

CHAPTER THREE

Presenting the argument: Literature review and conceptual framework

3.1. Introduction

This review will analyse the literature on quality in higher education by first examining descriptions of what quality is and how it is frequently understood. Secondly, it will give an account of various research studies into how the working lives of academics have changed as a consequence of changes in the form and purpose of higher education. Thirdly, the review will examine policy reform and the changing relationship between the state and higher education in South Africa with regard to quality. Fourth, a notion of quality as politics (Lemaitre, 2002) in the context of the above changes will be explored, and accounts in the literature of different models of and approaches to quality assurance in higher education will be examined. Fifth, the review will explore the idea of the rise of an audit culture as a consequence of measuring quality within an accountability framework. Sixth, I will present the theory of the Evaluative State as a conceptual framework for this research, and as a construct through which to examine higher education reform in relation to the introduction of new quality regimes in universities. Finally, the chapter will conclude by examining gaps in the literature which this study intends to address.

The purpose of my research is to understand different positions regarding what quality is in higher education in South Africa, to understand the roots of these positions, and to understand how differences regarding views of quality and how it ought to be improved lead to contestation as universities respond to higher education quality policy.

Tam (2001) has argued that quality is understood differently by different stakeholders in higher education, and that this results in the employment of different internal and external approaches to monitoring and evaluating quality. She has further suggested that these multiple views also give rise to power struggles, in which different positions constantly struggle to be taken into account in various higher education quality processes.

My work in higher education had suggested that that academics in South African universities take an approach to quality which differs from that of the state and many university managers, and that these differences are related to varying perceptions of the role and function of

universities in society. Differences in views of what quality is and how it should be improved are likely to lead to conflict and resentment on the part of academics, as they are expected to implement internal and external quality policies and processes which they may not support ideologically.

Some theorists have described responses from academics to changes in higher education and the imposition of new quality regimes in negative ways. Studies by Halsey (1992, 2002), Kinman and Jones (2003) and many other writers have identified a 'sense of loss' (Bundy, 2005, p.89) amongst academics, as the imposition of new quality regimes are regarded as signaling a major change in the way universities function. Trow (1989) has described academics poetically and politically as powerless, as a result of their position in a rapidly changing higher education landscape. Other studies have demonstrated the ways in which academics have attempted to offer resistance to quality assurance and quality evaluation policy.

My own experience in a university has shown that academics, rather than behaving passively, have demonstrated various forms of active engagement with quality policies, ranging from acceptance to resistance and from compliance to internalisation (Trowler, 1997).

My research will use a definition of quality as stakeholder driven, as proposed by Harvey and Green and supported by Tam. I will also use Harvey and Green's classification of quality as excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation and perfection.

3.2. Defining quality

Pirsig (1974) in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, poses the following dilemma about defining quality:

Quality ... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no-one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes, it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes, it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously, some things are better than others...but what's the "betterness"? So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it? (1974: 184)

Doherty (1994) suggests that Pirsig's (1974) famous search for the meaning of quality through the act of motorcycle riding and maintenance, leads him to conclude not only that quality is an elusive concept but that it might be better not to define it at all. This gives rise to what Doherty (1994) refers to as the 'I-can't-define-it-but-I-know-it-exists' notion of quality.

Giertz (2001) has argued that it is no longer enough to accept a tacit understanding of quality in higher education such as the one proposed by Doherty (1994), one which is assumed to be shared by those inside higher education but which is impossible to define beyond asserting that 'we know it when we see it.' It is no longer enough, Giertz (2001) maintains, because more and more stakeholders – the state, parents, business and industry, students and society – want to contribute to deciding what quality is in higher education. And in order to be able to negotiate quality meanings, those meanings and understandings have to be made explicit and defined.

Despite the difficulties identified by Pirsig (1974), Harvey and Green (1993) have defined quality in five different ways: as excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation, and perfection. These definitions have been reworked and reconstructed by many writers, as attempts have been made to locate quality policy and practices within the Harvey and Green framework.

Lomas (2002), in a paper entitled, *Does the development of mass education mean the end of quality?* reports on findings of research conducted into the views of university senior management who were asked to rate these definitions. The notion of quality as fitness for purpose received the most support, closely followed by transformation, with value for money receiving the lowest ratings. Interestingly, in research conducted at almost the same time in South Africa, Luckett (2003) found that senior staff whom she interviewed, in this case quality assurance managers, also demonstrated preference for a fitness for purpose approach, similar to the approach she observed emerging within the South Africa's Higher Education Quality Committee.

What is it about fitness for purpose that makes it popular with university managers? Lomas (2002) suggests that this approach, upon which many quality agencies base their work, encourages institutes to adhere to their own goals and objectives by requiring them to 'say what they do, do what they say and then prove it to a third party' (Lomas, 2002).

Thus fitness for purpose appears to grant greater autonomy to institutions to determine their own programmes and goals, conferring on external assessors the responsibility only of judging the 'extent to which the processes, outputs and outcomes of the organisation are indeed fulfilling their intended purposes' (Luckett, 2003).

But Newby (1999) argues that greater standardisation (which he terms McDonaldisation) of the goals and purposes of higher education as reflected in mission statements, renders higher education institutions so alike as to defeat the purpose of quality evaluation based on diversity of mission. Such standardisation makes a fitness for purpose approach to quality attractive to institutional managers, yet ineffective in facilitating quality judgments across the higher education sector.

The transformation approach places students at the centre of quality. Tam (2001) suggests that the central aim of higher education should be to maximise students' educational and emotional development, and argues further that to be considered 'excellent' universities must bring about 'positive change' in students (Tam, 2001).

The one complicated feature of this approach is that for positive change to occur, students have to contribute significantly to their own intellectual and emotional development, a variable which cannot be incorporated in the measurement of quality.

Many theorists have questioned whether it is possible to devise a common notion of quality. Doherty (1994) questioned whether there could ever be a unified theory of quality, while Giertz (2001) argued for the necessity of developing a generic notion of quality, maintaining that a lack of consensus on what quality is makes it almost impossible to assess it or improve it.

Harvey and Green (1993), however, argued that quality cannot be considered a unitary concept, but rather that multiple perspectives of quality exist amongst different interest groups in education. They suggested that higher education's stakeholders – its students, academics, and prospective employers, all have different interests with regard to higher education and therefore pursue different notions of quality.

In their view, therefore, the concept of quality is relative; indeed, it is specifically stakeholder-relative. In terms of devising quality assessments which are sensitive to multiple perspectives, Harvey and Green (1993) suggest that:

The best that can be achieved is to define as clearly as possible the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality, and for these competing views to be taken into account when assessments of quality are undertaken (1993: 28).

