

Chapter 5

Research Design, Data and Interpretation of Results

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Chapter 5

What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to
Geertz

The Research Design, Data and Interpretation of Results

5.0 Introduction

Klein (1999) reminds us that interpretivists of all flavours should heed the often forgotten dictum that data without theory is blind and theory without data is empty. We have used various theories to construct the analysis framework presented in chapter 4, which we believe will enable us to “see” something from the data we are presenting in this chapter. Our belief is based on the fact that the research questions we have used in generating the data were constructed in accordance with a theoretically sound and sufficiently broad process-based research framework which traversed the entire research problem space. We therefore believe that it is reasonable to expect the analysis framework not to result in some blindness, even if the theories used in it are different from that used to generate the research questions. This is consistent with published work on interpretive research. For instance Walsham and Sahay (1999) used ethnographic criteria to assess the quality of their research even though their work is not an ethnography, while Geertz (1973), an ethnographer, used hermeneutics. Sawyer (2001) reports about a multi-method qualitative research approach in which *dissimilar* data sets drawn on the *same phenomena* were analysed. The phenomena in our study is the introduction of the concept of justification to the group decision-making process. Furthermore, in responding to critics of the basis of his structuration theory, Giddens had this to say:

“If ideas are important and illuminating, what matters much more than their origins is to be able to sharpen them so as to demonstrate their usefulness, even if within a framework which might be quite different from that which helped to engender them” (Giddens, 1984, p.xxii).

Through interpreting the data, we hope to obtain new theoretical insights and an enhanced understanding in line with the purpose of this research, which we have stated as:

To acquire an enhanced understanding of the group decision-making process and the potential benefits this process could obtain through the introduction of the concept of justification.

To identify, describe and interpret the possible implications brought about by this justification process for GSS use and design ideals.

Three data sets are presented in this chapter. The first set is obtained through a survey-like (open-ended and non-quantitative) questionnaire and is presented in Part I, while the second and third are obtained through *interpretive experiments* (Klein and Myers, 2001, p. 229). Although the practice thereof is not new, interpretive experiments are a relatively new classification proposed by Klein and Myers in the interpretive IS research literature. In interpretive experiments, the data is gathered from contrived (or artificially created) situations, whereas in field studies the data is gathered from natural (or rather, social) settings (Klein and Myers, 2001). The GSS use sessions were in a way contrived in the sense that they were planned laboratory exercises which the students performed as part of their learning programme. We would have preferred to classify the GSS use sessions as 'field studies' because they were meetings of students - held at a special venue for holding meetings of that nature, and meetings are social settings. We also made some observations, had informal discussions with the students during breaks and made some notes. However, because the focus was more on the technology use, they are better classified as interpretive experiments. For ease of reference and for the sake of familiarity of most IS researchers with case studies, we will refer to the GSS sessions as *case studies*¹. The data generated through these GSS use sessions is presented in Part II.

¹ This should not be read as reflecting a lack of understanding of what case studies are, but rather as an emphasis on the importance of the classification schemes proposed by Klein and Myers (2001). While

Part I: Generating the text through a survey-like questionnaire

5.1 *The questionnaire and its rationale*

All interpretivists, us included, would agree that the most appropriate data collection method in a study such as this is a field study of an ethnographic nature. According to Cavaye (1996), field studies take place in the natural environment of the phenomenon. The researcher enters the field with a priori definition of constructs and uses systematic techniques for the collection and recording of data. In order to account and understand how groups go about justifying their decisions, an interpretivist would acceptably argue that the researcher should be immersed in the actual practice *in situ*, looking at how groups routinely enact the decision justification process (Silverman, 1998). At face value, it may seem unusual therefore that we instead have used a survey-like, open-ended questionnaire or open-ended interview in collecting data for this part of the research. Typically, surveys are often usefully utilised to obtain descriptive information on “hard” issues (Sahay and Walsham, 1995). This choice of data collection method was made after considerable thought about (a) the theoretical and conceptual considerations (b) practical considerations and the nature of the problem being studied.

(a) *The theoretical and conceptual considerations*

One could have chosen to be a participating observer in collecting empirical data. Quoting Schutz (1973), Ngwenyama (1996) notes that without participating observation, empirical materials can often be incomprehensible to the researcher, and interpreted from the researcher’s own alienated perspective. Furthermore, the researcher may find it difficult or impossible to develop a valid theoretical explanation of the phenomena, in the absence of the understanding gained by such observation. This is a valid argument and we will not attempt to undermine its validity. However, taking this route would have meant that in producing the text, we would have relied only on our self-produced account of the phenomena. Although

interpretive field studies are a better understood classification, interpretive experiments, although not necessarily new, are a relatively new classification.

An analysis of group decision justification and its implications for GSS use and design ideals

this would have been acceptable within the interpretive tradition, we preferred to have an account (the text) as presented by key informant representatives of the groups. Because of the nature of the research problem under consideration, neither of these choices would have resulted in a better text. Although objectivity in our observations would not have been an issue of concern, we took note of the following remark by Churchman (1968), expressed in Mitroff and Linstone (1993):

“One of the most absurd myths of the social sciences is the “objectivity” that is alleged to occur in the relation between the scientist-observer and the people he (or she) observes. He (or she) really thinks he (or she) can stand apart and objectively observe how people behave, what their attitudes are, how they think, how they decide.... [it is a] silly and empty claim that an observation is objective if it resides in the brain of an unbiased observer.” (Mitroff and Linstone, 1993, p. 89).

