CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse in detail responses to the questionnaire that was sent to higher education institutions in South Africa, to provide as far as possible, their institutional responses as to how the transformed structures of governance are influencing institutional QA mechanisms.

Particular emphasis is placed on the classification of HEIs in South Africa based on their orientations and culture as suggested by Cloete & Bunting (2000:56-57). This chapter attempts to highlight an accurate account of institutional approaches to quality, institutional impressions on the dimensions of accountability and improvement as they relate to quality assurance processes, institutional missions and strategy, efficiency and effectiveness and some international perspectives on quality.   Finally, it explores the institutional dynamics that influence the quality perspectives in a manner that touches on internal and external forces that impact on the implementation of QA mechanisms.   It further attempts to identify consistent differences in HAIs and HDIs in aspects of governance and quality arrangements.

6.2 THE QUESTIONNAIRE: AN ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

The analysis of responses is structured in the same manner that appears in the Questionnaire (cf. Appendix B) for ease of reference.

SECTION A

LEGISLATIVE IMPERATIVES (TRANSFORMATION) AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

1.   Legal Framework:

- ❏ Institutional participants were asked to give optional responses – the Yes/No questions followed by reasons or exploratory items.
- ❏ There were also open-ended questions seeking own comments or motivation for their answers.

The legal framework that is stipulated in the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997: 72(4) required that

"Councils, Senates and forums of technikons and universities, which existed at the commencement of this Act continue to exist and perform the functions which they performed prior to such commencement, but must comply with the provisions of this Act within 18 months after the commencement of this Act."

1(a)   Institutions were asked if they complied with this provision by the due date, and 94.23% responded in the affirmative, and 5.77% did not comply. The reasons mentioned for the compliance and non-compliance are indicated below to trace the elements of good practice in HEIs.

1(b)   In order to determine the elements of good practice that facilitated the compliance, 54 respondents gave 84 responses ranging among:

- ❑ Stable environment (20.25%)

- ❑ Good institutional leadership (22.62%)

- ❑ Extensive stakeholder consultations (35,71%), and

- ❑ The administrative capacity to handle the recurring demands from the state (14.29%)

- ❑ A further 7.14% gave other reasons that do not fall within the four broad categories identified above, such as "modifications/changes" in governance structures at their institutions.

This means that a significant number of respondents consider the legal framework within which they operate positively.

1(c)   Where institutions could not comply within the stipulated time frame, the greatest impediments were prolonged stakeholder discussions (28.57%), poor leadership (with no sense of urgency and cohesion) (28.57%) and parliamentary/Department of Education delays (28.57%) and to some smaller extent (14.29%), the changes to be effected in the institutional statutes.   This category represented the smaller number of institutions affected by this "non-compliance".

1(d)   Institutions were asked if there was tension between the governing Council and the Broad Transformation Forum prior to the promulgation of the Act, and 25 respondents said "Yes" and 28 said "No". Those that said "No" cited reasons, such as good management practices at their institutions, proper dissemination of information, consultations that even started much earlier than the promulgation of the Act, and general good governance at the institutions. These responses form 77.78%.

1(e)   Those that said "Yes" gave reasons such as the undemocratic Councils at their institutions, some Councils abdicated their responsibilities and the lack of understanding by councils, the Broad Transformation Forums as

well as Management what their different roles were at the institution. Such responses were 22.22%. It is clear from this response that some of the respondents opted not to give reasons as to why there were tensions of power relations between their Councils and BTFs.

An interpretation of this analysis is that institutional structural arrangements have an impact insofar as ensuring that a proper basis is set for institutional quality assurance and management systems are put in place .

❏ **Institutional Governance**

2(a)   When asked if institutional Statutes were gazetted prior to December 1999 (an extended period given to institutions by the Department of Education), 44 respondents (89.9%) said "Yes" implying good governance at their institutions. The writing up of institutional statutes is the responsibility of the governing council in terms of section 32 and 33 of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997. Where these governing structures demonstrate a conscientious effort to produce the institutional statute, it is reasonably interpreted as an element of good practice by that institution.

2(b)   Those that said "No" (5 respondents) said prolonged institutional consultations (33.3%) and the delay by parliament or non-acceptance of the Statute by the Department of Education (66.67%) were reasons for the delay of their institutional statutes.

2(c)   Similarly, the Private Acts of HEIs, with the exception of technikons, needed to be aligned with their Statute, and a 33 frequency of responses claimed that their Private Acts were in good standing. However, 13 respondents (28.26%) claimed that their Private Acts were not in alignment with the institutional statutes.

2(d)   The reasons given by 8 respondents were the delay by the Department of Education. This delay was clearly caused by the developments that culminated in the Higher Education Amendment Act of 2001 as indicated in Chapter 2 which sought to, among other things, repeal all Private Acts governing universities and subjecting all HEIs to the provisions of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and its Amendments, without exception.

2(e)   The following statement was made to elicit a "Yes" or "No" response:
"Institutions of higher learning (in this case their own institutions) were seemingly encountering difficulties and frustrations with the novel experience of sharing responsibility for institutional governance because some of the stakeholders lack high level skills, appropriate experience and resources, and become overwhelmed by the enormity of the responsibilities which accompany their new roles".

In response thereto 29 respondents, translating into 56.86% agreed that their institutions are encountering problems in their transformed governing structures. 22 respondents, translating into 43.14% did not seem to encounter these difficulties in their governing structures. This is an indication that some institutions ought to engage their structures in order to improve the *status quo* and enhance their accountability role.