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) have attempted to develop a generic model for quality in higher education, one which would allow for greater agreement on how to enhance and evaluate quality in the universities. They presented four models of quality, a Transformative model, focused on adding value to the capabilities of students; an Engagement model which emphasises student learning and highlights the role played by academics, administrators and students in quality improvement; a University of Learning model, which proposes that learning is central to all the core functions of a university; and a Model of a Responsive University, built around the idea that universities will have to be externally responsive and service-oriented to thrive. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) further proposed a generic model, a common notion of quality, which attempted to incorporate complementary features of all four models.

This research will use the definitions of quality proposed by Harvey and Green (1993), as excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation and perfection, and will examine academics' and institutional managers' beliefs about quality in relation to these. I will also use Harvey and Green's notion of quality as stakeholder-relative as a way of accounting for the presence of multiple definitions of quality amongst academics and managers at UWC.

3.3 Academics and change

A number of research studies have been conducted into the impact of changes in higher education on the working lives of academics (Trowler (1997, 1998), Kinman and Jones (2003), Chalmers (1998), Jeliaskova (2002), McInnis (2000), Menon (2003), Winter, Taylor and Sarros (2000) and Newton (2000, 2002a and 2002b).

Bearing depressing titles such as *Trouble at the mill* (Winter, Taylor and Sarros, 2000), *Feeding the beast* (Newton, 2000) and *Running up the down escalator* (Kinman and Jones, 2003), the majority of these studies lament the effects of these changes on academics' working lives.

Together they present a picture of a decline in academic freedom, deteriorating working conditions, an increase in meaningless tasks which consume academics' energy, and the rising negative effects of psychological stress on their well-being. The concepts of deprofessionalisation and the proletarianisation of the profession have been coined to describe a global state of despair and helplessness brought on by the implementation of quality policies in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Webster and Mosoetsa (2001) also entered the fray, revealing similar patterns among academics in South African universities.

Research is showing that a university career is no longer the highly satisfying and rewarding choice it once was. Academics are now regretting their career decisions, are searching for opportunities to leave the sector, and are discouraging their students from entering the profession.

Factors such as the move towards massification without an attendant increase in resourcing, intensification of state scrutiny of their performance, and demands for greater accountability, efficiency and quality (Kinman and Jones, 2003) have led to job dissatisfaction and low morale.

A shift from a hands-off type of management style to stronger control by institutional management has been identified with a move to a new managerialism (Henkel, 1997). New systems of quality assurance and monitoring, both internal and external, have resulted in increased scrutiny of performance and work (especially administrative) overload (Chalmers, 1998).

Further studies have been contributed by those researching forms of response to these changing conditions (Trowler, 1997; Newton, 2000 and 2002). Newton especially, through his use of insider research, has provided particularly riveting accounts of the responses of academics to these changes.

Rather than lamenting academics' powerlessness, these researchers have attempted to show the ways in which academic responses during implementation have served to change and remake policy. Trowler has identified four forms of response strategy: sinking, swimming, coping and active policy manipulation.

He has argued that the latter strategy especially can be associated with active attempts by academics to change policy to suit their own values and conditions. Newton too has characterised academics as ‘active makers and shakers’ of policy as they respond to, adapt, resist and ‘work around policy’ (Newton, 2000: 162).

3.4 Quality and higher education policy in South Africa

3.4.1 An overview of the literature

The debate in the literature in South Africa about quality and the restructuring of higher education revolves around a number of identifiable themes. Significant overlap exists between these themes, as intellectuals grapple with the complexities of policy making and policy implementation directed towards change in higher education.

One major theme is the complexity of attempting to pursue the goals of equity and development simultaneously. Another is the impact of global dimensions or globalisation on the higher education policy making process, focusing also on the concept of massification. Together, these first two themes are concerned with identifying and analysing the forces of change, internal and external, which impacted the policy agenda and resultant forms of state action in South Africa.

The nature, form and changing role of the post-apartheid state and its relationship with the higher education sector is a third major identifiable theme. Quality assurance, and related issues such as curriculum alignment and the changing nature of the academic workplace, comprise another theme, albeit one more limited in terms of published contributions. Lastly, there exists a body of literature which documents and analyses the nature of change in higher education in the post-apartheid era. It describes policy-directed changes which had so transformed the sector by 2010 that it barely resembled the system inherited by the new state in 1994.

Within these broad themes in the literature, one can identify seminal individual contributions. These specific works served to provoke debate and shift discussion towards specific complex phenomena. First amongst them was Jansen’s unforgettable presentation on the occasion of the 41st T.B Davie Memorial Lecture at UCT in August, 2004 (Jansen, 2004).

The presentation, entitled *Accounting for Autonomy*, was later published and generated a huge amount of intellectual activity - seminars, position papers and various other publications - concerned with characterising the post-apartheid state's interaction with universities.

A second seminal work was Colin Bundy's *Global Patterns, local options?* published in June, 2005, which drew attention to the global pattern of higher education change. Bundy argued for caution, warning of the negative consequences of these global reform packages for academics and academia in different parts of the world. A flurry of responses followed his article, most notably from Lis Lange (2006) and Mala Singh (2006), both senior staff on the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of South Africa and central role players in the quality assurance reform arena.

3.4.2 Globalised Policy: Higher education and economic growth

Maassen and Cloete (2004) have argued that a fair amount of consensus existed within reform efforts all over the world in the 1990s and subsequent years, and that such reform was '*strongly affected by global trends and pressures*,' an effect broadly referred to as globalisation. Lemaitre (2002) defines globalisation as a cultural, political and economic imposition and likens its effect to that of imperialism. Lemaitre argues that nations conquered by imperialist forces modern nation states have been unable to resist the rules of the market; are failing to preserve their cultural autonomy and national identities are increasingly under attack.

Bundy (2005) characterises global changes in higher education systems in the following way:

These similarities between developments in higher education across a number of societies reflect a convergence of political and ideology more broadly. That is, the transformation of universities in all advanced capitalist countries is implicated in an epochal shift (2005: 86).

Maassen and Cloete (2004) identified factors which stimulated these common global reform initiatives; these factors included the emergence of new globalised financial markets, an increase in the scope and variety of global communication, and an expansion of global free trade agreements.

They argued that such global changes formed a backdrop against which global reforms of higher education systems would proceed, and further, that global economic developments encouraged the common understanding that higher education funded by the state should become '*part of national development policies in countries all over the world*' (Maassen and Cloete, 2004).

The significance of the role of public higher education in economic development, although broadly accepted in the literature in recent years (Pillay, 2009), was a fairly novel idea, at least in the education policy arena in 1996, when the NCHE first expressed this link as follows:

Only higher education can deliver the requisite research, the training of highly skilled personpower, and the creation of relevant, useful knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to participate competitively in a rapidly altering national and global context. The Commission has argued that South Africa's higher education system must be transformed to play this role (1996:15).

