CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1   Introduction

The research methods that have been employed are explained in this chapter. Furthermore, a strategy involving scientific steps that would ensure the validity of the study which has been practically utilized to gather data, is also outlined.

The research project has been based on the hypothesis as outlined in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.4. The articulation of a hypothesis forms the basis of a research project. Hence, Hult (1996:66) indicates that "*Developing the hypothesis provides the key ingredient to structure all subsequent parts of the project: the questionnaire, the sample, the coding, the tabulation forms, and the final report itself.*"

A hypothesis is drawn with the intention of kick-starting a process of resolving a particular problem. For instance, in the case of this study, the identified problem as specified in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.3, is that in the face of accommodating other racial groups in historically white universities in South Africa, change in terms of the way of doing things is inescapable. As a result, conflict is experienced. It was therefore hypothesized that substantial involvement of relevant stakeholders through an efficient and effective communication system could help resolve the problem.

Hence, the purpose of the study, as indicated in Chapter 1, is to establish a strategy that would facilitate change processes in such a way that cultural conflict within student communities would either be avoided or effectively

resolved. That warranted a scientific investigation, consequently both a literature survey and empirical research methods became indispensable for this study.

A questionnaire has been employed with the understanding that it can either support or counter the hypothesis (Hult 1996:66). It was designed in such a way to elicit racial perceptions regarding the management of change and conflict resolution in historically white universities in South Africa.

4.2   Literature review

The literature review has been covered in Chapters 2 and 3. It provided the study with the background on change management and conflict resolution, particularly in a multicultural location. Furthermore, it was established that very little has been written on the concepts *change management* and *conflict resolution* in relation to student affairs in multicultural universities.

The results of the literature review highlight the fact that this study could not be undertaken and be completed without consulting related literature. A literature review is an integral aspect of the scientific approach in the physical, natural or social sciences. Borg and Gall (1989:116) state that it would be after the establishment of what others have done already and what remains to be done that an appropriate research project, which would contribute to the furtherance of knowledge, can be developed. A literature study actually forms the foundation of the rest of the study.

Borg and Gall (1989:116-117) highlight that the process of reviewing literature facilitates the rest of the research because the literature review:

- Provides the researcher with an exposure and understanding of the previous work.

- Ensures provision of the data used in previous research.
- Makes it possible for researchers to delve into the unexplored periphery.
- Facilitates the process of both limiting and defining the research problem.

In addition, Ary *et al.* (1990:67-68) emphasize that a literature review is important because a thorough review of related literature would:

- Make it possible for investigators to define the frontiers of their field.
- Assist researchers to place their questions in perspective.
- Enable researchers to limit their questions and to explicate the concept of the study appropriately.
- Afford researchers insight into the reasons for contradictory results in an area.
- Enable researchers to identify relevant and appropriate research methodology.
- Facilitate avoidance of unintentional replication of previous studies.
- Enable researchers to effectively interpret the significance of their research result.

The literature study was therefore conducted within the above context. Consequently, a foundation was laid and the study was enriched. The literature study also facilitated the pilot study and the formulation of the final questionnaire. It may be extremely difficult to formulate a questionnaire without background knowledge about the subject. Thus, Bausell (1986:8) indicates that the final formulation of a questionnaire will follow the literature review.

The literature study will always be important by providing what experts in particular fields have discovered as well as their viewpoints. In addition, as pointed out by Bausell (1986:9): *"A thorough knowledge of literature is useful*

for many extra-research purposes, including teaching, consulting and non-empirical writing." But as far as this research project is concerned, in addition to the literature study an empirical study (as indicated in paragraph 4.3 below) had to be employed in order to complete the research in order to establish current perceptions of people in student affairs regarding contemporary issues of change management and conflict resolution. For instance, literature is available on the management of change, conflict resolution as well as on various aspects of student affairs.

The information contained in the literature cannot, however, ascertain the actual perceptions of the student affairs population regarding the management of change and conflict resolution in historically white universities in South Africa. It was therefore indispensable to conduct an empirical study in order to establish perceptions of various cultural groups regarding the management of change and conflict resolution. It is therefore appropriate to point out that the literature and empirical research methods supplement each other as far as this research project is concerned.