2(f)   It is also clear that the minority of institutions (9 respondents) are still being micro-managed by the Councils, who seemingly do not understand their role in the manner that it is stipulated in the spirit of the Education White Paper 3 : A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), and the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and its Amendments of 1999, 2000 and 2001. The encouraging responses, i.e., 82% seem to have governing Councils that clearly understand their role. This is an indication of an element of quality in the main, although some institutions have problems.

2(g) HEIs were asked to classify themselves in accordance with the institutional types that Cloete & Bunting (2000:56) invented, after extensive research during this era of transformation in South African higher education. The selection of this classification (HDI-HAI by institutional type) is necessary because it is found to be current, relevant, and can still be located within the broader category of the HDIs and HAIs as indicated below. The table below illustrates how participants view or classify their institutions:

Institutional Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Emerging-Stable institution (mainly HDIs)	17	32.69	17	32.69
Uncertain – Unstable institution (exclusively HDIs)	5	9.62	22	42.31
Entrepreneurial – Expanding institution (mainly HAIs)	23	44.23	45	86.54
Traditional – elite institution (exclusively HAIs)	5	9.62	50	96.15
Three (3) of the above	1	1.92	51	98.08
Four (4) of the above	1	1.92	52	100.00

It is noted from the table above that most HEIs regard themselves as entrepreneurial and expanding, whereas others perceive themselves as uncertain and unstable. Those that are emerging and stable seem to have a strong leadership core and a shared vision. One respondent claimed that their institution fulfilled all the first three institutional types, whereas the other also believes all characteristics are present at their institution.

The reason for the response was that the institution cannot be located within the HDI- HAI framework because of its historical outlook.

2(h)   In order to elaborate on these choices, HEIs were asked to give reasons and the following 82 frequency of responses were given:

Reason 1:   There is stability on campus – student unrests are minimized; growth in student numbers; there is financial viability; innovation as well as programme development.

Reason 2:   Decline in student numbers; poor leadership and management; and an unstable environment charaterised by student unrests/uprisings.

Reason 3:   Strong focus on strategic planning, expansion and entrepreneurship. The vision and mission is widely shared.

Reason 4:   The pending mergers of institutions bring about uncertainties in institutions.

Reason 5:   Some could not classify themselves as they believed that this was not a good classification of institutions since it could be all as a result of the mobility in higher education at this stage.

The table below illustrates the reasons given by HEIs according to their classifications:

Frequency Percent Row % Column %	Classification by Institutional Type						
	Emerging Stable 1	Uncertain Unstable 2	Entrepr.- Expanding 3	Traditional Elite 4	Other		TOTAL
1	10	0	14	5	0	0	29
	12.20	0.00	17.07	6.10	0.00	0.00	35.37
	34.48	0.00	48.28	17.24	0.00	0.00	
	43.48	0.00	37.84	50.00	0.00	0.00	
2	3	4	0	1	1	0	9
	3.66	4.88	0.00	1.22	1.22	0.00	10.98
	33.33	44.44	0.00	11.11	11.11	0.00	
	13.04	50.00	0.00	10.10	50.00	0.00	
3	9	0	21	3	0	0	33
	10.98	0.00	25.61	3.66	0.00	0.00	40.24
	27.27	0.00	63.64	9.09	0.00	0.00	
	39.13	0.00	56.76	30.00	0.00	0.00	
4	0	4	2	0	0	1	4
	0.00	4.88	2.44	0.00	0.00	1.22	4.88
	0.00	57.14	28.57	0.00	0.00	25.00	
	0.00	50.00	5.41	0.00	0.00	50.00	
5	1	0	0	1	1	1	4
	1.22	0.00	0.00	1.22	1.22	1.22	4.88
	25.00	0.00	0.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	
	4.35	0.00	0.00	10.00	50.00	50.00	
TOTAL	23	8	37	10	2	2	82
	28.05	9.76	45.12	12.20	2.44	2.44	100

Reasons for choosing the category

What is worth noting from this table is that 21 responses of the Entrepreneurial-expanding institutions gave reason number three, which signifies a strong strategic focus and "fitness for purpose". Similarly, these types of institutions (14) gave reason number one (stability, growth and financial viability). In the context of the research question, this is an indicator of a positive influence on the institutional quality assurance and management mechanisms.

The Uncertain-unstable HEIs gave reason number two and number four as reasons for their classification.

Some institutions were experiencing the decline in student numbers, unstable environments as well as poor leadership. Another reason was cited as the looming mergers of some institutions that seem to sow further instability in the affected institutions.

2(i)   When asked whether the transformed governance structures have brought about any improvements in the running of the institutions, 69% agreed and 30.7% (or 16 responses) said "no".

2(j)   The reasons for the "Yes" responses were 70.83% that attributed it to greater representivity, a stable environment, established credibility of governance structures and the competence with which the institutions are governed by the councils.

Another reason for the improvement brought about by Council was financial stability, a good strategic planning exercise as well as increased accountability at institutions.

2(k)   Where no improvement seemed to have taken place;

□ 28.57% of the respondents attributed it to no strategic planning document to reposition/re-align the institution in line with the higher education reconfiguration exercise.

□ 23.81% attributed it to Councils who do not understand their role and continue to micro-manage institutions and therefore violating the authority of the management structures.

□ 47.62% of the responses attributed it to a solid and impressive history of good governance. The fact that there were newly transformed Councils did not matter at all.