The NCHE report (NCHE, 1996) identified a chronic mismatch between higher education's output and the needs of a modernising economy. The report also made very clear the state's position in terms of expecting higher education to contribute to national growth and international competitiveness. This early policy framework laid the basis for a subsequent articulation of principles and goals, especially those related to economic growth and development, and identified the need to increase participation in higher education in order to intensify the production of '*highly trained personpower... to produce the skills and technological innovations necessary for successful economic participation in the labour market (1996: 2).*

Early policy (DOE, 1996 and 1997) played a critical role in making a case '*for the social and public value*' (CHE, 2004) of higher education and promoting the idea that South Africa should not fall further behind than it already had in terms of its position in the global economy.

Many theorists have debated the restructuring decisions and the pace of reform adopted by the South African state. Fataar (2003) argued that globalisation, more accurately described by him as '*globally inspired processes,*' had a powerful impact on policy formulation in the post-apartheid era and compelled the state to adopt '*a more interventionist approach*' to steering the higher education system (2003: 33).

Bundy (2005) has suggested that the post-apartheid state was confronted with a need to act quickly and decisively to make up for lost opportunities for participation in the global economy. In his view, South Africa had emerged from a lengthy period of international apartheid-induced isolation. Its entry into the global arena had been delayed as a consequence, and the resultant sense of anxiety had driven the frenetic pace of state reform (Bundy, 2005).

Restructuring efforts by the state were grounded in the belief that apartheid education had limited individuals' opportunities for social and economic growth and for mobility, and in so doing had limited the contribution the country was able to make to the global economy. Policy making in all spheres was driven by the belief that the country had to become internationally competitive or face threats to its survival in the global economy (Nthsoe, 2004; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001).

Castells' (2001) arguments about the emergence of a new global economy, based on information technologies and the production of high-tech manufactured goods and services, appears to have influenced policy-making debates. The National Plan (DOE, 2001) refers to Castells as serving on the Presidential International Task Force, and its policy document quotes Castells as follows: *If knowledge is the electricity of the new informational international economy, then institutions of higher education are the power sources on which a new development process must rely* (2001: 5).

The implication of the policy discourse around economic development and global performance was that those countries which dominate science and technology research and development, dominate the global economy. Restructuring higher education for economic growth therefore depended on achieving at least three goals, those of increased participation, of increased production of knowledge and skills (in the form of enhanced graduate rates), and of growing the number of graduates in the fields of science and technology.

The extent to which policy makers accepted the globalised view of the link between higher education and economic growth and development was clear, and so was the urgency with which they approached the task of restructuring higher education to deliver the required goods. As early as January 2000, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, instructed his advisory body, the Council for Higher Education (CHE), to mandate a task team to conduct a review of the higher education system and make proposals for its overhaul.

The CHE's brief was to answer the Minister's provocative question: *Is higher education, will higher education be, a system for the 21st Century?* (2001: 2).

The linking of higher education transformation with economic growth and international competitiveness had implications for how the state conceptualised quality.

A quality higher education system was characterised by the state in its policy utterances as one capable of efficiently producing large numbers of highly skilled and knowledgeable graduates, in the fields required by the global economy, namely science and technology, business and commerce. This gave the concept of quality a decidedly functional dimension. High quality became synonymous with the notion of an efficient and well-functioning university (CHE 2001), and improvement of quality became associated with increasing efficiency through raising outputs – the symbols of which would be a reduction in drop-out and repetition rates and an increase in retention and graduation rates (DOE, 1997, 2001, and CHE, 2001). The entry of notions of efficiency into policy discourse signified the adoption of a neo-liberal framework characterised by ideas related to global competitiveness, the need for efficiency and increased productivity and a desire to make universities serve the market. The theory of the Evaluative State as articulated by Neave and others, accounts for these changes in the relationship between higher education, the state and society in a way that explains the global and universal dimension of higher education transformation.

3.4.3 Quality as a steering mechanism

The centrality of the quality concept was further borne out by the identification of quality in the NCHE Report (NCHE, 1996) as critical to shaping a new relationship between the state and higher education, within the context of transformation:

Quality is not only an institutional consideration, but also an essential ingredient of a new relationship between government and higher education. Government is to steer the system by means of incentives and evaluation of institutions and programmes rather than by detailed regulation and legislation. A comprehensive, development-oriented quality assurance system provides an essential mechanism for tackling differences in quality across institutional programmes (1996: 7).

This extract suggests that a key policy decision had been made about the future role of the state in higher education affairs: the state would steer higher education through the application of a number of tools, including quality assurance. The NCHE policy (NCHE, 1996) signaled a change in the relationship between higher education and the state. From now on, quality assurance would be central to driving the state's reform agenda.

However, the above extract suggests that, rather than invoking regulations and legislation to achieve change in higher education, a system of incentives would reward institutions for their performance, and a new national system of quality assurance would be established to monitor and evaluate such performance.

In its 2004 analysis of progress made in transforming the higher education sector in the first decade of democracy, the CHE (CHE, 2004) reiterated the role of quality assurance as one of three steering mechanisms, the others being planning and funding. This idea had first been mooted as policy in the 1997 White Paper, and had been supported by the CHE at its establishment and by the HEQC at its formal launch in 2004.

Luckett (2004) has argued that positioning quality assurance in policy discourse as a steering mechanism implies that quality assurance would become a tool for achieving the policy goals of efficiency and effectiveness, equity and responsiveness, development and democratisation. Policy discourse throughout this period stressed the centrality of the link between goal achievement and quality improvement. Goals such as broadening participation and increasing the production of relevant knowledge and skills, were portrayed as being achievable only through significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness, both of which would become proxies for quality.

The link between quality, planning and funding is clearest at the level at which the Department of Education makes decisions regarding the size and shape of higher education institutions. The concepts of size and shape were introduced into the South African higher educational landscape as a way of talking about the future trajectory of universities and other higher education institutions. In this context, size refers to the enrolment goals and targets the state will allow universities to aspire to, and shape signifies the shifts the state expects in student enrolment which will achieve national human resource development goals.

Size and shape goals are thus currently related to the state's intention that universities should produce significant numbers of highly skilled graduates and postgraduates in the areas of science, engineering and technology (SET) and in business and commerce.

The approved targets are designed to change the shape and size of the higher education system both in terms of enrolment and of graduates. Increased emphases have been given to SET and BUS inputs and outputs (DOE, 2007: 11.)

Planning and funding would become two sides of the same coin. Institutional plans -submitted as 'three-year rolling plans,' operational plans or strategic plans – would have to reflect universities' commitments to increasing research output, broadening access for designated groups and ensuring graduate success, especially in the areas of greatest regional and national need, before funds would be released. The White Paper (DOE, 1997) concludes by linking public funding, accountability, strategic planning and quality assurance in the following way:

The basis for improving accountability in higher education is making public funding for institutions conditional on their Councils providing strategic plans and reporting their performance against their goals. The plans will provide a framework for continuous improvement within institutions and a reference point for quality assurance (1997: 55).