To us this meant that even though our own subjectivity would have been acceptable in the production of the text from the observations, we still would not have been able to capture everything. We however do not deny the fact that observations would perhaps have given us a different insight, but both Boland (1991) and Lee (1994) would argue that an equally rich insight could also come from the text as presented by the key informant representatives of the groups. As long as we heed Schwartzmann’s (1993) advice that here, unlike in many interview studies, we need not treat organisational members’ accounts as true or false indicators of organisational realities but as *narratives* with specific functions (for example shaping and sustaining images of the organisation). Our choice then became a matter of informed judgement. Because our research method is an interpretive understanding through hermeneutics, what eventually matters most is the *text*. In this respect, Radnitzky (1970, p. 27) cites Gadamer as saying that “we don’t have to imagine oneself in the place of some other person; rather, we have to understand *what* these thoughts or the sentences expressing them are all *about*”. Also, according to Lee (1994), the researcher can also develop his or her interpretive understanding through a hermeneutic interpretation of the subjects’ *documentary*

artefacts. The responses presented in Table 5.0 obtained through the use of a survey-like questionnaire are documentary artefacts of the subjects.

(b) *Practical considerations and the nature of the research problem*

Although instances where established groups in organisations are challenged to justify their decision are not rare, especially in the new South Africa, such a social practice is not yet prevalent. An outside observer into a situation where a group is undertaking the decision justification process would thus be a sensitive matter. It is for this reason that we propose as part of this study a *decision justification social practice* - a social practice which could, in a practical way, reduce this sensitivity by exposing and preparing decision-making groups to a particular way that could accompany their decision-making processes. We believe that such a social practice is achievable and we propose it later in this chapter and further expand on it in the last chapter. In the absence of the prevalence of this social practice, the best that one could have done would have been to observe the normal group decision-making processes of various groups. This exercise would however been less than helpful to our study.

Based on the considerations presented in (a) and (b), we concluded that the survey-like approach is the best data collection method for this part of our study which is consistent with the regime of truth espoused in the hermeneutic tradition.

What remains now is for us to describe the logics of the questionnaire, how it was designed and administered and why it was administered in that way. We do this in the next section.

How the questionnaire was designed and administered

We have already indicated in chapter 3 and in the introduction of this chapter that a process-based research framework described by Roode (1993) was used in generating the research

questions. Eight open-ended questions which spanned the entire research problem space were formulated. Accordingly, these were the *What is? Why is? How does? and How*

should? type questions. Responses to the questionnaire were to be in the form of written text by key informant representatives of decision-making groups within identified organisations. The organisations identified were those that according to us, were perceived to be routinely engaged in making decisions which have major social implications. This is in keeping with the philosophy of the social construction of technology about which Sahay *et al.* (1994) advise that sampling and data gathering be conducted amongst relevant social groups, rather than aiming at a representative sample of the total population, as would be the case in positivistic research. The questionnaire was mailed to 200 CEOs of such identified organisations in February 2000. A three months period of data collection was allowed. 53 responses were received, with 30 fully completed questionnaires by the end of April of the same year. Two of the respondents preferred face-to-face interviews while two others preferred to have a telephone conversation. These responses were transcribed onto the questionnaires by ourselves. The remaining 19 of the responses were in the form of letters, explaining why it was not possible for them to complete the questionnaire. Although not included on the text as presented in Table 5.0, the explanations are, however, very helpful and are thus considered as part of the empirical data and would thus be interpreted as well. The response rate to the questionnaire was thus 26.5%. The covering letter which accompanied the questionnaire, the sample of the questionnaire itself as well as a list of organisations to whom the questionnaire was sent are separately available. The text from the 34 respondents is shown in Table 5.0 in the next section.

5.2 *The text: responses to the questionnaire (raw data)*

Table 5.0 below contains the eight questions that were asked together with exact responses from the 34 respondents. Other than to observe confidentiality, we did not edit the responses. Regarding the letters, some were very interesting while others indicated time

constraints as their reason for not responding. Here is an example of a very interesting letter response:

“Given the nature of his diplomatic functions, Ambassador X does not unfortunately respond to this kind of initiative. He wishes you well in your study.”

Another interesting observation was that a few respondents took great efforts to respond to a request they did not read. Here is an example showing that the respondent miss read the heading of the request - and clearly never read the rest of the request, even though it consisted of only seven words (the heading read: request for your assistance in the study):

“Thank you for your application dated 26 February 2000. Your request for financial assistance was carefully considered but we are unable to offer you support. We realize the importance of your work and wish you the best of luck in seeking funds elsewhere.”