It is worth noting in these preceding paragraphs that these responses represent a much smaller fraction, i.e. 21 responses in contrast to 48 responses that realised an improvement as a result of transformed governing Councils. This is another indication of the unevenness in the higher education system.

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO QUALITY

3(a) All 54 respondents confirmed that quality underpins the strategic plan of their institution. This is an indication of how institutions of higher learning were repositioning themselves in line with the developments in higher education. Some strategic planning documents were compared with this assertion, and were found to be in concurrence with the statement made that quality underpins their strategic planning. Some could not be verified owing to the non-availability of these documents.

3(b) 96.15% of the responses (50 in total) affirmed that their mission statements reflected the principles of quality assurance and quality promotion. All mission statements of institutions were read and analysed and found to be in agreement with the principles of academic excellence

and community service. These are public documents that were also accessed from institutional web sites in order to verify or check if they have not shifted their vision and mission in line with the developments in higher education.

3(c)   Respondents were asked to state the key concepts that supported their choices on mission statements. The first concept that stood out was "academic excellence", the second concept was "community service", and the third was "strategic planning". The fourth was the category that gave any other reason that would not fit in any of the concepts above. The following table depicts the reasons given in alignment with the "Yes" responses.

Frequency % Row % Column %	Yes 1
Academic Excellence	27
1	45.00
	100.00
	45.76
Community Service	17
2	28.33
	94.44
	28.81
Frequency % Row % Column %	Yes 1
Strategic Planning	11
3	18.33
	100.00
	18.64
Any other	4
4	6.67
	100.00
	6.78
	59
	98.33

3(d)   'Elements of good practice are a recent phenomenon in our institution', elicited 58.49% in agreement with the statement, thereby suggesting that the institutional approach to quality needs continuous improvement in line with the national QA imperatives: institutional self-evaluation exercises. Those that did not see QA as a novelty were 41.51% of the responses.

3(e)   Participants were asked if the notion of quality as "value for money" is superseded by quality as "fitness for purpose" in their institution, and 59.57% said "Yes", 36.17% said "No", and 4.26% said both notions are equally important.

3(f)   Upon giving reasons for their choices, some indicated that both are equally important (1.82%) and 61.82 % thought that indeed the notion of quality as "value for money" was superseded by quality as "fitness for purpose". Those that did not concur were 36.36% of the responses. These believe that "value for money" is the primary focus at their institutions, for reasons such as the need to recover from the financial strain the institutions had in the recent past.

3(g)   Another institutional approach to quality had to do with whether the focus was on "improvement " of quality in teaching and learning, and 88.89% agreed that their institutional focus was on improvement.

3(h)   The statement that the institutional governance structures' focus was on "accountability" and efficiency of operational systems as opposed to the improvement of teaching and learning and research, yielded 42% in favour of the approach and 52% said "No", meaning that institutional governance structures' focus was primarily on the improvement of teaching and learning and research.

SECTION B

ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT DIMENSIONS

4. **Quality Assurance Processes**

4(a) The participants were asked to consider the following structures of institutional governance and to indicate the <u>extent</u> to which QA was taking place in their institution and how <u>important</u> it was considered to be?

❑ **Council:**

Out of a total of 49 respondents, 11 (22%) said that the extent to which QA was taking place at the level of Council, as well as the importance, were low (falling within the "Not at all" and "Partly"). In other words, they do not see Council involved in quality assurance, and they were less concerned about Council's involvement anyway.

Only 2 respondents see QA taking place at the level of Council and yet do not see why Council should be concerned about that, i.e. higher extent – low importance distribution (4%).

Those that see the lower extent (i.e. those that wish to see Council engaged in QA at that level), but do not see Council doing it, represented 8 (16%) of the responses

Contrary to these figures above, 28 (57%) respondents claim that the extent and importance at which QA is taking place at Council level in their institution was high, meaning either very important or extremely important

In order to determine whether the differences in these responses were not per chance a chi-squared test was performed and the probability value of <0.0001 was found to be <0.05 (which is the norm) and therefore making these responses statistically significant. The chi-squared test of a contingency table is used to determine if there is enough evidence to infer that two quantitative variables are related and to infer that differences exist among two or more populations of qualitative variables (Keller & Warrack, 2000:551). Completing both objectives entails classifying items according to two different criteria and in this case it was the extent and importance.

- **Senate**

The majority of the responses, 41 out of 51 representing 80% saw a high extent – high importance distribution as far as Senate's involvement in QA practices. This is a confirmation that Senate as the primary governance structure charged with the responsibility of academic standards is still dominant in promoting the core business of institutions of higher learning.

Those that came across the lower extent and high importance as far as Senate goes were 7 (13.7%). This category of respondents would like to see more QA activities at Senate level because they believe that it is either very important or extremely important.

Seemingly 5.8% of the respondents were experiencing low extent - low importance of QA practices at Senate. The interpretation of this response is that senate is not perceived as crucial to the QA mechanisms at those institutions.

Similarly, the Fisher's Exact Test was performed to determine the statistical significance of these responses (Two-sided probability <0.0058). This was found to be a valid test.

❏ **Institutional Forum (IF)**

Out of a total of 48 responses on this item, 16 (33%) claimed that QA was not taking place at IF level, and it was not important for it to be concerned about QA. Whereas 17% of the responses said it was important that the IF should be involved in QA but the extent was lower, 6% said it was not important for QA to take place at the level of IF and yet they see the extent at which it is happening either mostly or fully.

The majority of the responses (21) translating into 44% favoured that QA should take place and that it was indeed taking place at that level in their institutions.