4.3   The empirical study

4.3.1 Orientation

As far as the empirical study is concerned, the final questionnaire (addendum 1) was used for data collection. As indicated by Borg and Gall (1989:418) the questionnaire and individual interviews are mostly used in the collection of data. However, the decision to only make use of the questionnaire was influenced by the purpose of the study as well as the nature and size of the sample as explained in paragraph 4.3.2.

In addition, the questionnaire was constructed within the following context as suggested by Hult (1996:66), namely that the basic purpose for using a

questionnaire is not only to gather facts but also to solve an identified problem. In addition, May (1993:65) states: "*The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure some characteristics or opinion of its respondents.*"

Experiences and perceptions regarding change management and conflict resolution in historically white universities in South Africa had to be established, particularly within the context of the changing South Africa. Thus, the use of the questionnaire was geared to resolving the problem as highlighted in Chapter 1 through establishing perceptions of relevant respondents regarding management of change and conflict resolution in historically white universities in South Africa.

Further motivation for the choice of a questionnaire is the following explanation of the importance of the questionnaire as provided by Ary *et al.* (1990:421):

- A questionnaire guarantees more confidentiality than an interview.
- Respondents may not be truthful in an interview because of fear of becoming unpopular or being victimized.
- The attitude of the researchers, which may either negatively or positively influence the responses, is not experienced when using a questionnaire.

More details on positive aspects about the use of a questionnaire are provided in paragraph 4.3.3 (c).

However, it is acknowledged that a questionnaire may not be perfect. One disadvantage as indicated by Ary *et al.* (1990:421) may be the misinterpretation of questions by respondents. Furthermore, when questionnaires are mailed, some of them may not be returned. Behr (1988:162) further corroborates that by stating: "*A serious disadvantage of questionnaires sent by post is the high proportion of non-replies*".

Interviewing as a research method could also could have been used. Behr (1988:150) states that "*The interview is a direct method of obtaining information in a face-to-face situation.*" There is an interaction between the interviewer(s) and the interviewee(s) with the intention to discover opinions and experiences of the interviewee. Various authors highlight the importance of interviewing as a research method as follows:

May (1993:91): "*Interviewing can generate rich sources of data on people's experiences, opinions, aspirations and feelings*".

Behr (1988:151): "*The research interview, though time consuming, as a rule expensive, and often difficult to arrange, is sometimes preferred to the written questionnaire, particularly where complex topics are involved, or where the investigation concerns matters of personal of a personal nature.*"

Hult (1996:69): "*Interviewing as a research method provides rich and high-quality data*".

Thus, interviews could have been relevant to a certain extent. The following advantages of interviewing as a research method, as provided by Hult (1996:68), further confirm the relevance and importance of this method:

- Allows flexibility because of possible interaction between the questioner and the respondent.
- Response rate is immediate because of knowing the answer immediately.
- It becomes possible for the questioner to gather both verbal and nonverbal clues.

Nonetheless, interviewing as a research method could not be used in this study because of various reasons. For instance, time as well as financial

constraints made it impossible to employ interviews. Time and financial aspects are considered by Hult (1996:68/9) as being primary constraints to employing interviewing as a research method. In addition, the universities involved are far apart from each other. Furthermore, it would have been extremely difficult to interview such a large number of students because students are involved in many other activities besides the academic work. Therefore, it became important to make use of a questionnaire in order to secure the required data from these institutions.

However, before the final questionnaire could be constructed, the following preparatory steps were taken:

4.3.2 Population and sample size

As indicated in Chapter 1, part of the aim of this study is to establish various individual views regarding the management of change and conflict resolution. Ten historically white universities were the target group for this research project.

The inclusion of every university was not automatic. The final inclusion of a university in the research process depended on whether it participated in the preliminary survey as explained in paragraph 4.3.4. According to the results of the preliminary study, only seven universities participated.

