewer. At the beginning I was often nervous when entering interview sessions. It took me about 15 minutes to warm up to the personality of the interview respondent as well as the varying environments

in which I found myself (such as in an outdoor setting where an interview respondent was chain smoking and there were people constantly walking by). This taught me how to be ready for any physical and/or environmental situation and prepared me for instances when the interview recordings were not always clear or sometimes even completely inaudible.

Also, when I began my interviews I had my set of structured interview questions and I got frustrated once or twice when I was not able to ask all the questions and/or the interviews wandered into topics that seemed unrelated to what I was asking in a specific question. I also often asked what I later thought were leading questions and many more closed ended (yes or no) questions than I wanted to ask. However, as I began to interview more people and to transcribe the interview tapes, I realised many things. For instance, I realised that I was asking leading questions, and corrected this by asking more broad questions. For example, when talking about internationalisation with UP (my case study HEI) stakeholders, I was interested in knowing the role that African international engagements played for the university. Thus, at the beginning, I asked specific questions about the role of African engagements, and how important individuals at UP thought they were. I soon realised that perhaps this was a leading question and if I wanted to know how important African engagements really were, I should let the interviewees bring up the subject themselves. If people actually brought it up, this would give me a sense of how important it really was for them. This would turn out to be a useful approach when I was analysing discussions about African engagements by UP researchers and engagements with researchers and institutions outside of Africa, which I discuss in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

### **3.8.3 Synthesising personal observations**

Each of the developments and/or observations discussed above played a part in my study; some affected my ability to collect data while others affected by ability to analyse the data and to present it in a coherent and readable manner. These developments affected me personally and strategically along the journey to completing this thesis and to presenting a scholarly work that addressed my intellectual puzzle. These developments have also positively affected my understanding as a researcher. I have come to learn that there are numerous ways that one's perceptions and approaches can, and most often do, change during the course of an intensive research study such as a doctoral thesis. Although I was often frustrated as I thought about some of these developments as they were happening and/or once they had happened, I soon realised that they were just an inevitable part of the research process. In all, the developments discussed in this section helped shape my views as a

researcher, and particularly what I could expect and should not expect from my respondents and even myself as I gathered and analysed my data. I believe that these, and other unmentioned developments, affected me both positively and negatively as I conducted this qualitative research study. Most importantly, I believe that I made steps toward truly understanding that qualitative research is not a linear process and that the process of conducting qualitative research is a continuous learning experience. I also came to understand that no matter how hard we try to remain objective, qualitative research is personal and we as researchers will inevitably have to make decisions based on personal beliefs and perceptions. Finally, I found peace in the realisation that a researcher finds not only answers as he or she conducts research but, probably most importantly, even more questions.