The relatively higher responses of 33% and 44% above is an indication that this is a fairly new structure whose responsibilities need more and more clarification at operational level. This is attested to by the fact that 11% of the respondents did not know how to place the IF in terms of QA practices at their institution(s). The test was found to be statistically significant as it is the case in the above categories.

Institutions were asked if there were any levels at which QA was taking place at their institutions, and to what extent and degree of importance. The majority of the HEIs (70%) identified Faculty Boards with 94% for both the extent at which QA was taking place, and the degree of importance for QA. This is not an unfamiliar pattern given the fact that much of QA debates are about quality and academic standards. 6% saw their Faculty Boards partly involved with a much lower degree of importance.

Another level identified by 53% of the respondents was at academic departmental level with 89% affirming that QA is taking place with 91% degree of importance.

Other categories identified were administrative units without actually indicating the extent and importance to any significant extent. This category could be further explored in line with the principles of Total Quality Management in higher education (cf. Chapter 8 section 8.5.8).

5.   Institutional Mission and Strategy

5(a)   When asked to what extent the notion of quality as "fitness for purpose" is embedded in their mission statements, and how important it was to their institution, 85% indicated that it was to either 'most' or 'full' extent as well as very to extreme importance.

13.21% of the respondents indicated a lower extent and high importance, meaning that they could see why this notion (fitness for purpose) should be embedded in their mission statements, but it was actually not.

It is evident from the foregoing paragraphs that the reconfiguration of the higher education system necessitates the revision and/or improvement of institutional mission statements, and most institutions seemed to concur with the national policy imperatives in this regard.

5(b)   The emphasis of quality as "value of money" elicited 65% high extent – high importance (i.e 34 out of 52 responses) in that combination. The majority of respondents claimed that "value for money" is considered to be extremely important.

A further 25% (13) respondents believed that the extent and importance to which quality as "value for money" is emphasized at their institution, was much lower (not at all/some what) thereby suggesting that they do not see it and there is no need to focus on value for money.

5(c) Funding in higher education is currently a problem that requires "doing more with less", and when institutions were asked how extensive the funding of QA and its mechanisms was at their institutions, and how important it was considered to be, 11% indicated that there was no separate funding for QA at their institutions, and it was not considered to be an issue (of importance). An emerging concern was that 31% felt that QA ought to be adequately funded and that it was actually not funded properly at their institutions.

Out of 54 responses 29 (54%) said that QA was extensively funded at their institutions and it was considered to be mostly/extremely important as part of their institutional mission and strategy. 85% felt that it was necessary for QA to be funded adequately. This could be the subject for further research (cf. Chapter 8, section 8.5.9) in line with the HEQC mandate in this country which is outlined in its Founding Document in Chapter 2.

5(d) HEIs were asked to what extent were perceptions on academic standards affecting their student intake and how important this was to their strategic focus?

- 6% said perceptions on academic standards were not affecting them, and it did not quite matter to them.

- Another 6% said perceptions on academic standards were to a larger extent affecting their student intake, but it was not considered that important.

- 20 respondents out of 53 (38%) said the extent to which perceptions on academic standards affected their student intake was not at all/partly (low) an issue, and yet it was very/extremely important for their strategic focus.

- 51% reported high extent – high importance, meaning that it was necessary for their institutions to promote positive perceptions on

academic standards that would yield higher enrolments as part of their strategic planning endeavors.

6. **Efficiency and Effectiveness**

6(a)   The intensifying stakeholder scrutiny of governance policies and practices, education and training processes and outcomes, all are leading towards the implementation of formal QA arrangements within higher education institutions.

HEIs were asked to respond to this statement by indicating the extent to which this was applicable to their institution, and what importance was attached to the stakeholder input. 87% overwhelmingly responded that it was very/extremely important to engage stakeholders for purposes of accountability. A smaller fraction (9.4%) felt that accountability and stakeholder involvement was taking place and it was not important at all since systems of good governance are in place.

6(b)   HEIs were asked whether the shrinking resources from the state had a bearing on the core business (teaching and learning, research and community service) in the following categories:

- ▢ Programme Offerings: 63% of the respondents indicated that the extent to which the shrinking resources and the call to "do more with less" was impacting on the core business was high. The degree of importance was also high implying that if there is a continued call "to do more with less" the quality of the academic programmes may be adversely affected.

Another 28% of the respondents said the extent to which this was happening appeared much lower than the degree of importance (which is high).

❑ <u>Information Technology</u>: 15 out of 54 respondents (25%) said that the extent to which the shrinking resources, was affecting IT was lower and the importance much higher. This scenario suggests that it is absolutely important that IT should support the functions of teaching and learning, research and community service, but respondents see it happening to a lesser extent (either not at all or partly).

65% of the respondents said the extent and importance to which the shrinking resources were affecting teaching and learning was very high. This is a situation that is calling for attention by way of quality enhancement.

❑ <u>Facilities</u> (e.g. Laboratory space). A similar situation with IT above appeared in this area. There is a high extent and high importance (67%) – i.e. the shrinking resources and the call to "do more with less" are affecting the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community service. 26% reported low extent and high importance. This is an area that is viewed as extremely important as a means towards the attainment of good academic standards.

❑ <u>Management Information Systems</u>: For purposes of efficiency and effectiveness 67% regarded the MIS reporting as both important and extensive toward the support of teaching and learning, research and community service.