However, because of time and financial constraints only four of the seven universities which participated in the preliminary survey were considered for the final questionnaire. The intention is that four of the seven universities must be representative of the research population. Furthermore, besides time and financial factors, the rationale behind the reduction of the number of universities was that it would be easier to obtain the required information from

all the stakeholders at four institutions, rather than to try to secure it from all the institutions.

For the final sample of the institutions, the seven universities were further categorized into two groups – historically Afrikaans medium universities and historically English medium universities. As a result, of the four universities, the University of Pretoria and the University of the Orange Free State represented the Afrikaans universities. On the other hand the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University represented the historically English universities.

It should be appreciated that students are involved in many activities besides the academic activity. As a result, it may not be easy to obtain their co-operation in a research project that may not directly have an impact on their academic status. It was not possible to study the entire population of student affairs divisions at the seven universities because of time, financial constraints as well as the need for accuracy.

As a result, in order to determine the actual number of respondents, sampling was used. According to Bailey (1987:82) a sample is not a whole but an approximation of the whole. In order to achieve accuracy, sampling must be carefully drawn and must be unbiased. As indicated by Behr (1988:14) *"A biased sample is not representative of the population or universe and conclusions drawn from such a sample are subject to error."*

The sampling method was preferred because of the following advantages (Bailey 1987:83-84):

- Sampling can be highly accurate.
- It saves time.
- It saves money.

- It may be more accurate because it achieves a greater response rate.
- It enables a researcher to keep a low profile.

In corroboration of the advantages of using a sample as indicated above, Brewer and Hunter (1989:100) aver that "*Sampling, furthermore, facilitates other kinds of precision. By studying a fewer selected units rather than the whole universe, one may put additional resources into sharpening measurement by acquiring more and also more accurate data about fewer units.*"

The object of the sample for this research is the student affairs divisions of seven historically white universities as indicated in paragraph 4.3.3 (b). In this case, deans of students, student affairs officers and students would constitute student affairs' population.

Consequently, a sample of the population of the entire student affairs divisions of the seven universities as reflected in Table 4.1 was decided upon. In order to ensure representation, focus was placed on ensuring that the sample is unbiased. Thus, random sampling was employed. It would not have been possible to employ random sampling if the entire population was not identified. It therefore became essential to determine the actual population for this study. There are many other role players in a university like sponsors and lecturers. For the purpose of the research, the sample as reflected in Table 4.1 was selected. The motivation is that the categories of people included in the sample may directly have the most important influence on change and conflict. Thus, they can contribute greatly to the management of change and conflict resolution in student affairs.

As a result, a preliminary survey reflected in paragraph 4.3.4 was conducted. It then became possible to determine the nature of the sample, which was further categorized as reflected in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1:   Categories of respondents as reflected in the final questionnaire

Category	Number
Dean of Students	4
SRC President	4
SRC members	56
Residence Head (Female residence)	18
Residence Head (Male residence)	18
House Committee Chairperson (Female residence)	18
House Committee Chairperson (Male residence)	18
House Committee Chairperson (Mixed residence)	8
Male resident students	96
Female resident students	96
Male day students	104
Female day students	104
Total respondents	**544**

The categories of the respondents in this table represent the different groups involved with management of student affairs at universities.

The above numbers of respondents were further divided into smaller categories in order to ensure racial representativity as indicated in Table 4.2. The final number of respondents in the sample was determined after the results of the preliminary survey were determined.

Table 4.2: Racial categories of respondents

	Dean of Students	Residence Heads		House Committee Chairperson			SRC President	SRC Members								Total
								Black		White		Coloured		Indian		
		M	F	M	F	Mixed		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Rhodes	1	5	5	5	5		1	3	3	2	-	-	1	-	1	32
UOFS	1	5	5	5	5		1	1	1	4	4	-	-	-	-	32
UCT	1	4	4	4	4	4	1	3	2	1	2	-	2	-	-	32
UP	1	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	2	12	6	-	1	-	1	48
Total	4	18	18	18	18	8	4	11	8	19	12	-	4	-	2	144

Resident students									Total
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Rhodes	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
UOFS	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
UCT	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
UP	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
Total	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	192