Three respondents were concerned about confidentiality issues while one was upfront about receiving a copy of the thesis once completed. Generally, the letters reflects different meanings which the respondents attached to the request to assist in responding to the questionnaire. We will attempt in Part III to interpret these meanings.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/ department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
1	Some decisions are based on proposals that are submitted by our partner organisations to fund their projects. When this proposals are declined, it is necessary to give an explanation, especially for key organisations or individuals who occupy important positions.	Even those that don't deserve a response, the organisation is courteous to respond.	Not to side-track on our focus and strategy. Budget reasons	When a proposal is received, acknowledgement is done telephonically, then a formal letter is sent to explain the decision.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of IT expenditure (amounts on types etc.) mostly of a capital nature • Types of IT Infrastructure (hardware, software) supported standards etc. • Levels of development, maintenance effort on new and current systems • Staffing levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always respond based on facts & projected future (where applicable) • Response always provided, even if simply stating the obvious. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the situation that IT department is ultimately and fully responsible for total IT (infrastructure, projects, daily activities, provision of info etc.) in this organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrange meeting with relevant/affected parties, where necessary. - Communicate in writing (i.e. e-mail) where appropriate. - Clarify telephonically depending on type of decision. - Use existing (management level) where appropriate & affecting a number of business areas.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6	QUESTION 7	QUESTION 8
	<i>Are you generally satisfied with the way your organisation/department go about responding to such a need for decision justification, or is there perhaps a particular way which you think should be followed?</i>	<i>List some of the tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions.</i>	<i>In your view, are these tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions well understood by those who need to use them when such a need arises?</i>	<i>Do you find that people readily accept these explanations given within the available procedures and frameworks, or you are sometimes compelled to revisit such procedures and frameworks?</i>
1	I think I am satisfied	Usual procedures is to sit down with other managers, discuss the matter and make a decision. No particular tools are used. Objectives of the organisation give framework on decision making.	Yes, especially procedures.	People usually understand and accept the explanations.
2	-----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business intelligence software - Project management procedures - Discussion at meetings - Informal discussions - Change control procedures 	Yes, not a large organisation - prefers a quick and efficient resolution.	Sometimes need to explain in greater detail, especially if party is not fully informed about procedures or background info. (i.e. situation history etc.)

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RESPONDENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
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3	Yes, I always have to explain or justify my decisions to the MEC, the Head of Department, the Executive Committee of the Provincial Legislature, the National Department of Education, the Trade Unions and the communities served by the Department. When services of redundant teachers are terminated, when over expenditure on personnel occurs, when new posts have to be created, those decisions have to be justified to all stakeholders	I find them compelling because they have a profound impact on other stakeholders in education.	Because the decisions we take have an impact on the future of qualitative education and the needs of all learners - young and old - and the economy of our province and country.	We call the relevant stakeholders to a meeting and give purpose and reasons why certain decisions were taken. We also use the bargaining fora to disseminate information, print and electronic media are also used.
4	Yes: - Within the department, decision must be explained in order to facilitate its implementation - contributes to the "buying-in" process. - The structure of the Institution requires some explanations at a higher level- i.e. Faculty Board. - The dynamic nature of the IT field warrants explanation of some decisions especially IT - illiterate persons.	In most instances, it is useful and contributes towards a culture of openness. However, where questions are deliberately phrased so as to react negatively to a decision - no additional justification will help.	missing page	missing page

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6	QUESTION 7	QUESTION 8
	<i>Are you generally satisfied with the way your organisation/department go about responding to such a need for decision justification, or is there perhaps a particular way which you think should be followed?</i>	<i>List some of the tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions.</i>	<i>In your view, are these tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions well understood by those who need to use them when such a need arises?</i>	<i>Do you find that people readily accept these explanations given within the available procedures and frameworks, or you are sometimes compelled to revisit such procedures and frameworks?</i>
3	I am relatively satisfied but there is room for improvement. I wish we could be connected to more stakeholders, such as schools and district offices, through e-mail or computer networking to communicate more frequently and faster.	Education Management Information System Consultations in bargaining forums, legal services, legislation, the budget, etc.	The understanding ranges from fair to sound.	Some people accept readily, more especially those in management echelons, but unions often question our decisions.
4	-----	Distribution of documentation prior to making the decision. Major decisions are ratified at higher levels - Faculty board, Senate, etc.	Yes.	No. Our policy-making procedures lacks a feedback loop - sometimes causes difficulty.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
5	Yes. XXX is an independent organisation attached to YY. Regular feedback to a management board takes place twice a year. Important decisions are taken in consultation with the Dean of Humanities.	Adequate	Transparency, openness, other opinions and to cover myself	Planning internally Motivation- preparation Presentation
6	Yes. WWW is a public institution that is called on by the press to provide information on & to explain certain national policy processes.	Compelling	As a public institution whose decisions may affect the functioning of the economy, it is imperative that we provide the reasoning behind organisational decisions.	Press releases and in certain instances granting interviews with serious constituency representatives.
7	Staff Board of Directors Public International secretariat/Board	Deserving Necessary	To justify reasons given for action	Some: verbal explanations Some: verbal and the minuted Some: written