6(c) Participants were also asked to mention other areas and indicate the extent and importance of them in relation to how the shrinking of resources could affect the core business of institutions of higher learning. The following areas were mentioned by a relatively small number of respondents who in some instances were not indicating the extent and degree of importance:

- Research (9) 36%
- Human Resources (8) 32%
  - retaining qualified/quality staff
  - staff salaries and benefits
- Student Support Services (6) 24%
  - student accommodation
  - sports facilities
- Protection Services (2) 8%

7. International Perspectives on Quality

7(a) Asked whether the proliferation of international higher education providers and competition among institutions of higher learning was a threat to quality outcomes, 13 respondents out of 54 said the extent to which this phenomenon was impacting on the growth of their institution was low and it was not considered important at all to be a threat.

However, 31% of the respondents said that the extent at which this proliferation of private providers was impacting on their growth was either "partly" or "not at all" but it was considered very important that it may affect their growth as an institution.

Likewise, 23 respondents (43%) claimed that the extent to which it was affecting them was high and the importance was also high. This claim was found to be statistically significant on application of the Chi-squared test as well as the Fisher's Exact Test. It appeared that 74% of the respondents consider this proliferation and competition among institutions as a real threat to their growth.

7(b) Asked whether developing principles of good practice and recognition of quality in international education and training was an essential ingredient

of their institutional strategic plan, an overwhelming response (87%), said that the extent was high as well as the importance. This is evidenced by the fact that education does not seem to have any boundaries since a range of networks and the demands of globalisation have resulted in education without frontiers as outlined in Chapter 4.

8.   Total Quality Management

8(a)   HEIs were asked to what extent their institutional governance structures were applying the principles of TQM and how important it was for higher education in general? A resounding 72% said the extent at which TQM was applicable in the institutional governance was high and the importance for higher education in general was also high. A further 20% said that the extent at their institution was lower but felt that it was very/extremely important for higher education in general.

The TQM/CQI mania in higher education was pioneered by a small number of HEIs in the 1980's, but the formal introduction to a larger national audience in the US came about a decade later in an article "TQM Reaches the Academy" by Fred Marchese (1991:3). So much quality improvement seems to be occurring in the education sector, but it is so difficult to observe, decipher, and explain (Axland, 1992:41). Similarly, the Chronicle of Higher Edcuation proclaimed "TQM: Colleges Embrace the Concept of Total Quality Management" and went on to assert, "Across the country, colleges and universities are reporting success with the technique" (Mangan, 1992: A25). TQM was promoted as a way of restoring the pillars of higher education and overcoming the threat that competition from foreign institutions and the corporate sector would reduce "market share" (Bemowski, 1991: 37).

The TQM discussion appears extensively in the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 (section 3.4), and it is one of the quality management systems whose principles are applicable in higher education.

SECTION C

INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS THAT INFLUENCE THE QUALITY PERSPECTIVES

Institutions were asked to reflect whether the following variables <u>inhibit</u> or <u>promote</u> the implementation of best practice principles at their institution, and then indicate to what extent this occurs (according to the scale: "1 = greatly inhibits; 2 = partly inhibits; 3 = partly promotes; 4 = greatly promotes")

9.   Contextual Variables:

9.1   <u>Internal image of the institution</u>: 35% of the HEIs said that the internal image of their institution was inhibiting and therefore the implementation of best practice was being frustrated to some extent. Conversely 65% of all respondents said their internal images promote best practice in their institutions.

   ❑ Looking at this from a different angle of the classifications of institutions as in paragraph 2(g) above, 12% of the emerging-stable HEIs felt that they were greatly inhibited by their internal images, 47% of them felt "partly inhibited" and 29% and 12% felt partly promoted and greatly promoted by their internal image respectively. This classification comprises mainly the HDIs that are emerging from unstable environments, and also some HAIs that have repositioned themselves in line with the transformation agenda.

❏ The Uncertain-unstable HEI's felt greatly and partly inhibited with no indication of promotability of good practice. This is attributed to reasons mentioned earlier such as the pending mergers of institutions which makes a number of people in these institutions uncertain about their future and careers. Another reason is attributed to the decline in student numbers, poor leadership of the institution, as well as unstable environments characterised by student unrests and low morale of staff.

❏ This variable is characterises mainly by HDIs, and to a very limited extent the merging institutions.

❏ The entrepreneurial-expanding HEI's (HAIs) largely felt that their internal image is boosting the implementation of best practice, and this was accounted for by 87% of the responses in this classification. This outcome correlates with reasons such as the growth in student numbers, institutional stability, financial viability, as well as a strong strategic focus. Only 13% of these institutional types felt partly inhibited by their internal images.

❏ The traditional-elite HAIs reported no inhibition of their internal image and recorded only the internal image that promoted best practice principles in their institutions.

9.2 External image of the institution: The majority of respondents (67%) said that the external image of their institution was promoting the implementation of best practice principles, whereas 33% felt that their external image was inhibiting to some extent. This overall frequency is for all institutions without their classification by type.

❏ The classification of HEIs by type revealed that 59% of the emerging-stable institutions felt inhibited by their external environment/image

(emerging from the 'dark' past and are geared towards stable institutional climates), whereas 41% felt comfortable that their external image is promoting the principles of best practice in their institution.

- Uncertain-Unstable HEIs: 60% of them felt that the external environment/image is inhibiting and 40% of them (HAIs) felt it partly promotes the implementation of best practice in their institutions. These are institutions that are affected by external forces such as the National Plan for Higher Education, as well as institutions who are recovering from collapsed governance structures and negative publicity.