Day students									Total
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Rhodes	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
UOFS	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
UCT	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
UP	6	6	14	14	6	6	6	6	64
Total	24	24	32	32	24	24	24	24	208
Total respondents									544

4.3.3   Pilot study

-      **Why the use of the pilot study?**

A pilot study was conducted as preparation for the main study. The acknowledgement of the importance of the pilot study prompted the use thereof. A pilot study facilitates the development of a proper and sound research plan. When conducting a pilot study fewer subjects than in the main study, which would rarely exceed 20, are used, (Borg & Gall 1989:77). Furthermore, the pilot study which is referred to by Ary *et al.* (1990:109) as a trial run, would also assist in:

- determining the feasibility of the study;
- establishing the appropriateness and practicality of instruments used for data collection; and
- problems that would surface in the process of the pilot study may be addressed immediately, preventing some complications and delays in the main study.

Hult (1996:67) further highlights the importance of a pilot study when stating that: "*Questions should be pre-tested so that initial responses can be reviewed and the questions revised to eliminate any ambiguity prior to their use in the actual study.*"

-      **The respondents**

The University of Pretoria was used for carrying out the pilot study. This university was chosen because of a logistical purpose. It was carried out with 31 respondents. The specific number of respondents was used because of the importance to have all categories of people who will be part of the research group represented. Furthermore, in order to guarantee a

representative outcome on the basis of race, it was ensured that responses are secured from the four main racial groups in South Africa namely Black, White, Coloured and Indian.

The respondents were categorized as follows:

Table 4.3:   Categories of respondents

Category	Number
Registrar	1
Dean of Students	1
SRC President	1
SRC members	4
Residence Head (Female residences)	2
Residence Head (Male residences)	2
House Committee Chairpersons (Female residences)	2
House Committee Chairpersons (Male residences)	2
Female resident students	4
Male resident students	4
Female day students	4
Male day students	4
Total respondents	**31**

-    **The structure of the pilot study questionnaire**

A well-structured questionnaire was used for the pilot study. Both open-ended and closed questions were used. The distinction between closed and open-ended questions is provided by Berh (1988:156): *"The closed question requires the respondent to place a tick, make a mark, or draw a line alongside one of several provided possible answers. The open form of a question*

enables the respondent to reply as he likes and does not confine him to a single alternative".

Even though the researcher intended to use only closed questions in the main study, open-ended questions were employed in the pilot study in order to establish unanticipated answers. That is, aspects to be included in the final questionnaire for the main study. It became necessary to use open-ended questions in the pilot study because, as indicated by Bailey (1987:120): *"They can be used when all the possible answer categories are not known, or when the investigator whishes to see what the respondent views as appropriate answer categories."*

However, only closed questions with response categories were used in the final questionnaire, because of the fact that the questionnaire would be self-administered. Fowler (quoted in Hult 1996:67) indicates "… *if one is going to have a self-administered questionnaire, one must reconcile oneself to closed questions, that is, questions that can be answered by checking a box or circling the proper response from a set provided by the researcher."*

The decision to make use of closed questions was furthermore motivated by the following advantages of using such a method as provided by various authors:

Bailey (1987:118) highlights the following advantages of making use of closed questions:

- Standard answers which can be compared from person to person are achieved. That would be more appropriate particularly in the case of comparing perceptions of various cultural groups.
- Answers are much easier to be coded and analyzed. This point is corroborated by May (1993:78) when indicating that closed questions

"…limit the number of possible answers to be given and therefore can be pre-coded so that each answer may be given a specific number for the purpose of analysis."

- Respondents are often clearer about the meaning of a question. The importance on clarity of questions is that appropriate and usable responses would be provided.
- It becomes easy for respondents to answer because they only have to choose a category.

Various authors are also positive about the use of closed questions, for instance:

Fowler (1993:82-23) further provides the motivation as to why closed questions should be preferred and confirms the above-mentioned advantages of using closed-ended questions:

- The respondent can perform more reliably the task of answering the question when response alternatives are given.
- The researcher can perform more reliably the task of interpreting the meaning of answers when the alternatives are given to the respondent.
- When a completely open question is asked, many people give relatively rare answers that are not analytically useful.