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	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
8	Yes. Budget for IT Principles for IT architecture Key decisions desktop issues that affect users	Normally these directly impact budgets and people, therefore take them seriously.	Support functions and broad institutional frameworks require agreement to be sustainable	Task forces are used to do the planning and joint working sessions to get buy-in.
9	- Peromnes evaluation - man - Industry - Advisory committee - (IT) - student visits - Potential students and their parents: individual, school visits, - General - individual visits from government officials & other industries. - Students, SRC - Dean, staff	I market my department with every opportunity I get. I see justification of decisions as a way to help others understand what we try to achieve in it.	For the purpose of transparency so that stakeholders can be motivated to work together towards a goal(s).	Opportunities for decision justification: - Peromnes - Meetings - Informal sessions - Strategic planning sessions

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6	QUESTION 7	QUESTION 8
	<i>Are you generally satisfied with the way your organisation/department go about responding to such a need for decision justification, or is there perhaps a particular way which you think should be followed?</i>	<i>List some of the tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions.</i>	<i>In your view, are these tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions well understood by those who need to use them when such a need arises?</i>	<i>Do you find that people readily accept these explanations given within the available procedures and frameworks, or you are sometimes compelled to revisit such procedures and frameworks?</i>
8	No serious problems but ensuring commitment to decisions actually “sticks” is important	Thinktools for strategy. Structured problem analysis (based on theory of constraints) for action planning Total cost of ownership for IT	JIT education is normally sufficient.	TCO has to be revisited.
9	Justification of decisions depend a lot on individual drive. Options mentioned above should be sufficient.	Strategic planning (limited) General policies & procedures (limited) Management (limited)	Mostly	Frameworks have to be revisited - creating a chaotic environment not conducive for decision-making.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
10	Meeting of University bodies, interviews with staff members and student bodies, state departments, press, parents of students, other interested persons from the private and public sector.	Mostly reasonable	To give clarity in cases of misunderstanding or rumours; to be transparent, to build a good image of the institution, to promote communication with staff.	Regular communiqués and circulars from the Vice-Chancellor/members of Management/ Public relations section depending on the topic and nature of decisions.
11	Yes. The department is called upon to justify: - what we include in the curriculum from both a theoretical and practical point of view; - why we do or do not accept an application from a student for leave of absence; - why an application for a supplementary or special examination is not approved; - why we do or do not accept an application from a student for credit for a course taken at another institution; - why we do or do not accept an application from a student to register for a particular course or degree.	In some instances, the application is so weak that a response is almost not deserving. At other times, the applicant or requester deserves to know why a particular decision has been made.	Consistency of application of decisions or more appropriately that a consistent process is followed must be seen to be working. On a more down to earth note, applicants are sometimes woefully ill-informed that they need to be told why certain decisions have been made.	Both the process and the rules for making decisions are clearly defined, so that when a decision must be justified, it can be done relatively swiftly and with limited problems. Again, on a more down to earth note, all requests are made in writing as all are responses. Most decisions are accompanied by a reason (justification?) why.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

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	<i>Are you generally satisfied with the way your organisation/department go about responding to such a need for decision justification, or is there perhaps a particular way which you think should be followed?</i>	<i>List some of the tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions.</i>	<i>In your view, are these tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions well understood by those who need to use them when such a need arises?</i>	<i>Do you find that people readily accept these explanations given within the available procedures and frameworks, or you are sometimes compelled to revisit such procedures and frameworks?</i>
10	Generally satisfied. There is always room for improvement.	See 4 above. Also regular consultations via visits by Management members to departments/divisions; work- lunches with senior staff members (academic and non-academic), meetings of vice-chancellor with all staff, availability of complaint channels, as well as a Staff Forum and institutional Forum, etc.	Yes, provided that all written documentation is available in Afrikaans and English.	Generally satisfied. Where necessary, revision takes place through processes of consultation.
11	Satisfied. However, rules and procedures can always be amplified and made easier to understand so as to obviate or limit future justifications.	These may seem somewhat abstract: - precedent; - context (the department operates within the context of the Faculty, University) - Full departmental discussion to establish principle, process and rule. - Full records to ensure a firm and reliable basis from which to make a decision (the full current academic record of a student, including attendance record, is attached to an application for any concession from a student.	Mostly	Most applicants accept, albeit grudgingly, the decisions and associated explanations. However, it would be true to say that, true to life, each applicant vigorously contends, that they are a special case warranting different treatment. This should not be construed as a weakness of the system or the justification or the process of justification of its decisions.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
12	Yes, in decisions that affect the work in terms of time and resource requirements from other departments.	In such occasions, I find them compelling due to the fact that failure to justify means there will be little or no co-operation.	Because people normally only respond positively to issues when they are explained or justified	When we realise that our actions require co-operation from other departments.
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To the Director General who is the Executive head of the province. - To Head of department in which the information technology department resides - To the central information technology committee that functions as the official IT governance in the province. -To the departmental IT committee - IT governance at provincial departments level 	In all the above occasions it is reasonable to expect some form of justification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important to communicate the rationale for setting strategic direction - Ensures that decisions are better understood and accepted by stakeholders - Justification establishes a logical and rational need for the decision made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual presentations - Workshops - Meetings (group) - Meetings (one-to-one)