- 22% of the Entrepreneurial-expanding HEIs reported that they were partly inhibited by their external image whereas 78% felt their image is positive externally and they are seen to be implementing quality programmes and appropriate mission statements.

- Traditional-elite HEIs rely on their past external image and reported 100% promotability of best practice in their institution. They seemed not to have any inhibitions externally that affected their growth and development.

9.3   The Institutions' relations with the Department of Education:
The overall impression provided by all HEIs is that 24% do not seem to be having good relations with the Department of Education, 64% seem to have sound relations that promote best practice, and 2% of the respondents did not seem to care about that. They did not see this item as applicable to their institution.

- A further classification by institutional type show that Emerging-stable HEIs that are inhibited by the relations with the Department of

education are 41%. Those that feel that their relations are promoting and influencing quality perspectives were 59% of the responses.

❑ 80% of the Uncertain-unstable HEIs felt that their relations with the Department of Education partly promotes the implementation of best practice in their institutions.

❑ The category of Entrepreneurial-expanding HEIs overwhelmingly (91%) view their relations with the Department of Education as promoting quality perspectives in their institutions.

❑ Whereas 60% of the Traditional-elite HEIs felt that their relations with the Department of Education was partly inhibiting the implementation of best practice, another 20% felt it was partly promoted and another 20% felt it was greatly promoted. This could be interpreted as perceptions of resistance to the transformation on the one hand, and the need to maintain and preserve a particular culture of the institution on the other.

9.4   The Historical Classification of the Institution:
An overall 65% of institutions of higher learning reported that their historical classification either partly or greatly inhibit their implementation of quality perspectives at their institutions. A further 15% said their historical background partly promotes the implementation of best practice, and another 17% reported that their classification greatly promotes their quality focus. It was also noted that this factor was not an issue for 2% of the responses since their institutions cannot be classified in this manner. A few respondents elected not to respond to this item.

The following table illustrates the responses by institutional classification or type and the extent of inhibition or promotability of this variable:

Historical Classification of Institutions by Type:

	Emerging-Stable	Uncertain-Unstable	Entrepreneurial-Expanding	Traditional-Elite	Other
Greatly Inhibits	35%	20%	4%	0%	0%
Partly Inhibits	41%	60%	55%	25%	0%
Partly Promotes	24%	20%	14%	0%	0%
Greatly Promotes	0%	0%	27%	75%	0%

This data demonstrates the unevenness of higher education institutions as indicated in the problem statement in Chapter 1. Some institutions are greatly inhibited by their historical past and thus feel that the implementation of QA mechanisms requires additional effort to level the playing field.

The table above clearly demonstrates that institutions are inhibited by their historical past. The Uncertain-Unstable, Entrepreneurial-Expanding and Emerging-Stable record the highest percentages in this category. This phenomenon is captured in Chapter 1 where an indication is made that the higher education legislation and framework necessitates the establishment of transformed governing structures and yet the problem or challenge is how these will influence on the quality assurance mechanisms of institutions. Part of the research question is addressed by this distribution above which seem to suggest that the historical classification of institutions either partly or greatly inhibits the implementation of best practice at their institutions.

Similarly the traditional-elite institutions do not seem to have this problem which is to some extent attributed to governance issues. 75% of these

institutions felt that their historical classification greatly promoted their implementation of QA mechanisms.

The distribution in the table above attests to the unevenness of the higher education institutions in terms of the implementation of the quality assurance and quality management systems in South Africa.

9.5   The Financial Viability of the Institution:
The table below gives a picture of how institutional finances according to their classification impact on the implementation of best practice:

	Emerging-Stable	Uncertain-Unstable	Entrepreneurial-Expanding	Traditional-Elite	Other
Greatly Inhibits	41%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Partly Inhibits	24%	40%	26%	0%	100%
Partly Promotes	35%	20%	22%	20%	0%
Greatly Promotes	0%	0%	52%	80%	0%

This is yet another picture that demonstrates the unevenness of institutions in terms of financial resources geared towards the implementation of good practice. Entrepreneurial-expanding and Traditional-elite institutions seem to be well resourced with 74% and 100% respectively, whereas more indigent institutions (HDIs) seem to be greatly or partly inhibited by this factor.

This scenario poses further challenges for the higher education institutions especially with regard to the funding of QA mechanisms. This correlates with a question on how extensive QA was funded and how important it

was to their institutions. Some institutions felt that QA did not require a large budget allocation, others felt that it was not funded adequately and others felt that it was extensively funded at their institutions as illustrated by the table above.

The overall percentage frequency still demonstrates that 42% of the HEIs without any classification felt that the financial viability of their institutions were inhibiting the implementation of QA mechanisms.

National Policy Imperatives

9.6   The Legislative requirements of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997:
The majority of HEIs (86%) said that this factor partly or greatly promoted the principles of quality at their institutions. This general impression is also supported by institutions according to their classifications. This is an indication that the majority of HEIs consider the legislative requirements positively. A smaller group of respondents (14%) still feel that the requirements are inhibiting to some extent.

9.7   Higher Education Policy Implementation:
Policies that are implemented seem to have the support of HEIs to a very large extent. Institutions by their classification are in agreement with policies that are introduced by the Department of Education. These include the Three-Year Rolling Plans, National Plan for Higher Education, Programme and Qualification Mixes, etc. However, 40% of the Traditional-elite institutions (HAIs) consider the implementation of best practices inhibiting – this is the largest percentage contrasted with 100% of the Uncertain-unstable institutions who reported partial promotion of higher education policies. This means that HDIs consider the higher education policies to be promoting good practice in their institutions,

whereas the traditional-elite HAIs consider these policies inhibiting in their environment.