There was never any mystery about how higher education would be steered or the direction it would be persuaded to take. The state, through various policy statements, had promised to steer higher education through the use of detailed and prescriptive regulatory frameworks. These would ensure that the sector would in fact make a significant contribution to achieving the national goals of societal transformation, reconstruction and rapid economic development.

The NCHE, however, speaks of a new relationship between government and higher education, characterised by less intervention and more steering from a distance, in which 'quality is ... the essential ingredient' and state steering is facilitated through 'incentives and evaluation of institutions and programmes rather than by detailed regulation and legislation' (1996: 7).

In reality, the new planning, funding and quality assurance framework was underpinned by the state's willingness to steer through rewards and incentives, as well as through monitoring and evaluation, regulation and legislation.

Early higher education policy, in the White Paper 3 (DOE, 1997) and the NCHE report (1996), had made it clear that a new system of financing higher education would become the strongest lever of change. Most notably, a new goal-oriented and performance-related funding framework would promote equitable access, improved quality, enhanced student progressions and increased graduation rates as well as greater responsiveness to social and economic needs (DOE, 1997: 47).

Stated differently, the new funding framework would shape institutional responses towards achieving the central goals of increasing equity in access and outcomes, improving quality and efficiency and linking higher education activities to regional and national development needs (DOE, 2002b).

Crucially, since state funding to universities would be contingent on the achievement of strategic goals, the universities would henceforth need to supplement state funding by tapping into alternative sources of private income.

Institutions were encouraged to become proactive in negotiating contracts, establishing consultancy services and seeking donations from alumni and other benefactors (DOE, 1997). Although the state vowed not to cut levels of public spending on higher education in the immediate post-apartheid era, the sector was warned that the transformation required to achieve equity and other performance-related targets would carry a burden of additional costs. These would have to be met through accessing alternative and private funding sources.

Olssen and Peters (2005) have suggested that the promotion of entrepreneurialism was linked to sustaining economic viability and to the recognition of the role of higher education in economic growth. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) have argued similarly that, in order for higher education to serve economic growth, universities have to become entrepreneurial. They have shown that becoming entrepreneurial involves transforming institutions into organisations which are able to engage commercially, economically and competitively in response to the needs and demands of the economic sector.

South African universities, however, have not entered the entrepreneurial race on equal terms, and Subotzky (1998) has presented a cogent analysis of the challenges facing HBU attempts to embrace the concept of the 'market' university in the post-apartheid era.

Key characteristics of the 'market' university are commodification and commercialisation, a shift to strategic quality evaluation by performance indicators, and the enactment of new purposes for higher education related to economic needs and demands.

Subotzky (1998) has described the glaring and somewhat discomfiting similarities between South African education policy in the post-apartheid era and the Dawkins' proposals for restructuring higher education in Australia, both underpinned by what he terms 'neo-liberal doctrines.' I present five areas of obvious policy overlap here.

These are, firstly, belief in the power of higher education to boost economic growth. Secondly, there is the notion that institutions should become less reliant on government funding and more able to forge commercial partnerships with industry.

Further commonalities are, thirdly, that restructuring the sector is best achieved through mergers and incorporations, and, fourthly, that funding for operations, teaching and research should be awarded in accordance with goal achievement. The final coincidence is a shared assumption that subject fields such as science, engineering and technology should be funded more favourably, since skills and knowledge in these areas are more likely to advance global competitiveness.

The Education White Paper 3 (DOE, 1997) expressed the intentions of the state with regard to higher education as follows:

Higher Education.... must be restructured to face the challenges of globalisation' and 'must provide education and training to develop the skills and innovations necessary for national development and successful participation in the global economy' (1997: 9).

The shifts observable in higher education in South Africa are clearly not a local idiosyncrasy, but have their roots in a wider discourse of globalisation, neo-liberalism and a shift towards the Evaluative State.

3.4.4 Linking quality with transformation, accountability and efficiency

Only higher education can deliver the requisite research, the training of highly skilled personpower, and the creation of relevant, useful knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to participate competitively in a rapidly altering national and global context (NCHE, 1996: 15).

The concept of quality and its improvement has been high on the agenda of policy formulation in the post-apartheid era, and has dominated policy instruments since 1996.

The earliest higher education state policy, the Report of the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE, 1995), described the higher education system inherited by the post-apartheid government as *'fundamentally flawed by inequities, imbalances and distortions derived from its history and present structure'* (1996: 1). Subsequent policy portrayed higher education as a whole as characterised by *'fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency'* (DOE, 1997: 3). This discourse of deficiency appeared constantly in policy directed at the transformation of the higher education sector and was essentially a quality discourse. By implication, the inherited higher education sector stood accused of being dysfunctional, lacking the high standards and quality required to meet the knowledge and socio-economic needs of the 21st Century (CHE, 2001).

Later policy reiterated this low-quality discourse (DOE, 1996, 1997, 2001 and 2002a) in a way which conveyed the urgency of the need to improve quality, by transforming and restructuring the higher education system to address the challenges of social, economic and political reconstruction and development (DOE, 1996 and 1997). The CHE in its Discussion Document, put together by the Size and Shape Task Team (2001), identified a number of *'systemic dysfunctionalities.'* These were a decline in the enrolment of new entrants into higher education; extremely poor graduation and yearly pass rates; institutional debt associated with failure to collect student fees; skewed race and gender distribution of students in various fields of study; skewed race and gender distribution of staff at different levels; extremely low research outputs; and fragile management and administrative capacity (CHE, 2001).

The enumeration of failures and deficiencies of the higher education system in the 21st century was not unique to South Africa. Olsen (2000), writing about Norway in the 1990's, identified a similar rhetoric of failure and dysfunction in Norwegian higher education reform processes. Lack of quality and of responsiveness, inefficiency and wastage were some of the common accusations leveled against universities in Norway (Olsen, 2000).

In 2001, in his preamble to the National Plan for Higher Education (DOE, 2001b), the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, made clear the link between the need for quality and the need to transform higher education, by stating that:

The people of our country deserve nothing less than a quality higher education system which responds to the equity and development challenges that are critical to improving the quality of life of all our people (2001: 1).

The notion of quality in post-apartheid higher education policy was thus embedded in a discourse of deficiency. It was constantly referenced in the rationale mounted by the state to justify restructuring higher education away from apartheid-induced mediocrity and inequality towards excellence and equity.

Luckett (2003) argued further that quality came to signify both a desirable goal for the higher education system, linked as it was to the goals of efficiency and equity, and as a justification for restructuring and transformation. The position he took (Luckett, 2003) sheds light on the consistent and central presence of quality in the higher education policy framework. In a sense, in the post-apartheid era of higher education transformation, it became impossible to speak of any aspect of higher education restructuring without reference to quality and the improvement thereof. Quality became implicated in every aspect of the policy discourse, which suggested that the goals of equity, redress, efficiency and responsiveness were achievable only through institutional commitments to improving quality within a framework of accountability.