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10	Generally satisfied. There is always room for improvement.	See 4 above. Also regular consultations via visits by Management members to departments/divisions; work- lunches with senior staff members (academic and non-academic), meetings of vice-chancellor with all staff, availability of complaint channels, as well as a Staff Forum and institutional Forum, etc.	Yes, provided that all written documentation is available in Afrikaans and English.	Generally satisfied. Where necessary, revision takes place through processes of consultation.
11	Satisfied. However, rules and procedures can always be amplified and made easier to understand so as to obviate or limit future justifications.	These may seem somewhat abstract: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - precedent; - context (the department operates within the context of the Faculty, University) - Full departmental discussion to establish principle, process and rule. - Full records to ensure a firm and reliable basis from which to make a decision (the full current academic record of a student, including attendance record, is attached to an application for any concession from a student. 	Mostly	Most applicants accept, albeit grudgingly, the decisions and associated explanations. However, it would be true to say that, true to life, each applicant vigorously contends, that they are a special case warranting different treatment. This should not be construed as a weakness of the system or the justification or the process of justification of its decisions.

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	<i>Are you generally satisfied with the way your organisation/department go about responding to such a need for decision justification, or is there perhaps a particular way which you think should be followed?</i>	<i>List some of the tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions.</i>	<i>In your view, are these tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions well understood by those who need to use them when such a need arises?</i>	<i>Do you find that people readily accept these explanations given within the available procedures and frameworks, or you are sometimes compelled to revisit such procedures and frameworks?</i>
12	Things work generally very well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memos/ e-mails - Staff meetings/ interdepartmental meetings 	Yes they are commonly used (understood?)	Mostly people accept these explanations.
13	Yes, generally satisfied.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central information technology committee governance process - Departmental information technology committee governance process - Documented IT policy and strategy - Documented conceptual architecture - Documented IT domain architecture Master systems plan framework 	Well understood but perhaps not used effectively.	Sometimes compelled to revisit.

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	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
14	<p>There are numerous occasions. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain budget limitations to project managers - Justify office expenditures vs. head office organisation - Explain to local organisations reasons for impossibility to meet their requests for funding. - Justify overhead costs to recipients for funding 	Need for justification/explanation varies. There are occasions/instances which do not require/deserve a response. On many occasions clients superiors or staff members may reasonably expect explanations.	Decisions should be transparent. If no reasons were given, clients, superiors or staff would suspect that the decision was arbitrary. Also in order to maintain client satisfaction, reasons should be given.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Response by phone and explain. - Call a meeting and explain - Written response - Regular reporting and sharing of information during management team meetings - If necessary request or provide additional information.
15	Yes - If related to our line of work	Yes	It is necessary if not fully understood by person(s) enquiring	Detailed explanation and patience
16	Yes. e.g. explain national librarianship vis-à-vis academic, public, education, special libraries.	In my organisation's own interest.	explain national librarianship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal - Newsletters - Listservers

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14	If possible by delegation of responsibility to persons directly involved, to meet requirement of informed decisions. Increased delegation would however require double-checking.	- Organisational handbook (our), now also available on CD-ROM and via internet. - Signing powers for financial transactions remain with office director and personnel seconded from Germany. Regular management team and staff meetings.	Generally Yes. We try to give additional explanations if required and provide additional training and/or coaching if some rules are not so well understood, there is a need to standardise some of our procedures (standard replies to recurring requests)	At the request of the South African government, we have revisited some of our procedures and frameworks with a view to simplifying and streamlining approvals of projects or preparatory activities for projects.
15	Once fully explained we are satisfied.	Verbal and written	Yes.	People are mostly satisfied but if necessary topic will be revisited.
16	OK	- Budget - Strategic Planning Committee - Legislation - Board - Market needs/ requirements	OK.	Fair to good Unions often different matter

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17	As YYY is a funding organisation, one of our department's main functions is to draw up appraisals to present to the trustees or board for funding. This entails long justifications as to why a particular project should be funded.	This type of justification is part of our core job.	Yes, no decision should ever be taken without some thought and this should inform any justifications required.	The department has set report formats and meetings (as mentioned above) for such needs
18	We often have to justify decisions: - To funders in terms of how we have used their money [via funding reports] - To clients during projects, as part of measuring progress [usually during meetings] - To ourselves, as we chart the broad direction of the organisation and ensure it is in line with our vision/mission [during weekly/annual planning sessions] -To our Trustees, in terms of broad vision [during BI-annual meetings]	The above are all compelling in principle. Sometimes there is a mismatch between clients/funder expectation and our contractual agreement, and this can lead to problems.	Because we need to be held accountable for our actions, and have to ensure that we meet client/funder expectations. We also have to ensure that we do not lose sight of our organisational mission in the hurly-burly of daily activity.	We have broad planning frameworks, project justification tools, and budgeting templates to help us make decisions. Meetings are a critical way of responding.