In addition, Bailey (1987:118) provides the following advantages of using closed questions:

- Answers thereof are standard and can be compared from person to person.
- Answers are much easier to code and analyze.
- The respondent is often clearer about the meaning of the question.

- Answers are relatively complete and a minimum of irrelevant responses is received.
- They are often easier for a respondent to answer because of only being required to choose a category.

May (1993:78) indicates that "... *the advantages of closed questions are that they are cheaper to use and analyse relative to open questions and they also permit comparability between people's answers.*" In view of the fact that this research project deals with a multicultural situation where perceptions of people from various cultural racial groups are a factor, it became indispensable to use closed questions. This method would facilitate the process of coding which is, as pointed out by Moser & Kalton (quoted in May 1993:78), basically intended "... *to classify the answers to a question into meaningful categories, so as to bring out their essential patterns.*"

- **Results of the pilot study**

The following results were obtained through the pilot study:

- Unclear questions were identified.
- Unnecessary questions were pointed out.
- Unanticipated answers were discovered.
- It also became apparent that it was not necessary to include the category of 'Registrar' because of not dealing with student issues on the ground.

Consequently, the use of closed questions only became a practical possibility. Thus, the pilot study contributed to the finalization of the main questionnaire.

However, before the main questionnaire could be finalized, a preliminary survey, which is explained in the next paragraph, had to be conducted.

4.3.4 Preliminary survey

-       **Purpose**

A preliminary survey was conducted before the main questionnaire could be administered. This survey was accomplished through university authorities during April 2000. A one-page questionnaire as reflected in Addendum 2 was used for this purpose.

The main reason for the preliminary survey was to determine the sample size for the main questionnaire. Hence, the necessity that all ten historically white universities in South Africa be subjected to the survey. In addition, the other reasons are as follows:

- To establish the current racial composition of students.
- To establish whether student affairs officers are currently racially representative.
- To determine the current extent of racial representation within student structures, such as Student Representative Councils (SRC) and Residence Committees.

-       **Results of the preliminary survey**

The following ten historically white universities were involved: Rhodes University, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Port Elizabeth, University of the Orange Free State, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, "Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys", University of Stellenbosch, University of Natal, and Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit. However, after several attempts, responses could not be secured from the University of Natal, University of Stellenbosch and Rand Afrikaans University. Thus, of the ten universities, seven responded.

The preliminary survey led to the following findings about the seven historically white universities that participated in the survey:

Table 4.4:   When were Black, Coloured, and Indian students admitted for the first time?

University	Year
University of the Witwatersrand	1920
Rhodes University	1977
University of Port Elizabeth	1979
University of Cape Town	1980
University of Pretoria	1982
"Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys"	1990
University of the Orange Free State	1994

- As reflected in Table 4.4, historically white universities started to admit students from other racial groups (Black, Coloured, and Indian) in as early as the nineteen twenties, specifically the University of the Witwatersrand. Whereas the admission of other racial groups at other historically white universities started in 1977 and the last was in 1994.

- According to the information as indicated in Table 4.5, White students are still in the majority. However, the numbers of black students have significantly increased at other universities.

The numbers reflected in Table 4.5, reflect the actual numbers of full-time students.

- The general picture of the seven universities in terms of racial composition of student population reflects the following averages:

Total Black students	=	4110
Total White students	=	7547
Total Coloured students	=	698
Total Indian students	=	812

Table 4.5:   Total numbers of students per race

University	Student numbers			
	Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Rhodes University	1039	2311	136	457
University of the Witwatersrand	6398	7982	371	2570
University of Port Elizabeth	2078	2927	740	256
University of the Orange Free State	4379	5475	395	99
University of Cape Town	6847	9178	2278	1437
University of Pretoria	7765	22379	270	866
"Potchefstroom Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys"	620	7312	88	50
Total	29126	57564	4278	5735

- In most universities, with the exception of the University of Pretoria and the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys, white students are no longer in the majority.

In as far as student structures such as the Student Representative Council (SRC) and Residence structures are concerned, different situations regarding racial representation was obtained. Table 4.6 provides information regarding racial representation in the SRC.