9.8   HEQCs Approach to Quality Assurance:
Only 2% of the responses are not sure whether the HEQC's approach inhibits or promotes the implementation of best practice in their institutions. The reason for this is cited as "too early to judge/comment" since the HEQC has just been launched in May of 2001. This was an insignificant number in comparison to the 98% that support the approach of the HEQC towards the institutional implementation of best practice.

It has been indicated in Chapter 2, that the HEQC's developmental focus on QA is a predominant one with "Fitness for Purpose", "Value for Money" and Quality as "Transformation" as the primary foci or approaches. This indication seems not only to support the legal framework and the principles of the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), but also the acceptance by HEIs of the mandate given to the HEQC irrespective of the lingering binary division in higher education in this country.

9.9   National Plan for Higher Education (2001):
The looming uncertainties in higher education elicited the following responses as to whether the NPHE inhibits or promotes the implementation of best practices in institutions of higher learning:

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|	Partly Inhibits	Partly/Greatly Promotes
Emerging-stable HEIs	18%	82%
Unstable-Uncertain HEIs	40%	60% (partly only)
Entrepreneurial-Expanding HEIs	13%	87%
Traditional-Elite HEIs	40%	60%
Other	100%	-

The scenario presented here suggests that HEIs are mainly in support of the NPHE in spite of the uncertainties reigning with the pending report of the Ministerial National Working Group in December 2001, and the subsequent advise to the Minister by the Council on Higher Education possibly by February 2001. Notably, Uncertain-unstable and Traditional-elite HEIs show a pattern that casts some doubt on the implementation of the QA principles. There is clearly some skepticism as far as these institutions see the National Plan for Higher Education, a development that remains to be seen and be judged through the test of time.

9.10 SAQA's requirements through the NQF:

There is yet an indication by HEIs that the SAQA principles are supported (62%) as far as the implementation of QA mechanisms go. This pattern is strongly supported by Emerging-stable, Uncertain-unstable as well as Entrepreneurial-expanding HEIs ranging between 76% and 80%. However, 60% of the Traditional-elite HEIs consider the SAQA requirements through the National Qualifications Framework as inhibiting good practice.

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

9.11 The Funding Formula for HEIs appears to be worrisome to most institutions. Perhaps it is appropriate to mention that it is under revision at this stage as outlined in the NPHE. Nevertheless, the existing Funding Formula seems to generally inhibit the implementation of best practice as the following data shows:
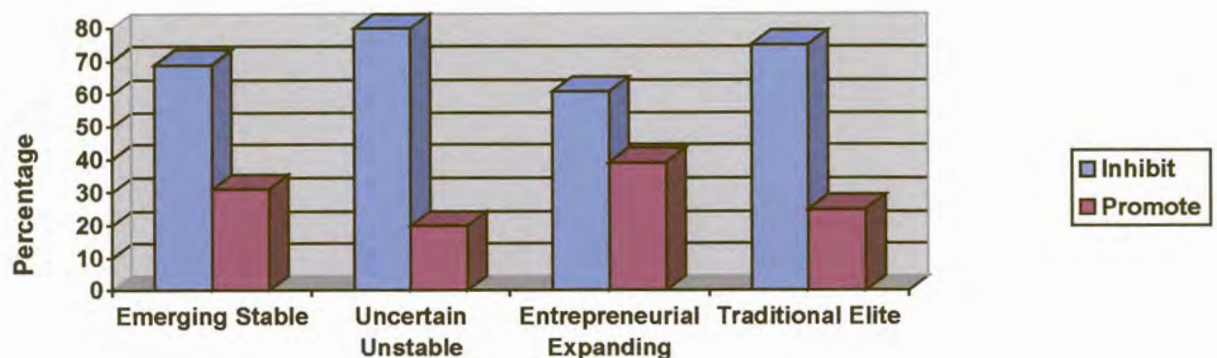
This is a serious factor for the implementation of a successful quality assurance strategy. Clearly, governance structures are inhibited by economic considerations in order to influence QA mechanisms in their institutions.

9.12 <u>Funding of Research in Higher Education</u> seemed to favour certain institutions over others as depicted by the following data:

□ 47% of the Emerging-stable HEIs are inhibited by this factor, 53% of them said that the funding of research promotes the implementation of QA mechanisms.

□ 60% of Uncertain-unstable HEIs felt inhibited whilst 40% felt partly promoted.

□ 52% of the Entrepreneurial-expanding HEIs felt that the funding of research was inhibiting the implementation of QA whilst 48% felt

differently. This factor relates to the technikon sector of the HAIs in that research has not been adequately funded by the government over a period of time due to their focus on vocational subjects.

❑ 40% of the Traditional-elite HEIs felt inhibited whilst 60% felt partly promoted. This attests to a much higher research output associated with HAIs in relation to HDIs.

This scenario attests to the fact that universities are funded for research under the current subsidy formula whereas technikons are not. Some relied on private/donor funding and contract research to promote the implementation of good practice in their institutions.

9.13 The funding of QA as a new initiative seemed to be partly given attention by Uncertain-unstable as well as Traditional-elite HEIs with each reporting 80% for the funding of QA and its mechanisms. Generally, HEIs said that there was partial promotion of the implementation of the elements of good practice. Only Emerging-stable HEIs with 60% appeared to be inhibited to a greater extent by the funding of QA as a new initiative in their institutions.