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17	I am generally satisfied however, meetings do tend to spend little time discussing justifications.	Project appraisal formats, report formats, meetings, discussions, etc.	Mostly	People readily accept them.
18	Generally satisfied - sometimes we get overwhelmed by the quantity of work and time for making decisions becomes a problem.	See answer to 4.	Generally well understood	Sometimes we have to revisit them - also form a useful archive.

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19	Upgrades for infrastructure for budgets. Salary increases to unions and staff. New producers or processes.	In most cases on reasonable and satisfactory grounds.	Due to technical nature of IT, it is necessary to justify decisions in terms that is understandable . IT interfaces with most functions, e.g. finance, administration, human resources, etc.	Personal contact and/or written response
20	As a statutory body, SSS is accountable to the public and social partners. policy decisions are determined by the government, business & labour. These reps are accountable to their constituencies, and decisions are in consultation with their constituencies. SSS receives queries (relating to circumstances surrounding a case usually) from external bodies, which are explained in a response. Departments & provinces need to explain decisions in management meetings & possibly to the governing body.	As a statutory body, we are required to consider each query as deserving a response. Most queries stem from a lack of understanding of legislation and SSS policies & procedures, and it is one of the SSS's functions disseminate such information.	We are a public funded institution. We are a statutory body and our functions are legislated. Criticism is important to ensure we are responsive to the public's needs - justifying decisions is part of this.	In writing for external If an internal query, possibly in writing or in a meeting (ad hoc or scheduled)

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19	A written response with personal contact to explain or sort out differences or misconceptions, depending on the complexity of the decision	Management Information Mathematical Models Spreadsheets Presentations Workshops	No, not always.	Sometimes compelled to revisit e.g. resource restrictions (e.g. budget)
20	The means of responding currently is appropriate.	- Year planner - Action plans - Technology - information dissemination - Staff meetings - Reporting ensured in monthly reports	Yes, they do. One major problem with communicating decisions is “information overdrive” where too much information is communicated to staff thus diluting the impact of decisions - this is particularly common with the use of e-mail where documents are so easily distributed.	It is common that procedures and frameworks are revisited. This is particularly due to the TTT being a relatively new organisation, which is regularly amending policies and procedures, and undergoing more restructuring.

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21	Yes, such occasions do arise.	The occasions are usually compelling, but may also not deserve response.	The reasons for justification are related (1) unpredicted change of circumstances (2) need for intervention that needs resources; and (3) to enhance or protect the image of the organisation	The process involves a detailed description of the changed circumstances, explanation of problems arising from that, and proposal or decision for intervention.
22	Yes. Policy issues around human rights, e.g. death penalty. Accountability to our members, employers, general public and funders.	Mostly compelling. In very few instances are they deserving of no response.	We are accountable to the various constituencies mentioned in 1. above.	Letters, Memos, Reports and Press statements.

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21	We are generally satisfied with the response	Mission Goals Plan of action Strategies adopted at higher level Discussions locally Workshops	Yes, these are understood	Very occasionally one needs to revisit the procedures.
22	It is fine right now	Board of Trustees policy Leadership opinion meetings Discussion documents	Yes	Generally accepted. Sometimes compelled to revisit.

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23	Certainly, within our advisory Board, the Faculty or the Management Committee of the University. Outside our sponsors, provincial government or organised trade and industry.	Very often yes. For the sake of transparency and plain good communication, it is most of the time compelling on satisfactory grounds. Due to ignorance or lack of insight it is sometimes unnecessary and does not need a response.	Purely for the sake of transparency and good communication habits. We also have a duty and responsibility towards our financial supporters.	Every case is treated on merit. Most often it can be justified by computer information.
24	All decisions have to be justified, so on most occasions such justifications/explanations have to be given.	Yes, for the sake of transparency there are always compelling grounds for explanation/justification.	For reasons of transparency and fairness.	Because of the organisation's policy on transparency and social justice, decisions are required to be accompanied by explanations and reasons or justifications.

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23	We are satisfied. It is important though that all decision justifications are based on proper information and facts.	Records of all activities/functions Proper records of financial matters Needs analysis of target groups Computer based systems	Generally yes. There might be odd occasion where these tools are ignored.	Generally yes. When it is discovered that procedures and frameworks are no re up to standard, it is changed to suit the needs of inside and outside parties.
24	Yes, I am satisfied.	Prior situation analyses and evaluations based on facts and/or reliable data, as well as individual and/or group consultations and discussions.	Yes, decision-makers are expected to understand them well, else they would not be decision-makers.	Mostly yes, but sometimes reviews are required when necessary.