3.4.5 Quality and democratisation

The CHE, in its seminal advisory document, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape* (2001), determined that transformation would be driven by two major forces, globalisation and the demand for social transformation, with such transformation addressing broad democratisation needs. It has been argued that the two forces driving reform, namely equity and development, would always exist in a contradictory tension with each other (Ntshoe, 2004). Higher Education policy, however, has proposed a resolution of the contradiction, by arguing that improvement in quality would allow development imperatives to coexist with demands for equity and democratisation.

Fataar (2003) has suggested that higher education policy shifted from a focus on achieving the goals of equity towards promoting those of economic development. This led to the rise of a discourse of efficiency which empowered the state to act against 'dysfunctional' institutions. The following quote from the National Plan for Higher Education (DOE, 2001) supports Fataar's contention:

All institutions must strive for excellence...Quality and excellence are not in competition with equity/redress; they are intrinsic to the achievement of meaningful equity and the substantive erosion of inequitable occupational structures and the current distorted pattern of knowledge production (2001: 16).

Foregrounding quality in the equity versus development debate enabled quality assurance and quality improvement to be identified as central to the achievement of these contradictory policy goals.

Further, the CHE's argument that increasing graduate output in the face of broadening expansion, or massification, was achievable only through significant quality improvement served to link quality improvement with human capital development. By implication, this conferred on quality assurance the high-stakes responsibility of actualising the goal of human resource production and knowledge creation.

The state regarded higher education as 'critical to the resolution of many of the unique and complex challenges that face South Africa and Africa as a whole' (DOE, 2001, Size and Shape), and Moja, Muller and Cloete (1996) linked this to the 1972 Accra Workshop which showed that, given the critical role of universities in economic development, they could not be afforded the luxury of autonomous decision making but instead needed to be subjected to state control in order to ensure that higher education contributed fully to economic development.

3.5 The politics of quality: Quality assurance and accountability

The White Paper (DOE, 1997) first included the idea of quality as one principle amongst many that would characterise a transformed higher education system. These would include the principles of equity and redress; democratisation; effectiveness and efficiency; development; quality; academic freedom; institutional autonomy and public accountability.

While the White Paper detailed the role of planning, funding and governance in constructing a new higher education system, this particular policy paid less attention to the role of quality assurance in steering higher education. However, the pronouncements which it did make in this area, though limited, had far-reaching consequences for the future development of quality assurance systems in South Africa.

The White Paper achieved two things with regard to quality assurance. Firstly, it proclaimed higher education institutions themselves to be responsible for quality assurance. This amounted to a declaration of faith in the institutions' capacity to develop and monitor quality internally. But at the same time, it articulated the need for a national authority for quality assurance, thereby determining that quality assurance in higher education would henceforth be externally driven and monitored. The White Paper determined that a new quality assurance system would combine institutional internal evaluation efforts with a centralised process of external assessment. While the White Paper articulated these policy intentions, the Higher Education Act (1998) would later provide for the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

Amaral (2003) suggested that universities have always been concerned with quality, and that history it was possible to distinguish at least two historical forms of quality assessment in universities. One form was centrist and accountability-driven, in which the state had control over every aspect of university life. Amaral (2003) claims that this was the case at Paris University in the thirteenth century, where the church, through the chancellor of the Cathedral at Notre Dame, had the right to decide what should be taught and who should teach it.

The second form, referred to variously in the literature as the traditional model of quality assessment, was the English model of self-assessment through peer review, where colleagues in institutions judged the quality of their peers and academics had the right to hire and fire teaching staff (Amaral, 2003).

Trow (2000) has suggested that the traditional model of quality assessment worked and was accepted because of the trust that society conferred on academics and universities to maintain a high level of quality in their work, and to institute appropriate internal quality control mechanisms, ensuring ongoing achievement and the enhancement of high quality.

Trow (2000) argues further that universities were rarely called upon to demonstrate quality or explain their understanding of it, but rather that it was broadly accepted that 'universities embody quality' (Trow, 2000: 18), that their academics knew quality when they saw it, and that there was therefore no need to invent external criteria against which to judge such quality.

Trow (2000) further states that the preponderance of new forms of external quality evaluation by government agencies indicates an increasing level of mistrust, by governments and society, in the ability and commitment of academics to maintain and enhance quality in their work, as well as an increasing mistrust in the effectiveness of universities' internal quality control mechanisms (Trow, 2000:16).

The move from an élite higher education system to massification, created pedagogical and quality challenges as more diverse groups of learners, from different educational and socio-economic backgrounds, were granted access to universities (Scott, 2001). Mistrust in the capability and effectiveness of traditional models of internal quality control to deal with the challenges of massification resulted in the establishment of external forms of quality evaluation and control, conducted by bodies appointed by governments.

The following extract from a policy document proposed by the CHE indicates the way in which the state conceptualised the link between massification and quality:

Numbers also affect standards. To combat the potentially adverse effects of rising enrolment on educational and academic standards, a policy of quality assurance becomes a necessity. Institutions will be increasingly accountable with regard to performance indicators that influence standards. Structures and procedures are proposed for a combination of self-evaluation, external validation and quality promotion.

Quality promotion will also involve the accreditation of qualifications and various forms of capacity building.

Increased participation, above all, means the participation of a far higher proportion of those previously excluded from higher education (2001: 4).

Much has been written about the creation of quality assurance as a regulatory device (Morley, 2003: 15). South African policy has linked the introduction of new quality assurance regimes in higher education to two broad policy goals – to widening access and participation and to solving problems in higher education related to inefficiency and poor performance.

Scott (2001) has suggested that broadening participation in the context of inequality in schooling provision would inevitably result in an increase in the number of under-prepared learners entering universities, while the quote above indicates the state's position regarding the link between massification and quality.

The need to increase the numbers of graduates, specifically in the fields of science, engineering and technology, the need to increase throughput across all years of study and to increase retention and pass rates (DOE, 1996, 1997, 2001, and CHE, 2001) have been amongst the efficiency and performance problems identified by the state, which could be addressed through the creation of quality assurance measures.

The National Plan for Higher Education (DOE, 2001) made it clear that the state would achieve its goals for higher education through the application of three steering mechanisms, namely planning, funding and quality assurance. Lockett (2003) has suggested that this means that the state would seek to control both funding inputs and outputs through planning and quality assurance mechanisms, and in this way would '*ensure that its goals and values are ascribed to and achieved*' (Lockett, 2003: 9).

By implication, quality assurance, a mechanism through which goals and policy would be achieved efficiently and effectively, would be an essential component of the regulatory framework.