9.14 The fiduciary responsibilities of governing Councils appeared to overwhelmingly (86%), promote the implementation of best practice principles in most HEIs even by their classification. This is an indication that most governing Councils in higher education take their trusteeship responsibilities seriously. This fact is supported by the earlier assertion that "value for money" is considered quite important by the majority of councils in paragraph 5(b) above.

INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

9.15   The extent of <u>trust among internal stakeholders</u> was outlined as follows:

	Emerging-Stable	Uncertain-Stable	Entrepreneurial-Expanding	Traditional-Elite
Greatly Inhibits	13%	80%	-	-
Partly Inhibits	44%	20%	9%	20%
Partly Promotes	37%	-	23%	20%
Greatly Promotes	6%	-	68%	60%

This distribution shows that Uncertain-unstable HEIs as well as the Emerging-stable institutions (who are largely HDIs) have a serious problem in respect of the level of trust in their institutions. Conversely, the Entrepreneurial-expanding and Traditional-elite HEIs (HAIs) seemed to enjoy a high level of trust that promoted the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in their institutions. This development enables the governance structures to influence QA positively, and thus contribute towards a long term impact on the higher education system in South Africa. The HDI scenario shows the perpetuation of the apartheid practices of lack of trust and suspicion among stakeholders. This development has an adverse effect on the implementation of good practice in historically disadvantaged institutions.

9.16   <u>The balance between academic and administrative responsibilities to QA</u> showed a pattern among Uncertain-unstable institutions not having a balance between these dimensions. 80% of these responses indicate an institutional environment that inhibits the implementation of best practice. This is yet again an indicator that these institutions are characterised by conflict amongst different governance structures and a lack of stable authority often accompanied by a loss of students and good staff (Cloete & Bunting, 2000:56-57). The Emerging-stable HEIs recorded 62% responses that either partially or greatly promoted the implementation of

best practice principles as far as the balance between academic and administrative responsibilities went.

As it seemed to be the pattern with Entrepreneurial-expanding, and Traditional-elite HEIs, there was 64% and 100% respectively that affirmed that there was a balance between academic and administrative responsibilities that promoted good practice in their institutions.

9.17 Most institutions (86%) reported that the <u>academic stability</u> of their institutions were promoting the implementation of QA. This was also supported by the Uncertain-unstable HEIs who, together with the Emerging-stable HEIs, seemed to have elements of inhibition above 20%. This is also an indication that there is an improvement driven by governance structures in their practices that are geared toward QA.

9.18 <u>Commitment to QA at all levels:</u>
The general picture provided is that there is universal commitment toward Quality Assurance at all levels with Emerging-stable and Uncertain-Unstable HEIs (HDIs) recording between 60% - 75% in this factor. There are still indications that in some institutions there is limited commitment to the implementation of QA.

10. Respondents were asked to contribute more influences that inhibit or promote the implementation of an effective QA system in their institution and the following category of responses were given:

Inhibiting Influences	Promoting Influences
❑ Organisational Structure	❑ A tradition of quality performance
❑ Impending Merger with another institution	❑ Strong Management/Commitment
❑ Lack of accountability	❑ Staff Commitment/Morale
❑ Integration of Academic & Support Centres	❑ Research Output
❑ Retrenchments	❑ Experiential Learning
❑ "Mark time" activities from students	❑ Management Responsibility
❑ Uneven academic quality of staff	❑ Student Expectations
❑ Inter- institutional collaborations	❑ International Co-operation
❑ Moving from Departmental to School Structure	❑ External examiners
❑ Poor teaching practices	❑ Expert staff in higher education
❑ Old staff clinging to old practices	❑ Explicit ideal to become a leading institution
❑ Campus hostilities	❑ Management Support
❑ Academic Support	
❑ Binary System	
❑ Indecisive management	
❑ Low salaries	
❑ Internal lack of resources	
❑ Lack of understanding and expertise	
❑ Financial constraints	
❑ Attitude/Understanding of QA	
❑ Policies & Dynamics of QA	
❑ General Apathy	
❑ Capacity: Human and Finances	
❑ Staff expertise	

This list of influences that either inhibit or promote QA are some of the dynamics that play themselves out at institutions of higher learning. These are factors that HEIs can take into consideration in their endeavour to enhance institutional climates conducive to quality promotion. It should be noted that the inhibiting factors outlined above are largely ascribed to the environment at HDIs, whereas

the promotion factors are ascribed to HAIs in the main. This is another pattern that is showing the unevenness in the system at a deeper level.

6.3   CONCLUSION

The analysis of this questionnaire took into account the legal requirements and institutional governance in a transformational context, and further probed the institutional responses as they relate to the research question. The majority of the HEIs are responsive to the legal requirements, institutional approaches that fall within the broader national goals, and the governance structures seem to support good practice in varying degrees according to the classification of institutions. Clear patterns of the differences in HAI and HDIs are outlined and analysed to include a further distribution of institutional types.

The dimensions of accountability and improvement are reflected in institutional missions and strategies, QA mechanisms, international best practice perspectives, and the quality management systems such as TQM that enable institutions to look at quality holistically.

The mobility in higher education brings about dynamics that influence the quality perspectives. Internal and external images of institutions are either inhibiting or promoting good practice, and that goes with many other variables like finances, national policies, stability of institutions, etc. All these influences serve as a template from which the governance structures can develop systems that will improve the quality management of HDIs and HAIs in the future.