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25	Financing decisions Strategic alignment Adjudication of tenders Expenditures within the department.	They are reasonable and compelling; i.e. there is a reason behind such an enquiry.	To ensure budget integrity. To ensure strategic alignment. To enforce governance.	Respond to the request in an appropriate manner; i.e. make sure that the objective of the request is met.
26	The very nature of the policies that govern the functioning of my organisation embodies such values as transparency, professionalism, equity, fairness, participation and accountability make abundantly clear that we need to justify virtually every decision we make. Starting from budgeting and planning, my organisation has to make value choices. We have to prioritise what we want to spend the limited resources at our disposal on. These choices have to be defended before the budget committee. This is where my department justifies their decisions. We are holding in trust public funds for public or common good, we are therefore not at carte blanche to spend wily nilly. We are accountable to the public. Through our political head we table our budget speech at the legislature for all sectors to poke holes at it. This provides us with another chance to defend our decisions to the public. As a co-ordinator in the province, my office receive requests from various stakeholders that are looking for explanations on decisions taken by our departments, ranging from questioning the process, approach and impact of our activities. This calls for a rapid response. To this end we have established a unit called Rapid Response Unit that deals specifically with queries from the press, communities and other stakeholders.	All queries are treated with utmost urgency. It is not for my department to award marks for queries but it is vital for us to respond. Perceptions, in my view should be well contained in order for any organisation to succeed. No query in my department will go unattended. I am creating a responsive, reiterative and reflective organisation whose aim is to satisfy its customers.	As has been stated in question one, to justify our decisions is not a choice but a way of doing things that is enshrined in the constitution of the country. We are following the model of an entrepreneurial government, which puts the customers first. When one looks carefully at Batho Pele, one clearly sees that decisions taken by government on behalf of the public must be sufficiently justified to the public.	To a great extent it depends on the nature of the query. There is no prototype rigid way in which we justify decisions we have taken unless so stated by a policy or legislation. When we are in a situation like this, what I normally do is to assemble the relevant officials to formulate a report. Once all inputs have been made, the response is then forwarded to the people or institutions that have asked for it. If there is need for a meeting, we convene it and discuss issues openly.

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25	I am generally satisfied about the way in which the department responds to the need of decision justification.	Management Information Systems Executive Information Systems	Not necessarily	People trust the source and tend to rely on the information provided.
26	I am fairly satisfied with the way we respond in my department, however the same cannot be said about all the departments in the province. What I would like to see happening is for all the departments to have a crack team of officials whose job would be to act as Rapid Response Unit. The team must consist of diverse skills. It is in a multi-disciplinary team that a department will be able to coordinate inputs for a report that justifies their decisions. Be that as it may I think a lot of time could be saved by communicating with stakeholders right from the planning level. That way your decision becomes their decision and you will be able to minimise queries significantly. Justification of decisions taken is to me a stopgap measure which reflects that before the decision was taken there was not consensus building with stakeholders. It is therefore vital that participation be stepped up running to a decision.	Nothing can replace good research before a decision is taken. One cannot over-emphasise the importance of consulting with key stakeholders for a buy in. The tools procedures and frameworks used are chosen on the merits of the case at hand. We are no longer rule-bound organisation, we are cutting down on bureaucratic tendencies, therefore we respond according to the dictates of the request at hand.	Irrelevant	When enough research has been done people accept the explanations, however if the opposite is true we are compelled to revisit our responses until we have satisfied the people. I am happy to say that I cannot think of a case where the latter has happened.

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27	Issues of financial management and control, justification is made to be important.	To the extent that the central government allocates money to us, there are compelling reasons to justify. On other occasions, I find it absolutely unnecessary.	To ensure that the organisation does not exceed spending limits and also to ensure that the money is used for the intended purpose.	A request is made to the Head of organisation. The relevant division is contacted to provide info. The info is then send to the requester.
28	Our organisation is a foreign policy think tank. Besides being answerable to a board, we have a broad constituency in government and civil society as well as regional, continental and international networks. The choices and outcomes of our research activity have to be evaluated by the board and have to have an impressive value to our beneficiaries/constituencies. In this sense, choices of projects (decisions) must be justified in terms of their relevance and utility.	The organisation has core analytical competencies for which it enjoys a healthy reputation. There have been occasions when certain projects focuses vs. preferred others had to be justified. This has been the case with government departments and potential donors. If not constructive or suggestive, they will tend to be ignored.	We are an NGO driven by an ethos of transparency and accountability. We therefore have a responsibility to demonstrate how resources are used and to constantly evaluate the impact of our work.	Depending on the end user, communication is entered into and a level of debate is provided. A government enquiry will warrant a considered response because it is a primary user of our research. Donors are treated more or less the same. Partner organisations will usually get a phone call or e-mail.

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27	Satisfied	- Minutes - Legislation - Databases	Yes	Often asked to revisit.
28	The YYY has a range of publications and research outputs which serve as primary outlets for communication. These are supplemented by seminars, symposia, workshops etc. Face-to-face discussions with decision-makers in government, NGOs, business etc. are useful.	Conferences, Workshops, roundtable discussions, issue forums, internship and visiting scholar programme, teaching and lecturing, commissioned research, travel abroad, partnerships with other organisations, policy briefing papers.	The are mediums we have to implement our mission and they are generally supported by a very broad constituency.	It is useful to revisit projects and decisions underpinning them periodically because our work concentrates on a dynamic and fast changing international environments.