At the same time as announcing its intention to steer the system through planning, funding and quality assurance, the state made it clear that higher education institutions would be held accountable for the use of public funding, and that such accountability would require compliance with the restructuring demands of the state. An extract from the task team report on restructuring higher education, commissioned by the Minister of Education in 2000 (CHE, 2000), made the expectation of compliance and accountability clear:

Inappropriate and defensive appeals to institutional autonomy and academic freedom in the face of the imperative of reconfiguring higher education to meet socio-economic goals should (also) be avoided. The autonomy of institutions has to be reconciled with the need to account for the use of public resources. The right to pursue intellectual and academic goals has to be exercised within the framework of complementary social goals (2000: 29).

Finch (1997) suggested that academics find emerging accountability imperatives to be highly problematic and a threat to their authority over their subject areas. She asked the question:

Are agencies such as funding councils, professional accrediting bodies and the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) undermining traditional academic authority vested in a deep knowledge of one's subject and replacing these with external benchmarks which derive from some other set of priorities? (1997: 147).

Apple (2005) argues that successful steering requires holding institutions and the people within them accountable for the achievement of policy goals and targets. Quality assurance regimes would perform those accountability functions by expecting universities to provide evidence that they were taking their social responsibilities seriously. The constant production and demonstration of evidence that these institutions were performing as expected, efficiently and correctly, became a key activity in an accountability-driven quality assurance framework, one which was tied to funding frameworks that rewarded good outcomes and high quality performance.

3.6 Emergence of an audit culture

Theorists like Olssen and Peters (2005), Morley (2003), Apple (2005) and Shore and Wright (1999) characterised the establishment of these conditions as the creation of an audit culture and the activities associated with measurement, monitoring and evaluation as a form of accounting and auditing of the performance and productivity not only of particular institutions but of the entire higher education sector.

Shore and Wright (1999) assert that measuring performance within an accountability framework has become a substitute for, if not a proxy for, improving quality, while Bundy (2005) has summarised the impact of audit culture in the following way:

Good practice is measured through Performance Indicators and monitored through Quality Assurance mechanisms. Continuous Improvement defined in terms of rising productivity is the state of grace aspired to by strategic planners (2005: 88).

Amaral (2003) asserted that change within the higher education sector is likely to occur when the institutions and the people within them act in ways which promote the achievement of external goals. Successful state-steering at a distance is achieved through what Morley (2005) terms the responsabilisation of every member of the organisation, in which each person is accountable to the organisation's achievement of targets and goals, and where conditions within the organisation are such that it is almost impossible for any member to remain unaffected by demands for change and accountability.

Similarly, Shore and Wright (1999), in providing an anthropological insight into the matter of educational change, have argued that successful state-steering from a distance requires forms of control that induce individuals and organisations to alter their own behaviour in line with external expectations. In this way, they argue that audit culture and quality assurance are critical instruments through which individuals are 'caused to behave' in ways which result in change at the individual, institutional and eventually the sectoral level.

The constant demand for the production of evidence, coupled with the demand for institutions and people within them to expose their behaviour and make their performance available for external scrutiny, through the activities of quality assurance bodies, has been likened to the creation of an ethos of policing, beratement and surveillance (Morley, 2003; Neave, 1998; Worthington and Hodgson, 2005; Shore and Roberts, 1993). Shore and Roberts (1993), in a seminal work on quality assurance and audit culture, introduced the notion of the panoptican paradigm to describe the nature of management and quality control, which they likened to acts of surveillance and policing.

The panopticon prison, first introduced by Jeremy Bentham during the late eighteenth century as a model of prison construction, and then adapted by Foucault in 1977 (Burchell, 1991) as a symbol of power and control in modern society, features a surveillance tower situated in a prison courtyard around which cell buildings are situated in such a way as to render each cell occupant constantly visible to the 'surveillant'.

Subsequent contributions to the literature around 'audit culture' (Morley (2001, 2003, 2005), Shore and Wright (1999), Worthington and Hodgson (2005) have endorsed and built on the panopticon model to characterise quality assessment and institutional management as disciplinary technologies, through which the state has restructured and achieved control of higher education institutions. Audit culture, in the view of the theorists described above, has altered negatively the nature of academic work and the conditions under which such work occurs. It has arisen out of quality assurance frameworks which function to monitor and evaluate whether higher education institutions are contributing towards the realisation of policy goals and objectives.

3.7 Quality evaluation approaches: Enlightenment and power

Theorists have asked about the fate of quality where quality evaluation is embedded in state-designed accountability frameworks. Lomas (2002) asked, 'Does the Development of mass education necessarily mean the end of quality?' Huisman and Currie (2004) wondered whether accountability in higher education was a 'Bridge over troubled waters?' offering little change in the quality of education. Gibbs and Lacovidou (2004) posed the question, 'Quality as a pedagogy of confinement: Is there an alternative?'

These theorists reflect a global concern that current forms of quality assurance, which prioritise accountability rather than quality improvement, are more concerned with achieving political objectives for the sector than with improving learning outcomes for students.

Barnett (1994) designed a useful typology for the classification of quality evaluation systems around the ideas of power and enlightenment, and argued that all forms of quality evaluation could be allocated to one of the four quadrants produced when the two axes intersected.

For Barnett, the critical question regarding enlightenment was whether evaluation was emancipatory, or '*to what extent is the self-understanding of those being evaluated being enhanced as a result of the evaluation process?*' (1994: 174). Barnett further suggested that *technicist* quality evaluation was the polar opposite of an *emancipatory* approach. He also believed that power resided with those who controlled quality evaluation, so the power distinction for him was *collegial* (controlled by the academic community) or *bureaucratic* (controlled by external state agencies) forms of evaluation (Barnett: 1994).

Bundy (2005) questioned whether quality assurance in South Africa could escape the negative consequences of international forms of accountability, where audit culture was a consequence of importing global monitoring and evaluation systems that operated within the confines of accountability to state policy goals and interests.

Mala Singh, then Executive Director of the HEQC (2006), in an interesting response to Bundy's (2006) criticism of the neo-liberal and conservative origins of quality evaluation in South Africa, introduced an account of the HEQC's quality evaluation system that she argued was *technicist* in its approach, while having an *emancipatory* purpose. Relating this to pragmatism, Singh (2006) explains:

There is no doubt that in the current environment there has been an acceleration of 'pragmatism' in the face of pressing moral and political challenges and an increase in efficiency discourses, though not all of it is necessarily driven by neo-liberal or anti-equity considerations. Efficiency can also be part of the armoury of strategies invoked to enhance equity and redress gains (2006: 67).