Table 4.6:   Racial representation in the Student Representative Council

University	SRC			
	Black	White	Coloured	Indian
Rhodes University	11	3	1	1
University of the Witwatersrand	13	1	0	0
University of Port Elizabeth	7	0	0	3
University of the Orange Free State	2	15	0	0
University of Cape Town	10	3	2	0
University of Pretoria	9	41	1	1
Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys	2	16	0	0

Generally, in the composition of SRC-structures, racial representation has been achieved to a certain extent. Lack of racial representation in the SRC-structures at other universities could possibly be attributed to the small number of Coloured and Indian students as reflected in Table 4.5. For instance, Coloured and Indian students are not represented in the SRC at the University of the Witwatersrand, University of the Orange Free State and Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys. However, it is important to note that at the University of Port Elizabeth White students are not represented in the SRC at all. Furthermore, White students constitute a very small minority in the SRC at Rhodes University, University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town.

Concerning the question whether residence student structures are racially representative, three of the seven universities, as pointed out in Table 4.7, indicated that student structures in residences are not yet racially representative. These are the University of the Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria and Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys.

However, the University of the Witwatersrand indicated that there are no White students in the residences.

Table 4.7: Do resident student leadership structures reflect the racial composition of students?

Institution	Response
Rhodes University	Yes
University of the Witwatersrand	No
University of Port Elizabeth	Yes
University of the Orange Free State	Yes
University of Cape Town	Yes
University of Pretoria	No
Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys"	No

The four universities that indicated that residence student structures are racially representative indicated that this was achieved through the democratic election process.

Table 4.8: Are student affairs officers racially representative?

Institution	Response
Rhodes University	Yes
University of the Witwatersrand	Yes
University of Port Elizabeth	Yes
University of the Orange Free State	No
University of Cape Town	Yes
University of Pretoria	Yes
Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys"	No

Furthermore, according to Table 4.8, of the seven universities, it is only at two universities where student affairs officers are not racially representative.

The success of this process made it possible to evenly determine the number of respondents at each university for the final questionnaire, which is discussed in the following paragraph.

4.3.5 The final questionnaire

-        Orientation

The final questionnaire (Addendum 1) was actually the end-product of the literature study contained in Chapters 1 and 2 and the pilot study. It was used as a tool to gather information related to change management and conflict resolution within the context of student affairs in historically white universities in South Africa. The administration of the final questionnaire will contribute to realizing the aim of the study as reflected in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5. That would lead to the successful management of change and the efficient and effective aversion or resolution of conflicts in historically white universities in South Africa.

As a result, appropriate questions had to be formulated. It was ensured as suggested by Hult (1996:67) that the questionnaire is clear, direct and understandable to the target population. Obviously, if that is not ensured responses may not necessarily reflect the real perceptions of the respondents. Results and interpretation thereof may be wrong. Consequently, the problem may not be resolved. In order to ensure that suitable questions are formulated, the following guidelines as provided by Bailey (1987:108-115) were taken into consideration:

- The study should be relevant to the respondent.

  In order to secure positive involvement of respondents, the study must be relevant to them. That can be done by way of explaining the purpose of the study to them.

- Questions should be relevant to the stated goals of the study.

  Respondents will positively participate in a research project provided the purpose of the study is relevant to them. Consequently, it becomes imperative for questions to be relevant to the purpose of the study in order to ensure positively increased participation of respondents.

- Questions should be relevant to the respondent.

  If questions are directed to two or more different populations, their relevance may not be the same.

- Double-barreled questions should be avoided.

  It is important to avoid including two or more questions in one because it may not be easy to establish for which question the answer is. The respondents may also become confused.

- Questions should not be ambiguous.

  Word selection in formulating a question is crucial because the use of difficult words will result in ambiguity.

- Using two or three words when one would suffice must be avoided.

  Questions should be kept as short as possible. Words should be carefully selected to avoid double meaning.

- Questions that would lead to a specific answer must be avoided.

  The danger of such questions is that the answers of respondents may be biased and a particular response is generated.