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29	In pursuing the 3 main thrusts of the TTT foreign policy - to enhance national security - to undertake economic diplomacy and - to promote and protect the interests of TTT living and working overseas, justification for all decisions taken will always have to be made.	Justifications will always have to be made but only when required by circumstances. But, while justifications exists, they need be explained or even divulged.	An Embassy exists as an extension of the State and thus responsible to its people. Justifications offered will have to be parallel to the thrust of foreign policy	Sufficient data are gathered and reports are made in accordance with it. This usually form as the basis of the decision. So when justifications must be made, a data-look back will usually provide the answer.
30	Yes. Road shows to area and branch offices in the province.	Necessary to share information and decisions with lower ranking officials.	For everybody to understand management's line of thinking and to respond to some criticism.	- Monthly newsletter through PR department - Internal memorandums - Information passed on via middle management - Internal staff meetings addressed by top management.
31	- Accountability to parliamentary or legislature structures. - Public when they enquire - Public when there is a change in policy or implementation - Internally when policy changes - Labour organisations.	Mostly compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds.	We serve the public and use their taxes. it is important for clients to understand our policies and changes thereof.	Relevant persons to address the issue are identified. Data collected. The means to respond are chosen e.g. in writing, telephonically, media etc. Evaluation after response.

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29	Yes.	Please see 4	The existing tools, procedures and frameworks as they are ,are well understood by the officers, who make the decisions.	People differ. A good explanation to one may not be good to another. Hence, procedures and frameworks must be open to possible changes and refinements.
30	Generally satisfied	Management meetings PR departments	Yes, in most instances.	People not always satisfied.
31	No. Proper co-ordination at stage of choosing respondents. Accuracy & completeness of data Pro-activeness is key.	- Constitutional and legal frameworks - Availability of resources - Policy speeches	No.	Sometimes compelled to revisit.

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32	Meetings of the Executive of the University. Meetings of the Senate of the University. Meetings of the Council of the University. Marketing forums in the University. Interview with the media. Meetings with the unions on the campus.	In almost all cases I feel obliged to respond by providing facts and compelling reasons.	The University is largely dependent on public funds and is therefore liable to the public at large.	The process normally includes the provision of facts and compelling arguments for actions taken. The latter actions should be taken in the best interest of the students of the University and the country as a whole. In several cases the marketing department of the university responds proactively.
33	Yes. (((interview))) - Institutional bias (students) - To donor community (on activities) - To Department of Education - Guided by policy	Every query deserve a response If addressed to office, it needs a response.	If not, could lead to unresolved issues due to misunderstanding. So people can see the basis on which the decision was made	Depends of how it was brought up (e.g. students) Maintaining policy.

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32	I am generally satisfied. The Director of Marketing has the task of presenting such decisions to the media and interest groups in a convincing and positive light.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of facts and figure - Justification in terms of the mission of the University - Decisions are taken after wide consultations: therefore transparent and democratic. - The national standing of the University and its thriving for international recognition - The output of the University in terms of research and graduates - Hierarchical progression of decision-making. 	Yes, I believe they are.	Both. They are readily accepted, but the context is changing at an increasingly rapid pace and therefore people need to be constantly reminded what the bigger and total picture for decision-making in the University involves.
33	Yes. But I feel could go a little further. More consultations with recipients, frequent meetings, but resources are limiting	Assets in the form of funds	Yes, they are - at implementation level	Not really. Sometimes they do not. Individual expectations sometimes not met.

Table 5.0 : Results - Questionnaire responses/interviews

RESPONDENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
	<i>Are there occasions in your organisation/department when you have to justify (explain in some detail) your organisation's/department's decisions to other people, whether within or outside the organisation/department?</i>	<i>If such occasions do arise, do you find them compelling due to reasonable and satisfactory grounds; or do you find them deserving no response in some instances?</i>	<i>Why, in your opinion do you think it is necessary for your organisation/ department to justify some decisions?</i>	<i>How does your organisation/department normally go about in responding to such a need for decision justification when it arises?</i>
34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submissions to Board of Directors. - Corporate strategy to stakeholders - Presentations to potential partners - Submissions to government departments. - Presentations to communities. 	Compelling due to reasonable & satisfactory grounds.	My organisation is the successor in title to the former homeland based organisations. Its repositioning in the current politico-economic dispensation is dependent on the successful clarification of its role and mandate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulate conceptual framework - Collect & collate data - Analyse info at disposal - Identify best strategy or plan - Canvass internal stakeholders - Obtain necessary authorisation - Implement

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RESPONDENT	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6	QUESTION 7	QUESTION 8
	<i>Are you generally satisfied with the way your organisation/department go about responding to such a need for decision justification, or is there perhaps a particular way which you think should be followed?</i>	<i>List some of the tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions.</i>	<i>In your view, are these tools, procedures and frameworks commonly used in your organisation in supporting decisions well understood by those who need to use them when such a need arises?</i>	<i>Do you find that people readily accept these explanations given within the available procedures and frameworks, or you are sometimes compelled to revisit such procedures and frameworks?</i>
34	- Not satisfied as such - Would welcome the process if speedier as it is currently almost bureaucratic.	- Management workshops - Board workshops - External advisors	Not always appreciated.	Need do revisit procedures and frameworks as the operating environment is dynamic.