Singh (2006) provided an interesting justification for the technicist or pragmatic character of the quality evaluation system of the HEQC. In her article she explained that, as a body established by the State through the CHE (DOE, 1997), the HEQC had very little choice in terms of the design of the quality assurance system, and was in fact legally bound to comply with state demands. These demands linked quality evaluation to the multiple and somewhat contradictory goals of transformation, equity and social justice, and to economic growth (DOE, 1996, 1997, 2001). Singh (2006) further argued that it was expected by the state that quality assurance would function as a steering mechanism (DOE, 1996, 2001), would achieve its accountability ends (DOE, 1996, 1997, 2001), and would be directed at achieving increased efficiency of the higher education system.

According to Barnett's (1994) classification, given the state's goals and demands for quality assurance, the HEQC's quality evaluation system would have to be *technicist* and *bureaucratic*, the 'polar opposite' in fact of *emancipatory* and *collegial*, a conclusion that Singh (2006) shares in her paper. However, Singh (2006) proposed that the South African quality evaluation system, being '*rooted in the progressive objectives of the restructuring*' of the higher education system, was by virtue of its purposes - which were transformative and directed at the achievement of equity and social justice - also a progressive and even emancipatory system.

In this regard, Singh introduces the concept of transformative accountability to counter Bundy's accusations about managerialist accountability, and argues that the HEQC's quality evaluation system, although accountability-driven, was transformative in its purposes.

Lange (2006), in the same publication, and also in response to Bundy (2006), supported Singh's argument, suggesting further that in South Africa the quality evaluation system reflected a case of the end justifying the means. Seepe (2006) echoes Lange's (2006) view regarding the means and ends of the quality assurance system, adding: *'That people agree on the same approach does not mean that they share the same ideology.'*

Taking the same approach, Lange (2006), Singh (2006) and Seepe (2006) refer to the tools and mechanisms applied by the Evaluative State in the interest of evaluating the progress made both by individual institutions and by the entire higher education sector in achieving desired policy goals. In defense of the monitoring processes adopted by the CHE, Lange (2006) argues that:

The practise of monitoring as it is unfolding at the CHE indicates that it is possible to measure without buying into the conceptualisation of the evaluative state (2006:51).

The next section will examine the emergence of the Evaluative State in South Africa in the context of the relationship between the post-apartheid state and higher education, and will assert the appropriateness of the Evaluative State as a conceptual framework for this study.

3.8. Conceptual framework: The theory of the Evaluative State

3.8.1 Introducing the Evaluative State

The literature supports the idea that higher education has undergone significant change across the world. Common explanations of the causes of change are clear and powerful in their simplicity. Firstly, a new utilitarian view of the purposes of higher education has won out over contending traditional and liberal views (Greatrix, 2001). Simply put, the economic view of the purpose of higher education has come to dominate government and civil society attitudes towards universities. Higher education today is commonly regarded as the 'servant to the economy' (Greatrix, 2001: 13).

In the view of theorists of the accountability movement (King Alexander, 2000; Muller and Wright (1994), this new economic motivation drives the move by governments to demand greater accountability, responsiveness, productivity and efficiency from higher education institutions. In this regard, states are looking to universities to provide the human capacity and the knowledge requirements that will drive technological innovation, enhance economic productivity and facilitate global competitiveness.

Barnett (2003: 2) has described the traditional role of universities as promoting '*knowledge, truth and reason.*' Preston (2001) has taken a more economic view of the modern university's role as that of a producer of knowledge for global consumption, while Barrett (1998), in a provocative title, asks, '*What is the function of a university? Ivory tower or trade school for plumbers?*'.

The above theorists suggest that the shift from traditional conceptualisations of the purpose of higher education to more functional notions of the relationship between higher education and society has driven the pace of change in the sector globally.

Secondly, a political paradigm shift in the twenty-first century regarding the way the citizenry views government, coupled with increased calls for participatory democracy, has led to a demand by civil society and business across the world for a reduction in state control, or at least in the intensity and visibility of such control.

Thirdly, a global context defined by the need and desire to exercise financial constraint in relation to government spending of public funds has led to the dominance of cost-cutting strategies, and greater demands by the state for the demonstration of value for money in return for their investments in higher education.

Hence the three most powerful drivers of change in the relationship between higher education and state have been the result of an ideological struggle around the purposes of higher education, of shifting political paradigms and of the need to exercise constraint in state spending.

The new view of the purpose of higher education has had a huge impact on all dimensions of the relationship between the state and higher education. Not only has it asserted the demand for universities to serve the economy but it has also recast the higher education system as a

critical lever for social change, in which the type of change required is both pre-determined and stable, but also ever-changing.

If one accepts this as a fundamental principle underpinning the relationship between state and higher education, it follows that universities could conceivably be called upon to serve any number of diverse and even contradictory ends in the name of economic development and social change. An essential feature of this new relationship is the need for flexibility and responsiveness, since it is these two characteristics of the higher education sector which enable ongoing re-adjustment to changing needs and demands.

It is within this explanatory context that key concepts such as responsiveness, accountability and productivity have come to frame the discourse examining global patterns of shifting relationships between government and the higher education sector.

3.8.2. Key features of the Evaluative State

The theory of the 'Evaluative State' was introduced by Neave (1988), largely as a way of describing the changing relationship between the state and higher education in Western Europe in the 1980's, and by implication, across the world.

The theory of the Evaluative State describes, *firstly*, a model of state-steering aimed at driving change in higher education in a context where the sector is regarded as the prime lever for social change.

Secondly, the theory posits that the Evaluative State emerged from the recognition that a key area of social change was to universalise education through massification, as a means of achieving economic growth, and, *thirdly*, that this should be achieved within the context of a decline in public spending on education. King Alexander (2000) puts this succinctly:

The entire nature of the traditional relationship between government and higher education is in the process of significant change in stretching the public dollar to serve more students in attempting to maximise economic returns. In this new era, governments have adopted public policies advancing the democratic concepts of massification and universality of higher education (2000: 413).

A *fourth* dimension of the emergence of the Evaluative State was the introduction of new regulatory frameworks and other forms of legislation related to all aspects of institutional activity to bring about greater responsiveness of the sector to national social and economic needs. *Fifth*, the Evaluative State was so named since a key feature was that institutional performance would continuously and meticulously be evaluated against policy goals by agencies set up for this purpose. And, *finally*, the Evaluative State would reward institutional performance financially in accordance with progress made, documented and evaluated against strategic institutional goals which supported national policy intentions.

Using an uncomfortable metaphor to describe the continuous and invasive nature of state monitoring and evaluation of institutional performance, Neave and Van Vught (1991) ask:

Are we correct in seeing the higher education systems of the West chained, like the miserable Prometheus, to a rock with the eagles of budgetdom and intervention tearing daily at their entrails? (1991: 253).

Can South African universities be described as being '*Prometheus bound*'? I would argue that the construct of the Evaluative State does serve to explain social reforms and indeed provides one lens through which emerging quality regimes in universities can be viewed and understood. The above discussion highlighted at least six features of the Evaluative State which, it will be argued, also characterised the post-apartheid state in South Africa as discussed in the previous chapter. To summarise here, higher education in South Africa has become a key lever for social change and economic growth; increasing participation has been regarded by the state as essential to achieving the latter; state funding per student in South Africa has not increased in accordance with student growth; and a flurry of activity in the arena of policy making has steered institutions towards greater responsiveness and accountability to policy goals.