- Sensitive or threatening questions must be avoided.

  Such questions will generate normative answers, i.e. that respondents may provide false responses for the sake of complying with their norms.

The following aspects served as the source of information as well as the foundation for the formulation of questions:

- Information provided by the literature study regarding change and conflict.
- Experience of the researcher as a student affairs officer and involved in processes of change management and conflict resolution.
- The pilot study.
- The preliminary survey on the current situation at historically white universities in South Africa.

- **The structure**

The questionnaire was divided into four categories, namely:

- Section A: Particulars of respondents

This section would ensure diversity as far as race and various categories of people within student affairs are concerned. Different perceptions from a diversity of people were crucial to ensure racially representative findings. Such findings would then lead to the formulation of recommendations, which would benefit the entire student population equally.

- Section B: Composition of student affairs staff

The intention with this section was to establish how respondents perceived the question of the racial composition of staff within student affairs. Reasons as to why student affairs staff should be racially representative or not, were to be established.

- Section C: Change

It was significant to establish how all the role players in universities perceived change and how they thought it should be managed.

- Section D: Conflict

Recommendations for efficient and effective management of conflict would also be reinforced by what people perceive as causes of conflict and how conflict could be resolved. As a result, this section was intended to establish views of people regarding conflict management.

The questionnaire was constructed in a manner that would guarantee confidentiality in order to ensure truthful responses. Furthermore, compliance with some of the ground rules for the formulation of a questionnaire was ensured. Such rules are indicated by Borg and Gall (1989:430-431):

- ensuring clarity of questions;
- stating short questions; and
- avoiding negativity and biased questions.

In addition, in order to guarantee consistent responses, it was ensured as highlighted by Fowler (1993:70) that:

- every respondent is asked the same set of questions;
- questions are adequately worded; and
- questions have the same meaning to every respondent.

- **Administering the questionnaire**

In view of the disadvantage that may be experienced when mailing questionnaires, the researcher physically took the questionnaires to the four universities, namely the University of the Orange Free State, University of Cape Town, Rhodes University and University of Pretoria. Appointments with the deans of students were secured. Arrangements were made to the effect that student groups as well as personnel within student affairs be organized in line with the categories reflected in Table 4.2.

It was, to a great extent, very easy to work with students and staff members at the residences. It was very difficult to work with the day students even though ultimately the efforts turned to be a success. The same arrangements to secure the involvement of day students were made at three universities with the exception of Rhodes University where the questionnaire had to be

left with the Deputy Dean of Students. Student leaders were made available. Student leaders made it possible for the researcher to meet students at various places of relaxation, including restaurants. It was time consuming and strenuous to explain the questionnaire to the various students and groups. But with the help of student leaders, the efforts paid dividends. Nonetheless, a 100% response could not be secured. The final response rate is as reflected in Table 4.9 below:

Table 4.9:   Final response rate

Capacity	Number
Female Resident Students	101
Male Resident Students	83
Male Day Students	78
Female Day Students	71
SRC Members	37
Residence Head (Female residences)	21
House Committee Chairpersons (Male residences)	18
Residence Head (Male residences)	15
House Committee Chairpersons (Female residences)	15
Dean of Students	4
SRC President	3
Total	**446**

According to Behr (1988:162) the results of an empirical research study will lack validity if the response rate is below 70%. In such a situation, a follow-up study would be required. However, as far as this empirical research study is concerned, the response rate as indicated in Table 4.9 is 82%. Thus, the validity of the research study has been achieved.

The advantages of physically distributing the questionnaires have been experienced to be as follows:

- high response rate is guaranteed;
- respondents have an opportunity of asking for clarity in case of need; and
- the research process is expedited.

However, this method also has some hindrances. For instance;

- financial constraints;
- time limitation; and
- respondents not honoring appointments.

4.4   Summary

The above-mentioned methods that were applied for the gathering of information may not have been perfect. However, these methods ensured to a great extent that people responded which guaranteed the determining of particular perceptions regarding change management and conflict resolution at historically white universities in South Africa. The findings are further outlined in the following chapter.