Finally, the introduction of a new external quality assurance system, the requirement for institutional submission of three-year rolling plans and a new, performance-based funding framework have indicated the South African state's intention that the transformation and performance of the higher education sector should proceed in line with the state's expectations. What follows is a more detailed exploration of the above-mentioned and other key features of the theory of the Evaluative State, and its emergence in South Africa.

3.8.3 The Evaluative State: Higher education, human resource development and economic growth

Two major and related sources of change in higher education in Western Europe have been linked in the literature to the emergence of the Evaluative State. Firstly, economic growth generated the need to raise skills levels, especially in the areas of science and technology; hence the need for higher education to produce highly skilled workers for the new knowledge-based economy. Massification was achieved as larger numbers of young people were encouraged to enter universities. Given this new role in human resource development, higher education subsequently became the driver for economic growth (Neave, 1988).

Secondly, governments' reluctance to fund rising costs generated by massification saw a reduction in state spending on higher education. Neave has argued that the need to increase participation in higher education, coupled with the state's determination to cut spending in this area, generated a particular set of circumstances that demanded a quite different form of state intervention in higher education.

Policy goals and framework targets were designed to be reached through the exercise of new systems of resource allocation. In other words, institutions would be funded only on the basis of having fulfilled certain criteria; these were related to efficiency (doing more with less), productivity (turning out the desired graduates and research outputs quickly), and quality. The state in this period never intended to fund all costs generated by institutions. Rather, under-funding achieved the goal of forcing the sector to become more responsive to external pressures. The market, which institutions had to serve to ensure their continued survival, embodied social demands and the needs of industry and other partners with whom contracts could be negotiated to fund institutional activities which matched their priorities.

Thus, massification and budget costs, as described above, were two elements which effected a major transformation in the higher education sector; they did this by bringing to bear new pressures related to increasing demands for efficiency, productivity, quality, accountability and responsiveness.

3.8.4 Remote steering and the exercise of control

Two fundamental shifts characterised the emergence of the Evaluative State in Western Europe. Firstly, the shift to strategic evaluation saw a heavier emphasis on quality and accountability, coupled with a shift from input control to what Neave has termed *a posteriori* or product control. Secondly, a move towards remote steering by the state was linked to a drive towards self-regulation and institutional autonomy (1988).

Neave (1988) points out that the Evaluative State, rather than being planned and intentionally engineered by powerful elements within government, was defined by a set of relationships between state and higher education that developed over a period of time and as a result of a series of state-led responses to a variety of circumstances.

A range of economic, social and even ideological conditions demanded that the state take action, largely through the promulgation of policy and regulatory frameworks, in order to ensure higher education's response as a sector to changing conditions and circumstances. Neave holds that it was these varied responses, rather than the implementation of a grand, bureaucratically-conceived master plan, which resulted in the emergence of a particular kind of relationship between the state and the higher education sector.

The theory of the Evaluative State thus described attempts by governments in Western Europe, beginning in the latter half of the 1980's, to steer higher education in particular directions and towards the achievement of specific, if shifting, policy goals.

What emerged at this time was a form of state-steering that began to rely on systems of incentives and processes of evaluation. These were designed to reduce the need for constant legislative enactment to make sure that the higher education system continued to serve the changing needs and priorities of governments and states. State-steering of this kind ensured that the higher education system was positioned over time to respond appropriately and continuously to changing societal conditions. Inherent in this movement was a re-conceptualisation of the purposes of higher education. The function of the universities was now linked to the needs of the labour market and to the technology, skills and knowledge needs of the growing economy.

Maassen (1997) remarked that steering from a distance did not imply an absent government, but rather that the state designed the framework within which institutions were expected to act autonomously, in the sense of having the freedom to decide on the best course of action to achieve the state's policy goals. Dill has argued that the basic principle of the new management models for universities was *'to better align control with accountability by delegating to public agencies greater authority over inputs and decisions about resources'* (Dill, 1998: 371). Hence the link between remote steering and self-regulation - states devolved the responsibility for detailing the behaviour required of the sector to institutions in order to achieve the outputs required by government (Maassen, 1997). The Evaluative State has continued to promulgate broad policy guidelines along with funding frameworks and other regulatory mechanisms to attain its policy goals, while at the same time control over universities has been achieved less through bureaucratic regulation (Maassen, 1997) and more through a focus on shaping the products and output of universities.

3.8.5 Evaluation and accountability

Maassen (1997) has argued further that universities have accepted the move towards greater institutional autonomy in exchange for providing the Evaluative State with more information, more frequently, about the quality of activities conducted in teaching and in research. For example, in South Africa, the provision of subsidy funds to universities has become contingent on the achievement of goals such as increasing graduate success and increasing research output through publications and successful postgraduate completions. The state relies on the regular submission of information from universities regarding these and other products and outputs in order to judge whether performance has been acceptable as measured against output goals and targets.

The increasing provision of information about the quality of academic activities has enabled routine, regular measurement and evaluation of the quality of performance, rather than educational provision, and quality evaluation has become the lever of accountability of the Evaluative State. Henkel (1998) has identified the development of evaluation processes within the policy context of the shift towards the Evaluative State, and argues that:

..there has emerged in some countries a public theory of evaluation as an instrument of public accountability and rational management: that it is possible to make authoritative evaluations, to convert them into quantitative measures, to use them as the basis of accountability and, in some cases, resource allocations and to be assured that these steps will produce better higher education (1998: 291).

Neave (1989, 1995 and 1998) has similarly argued that the Evaluative State was characterised by changes in the use, form and frequency of evaluation. Governments before had always engaged in some form of evaluation as an exercise in making universities accountable for public funding, but this sort of evaluation was characterised by Neave and others as routine verification, conducted less frequently and in the context of maintaining higher education in a steady and stable state. The transformation of higher education and its steering by the state to ensure that it became a lever for social and economic change, required new relationships between government and higher education.

These would revolve around the increased prominence of performance measurement and evaluation and the emergence of a new focus on quality control. To this end, quality has been associated with the achievement of policy goals and objectives, and the role of quality assurance agencies has been associated with the evaluation of the performance of universities against key state priorities and goals.

King Alexander (2000) has suggested that the movement towards what he terms performance-based accountability to the achievement of national priorities, has in fact meant the exercise of greater rather than more limited state control. The Evaluative State has become more actively involved in higher education, and has done so directly rather than remotely. In the words of King Alexander (2000):

..it is clear that the nature of the state's relationship with higher education has evolved from one of authoritative oversight to one of active involvement in financial arrangements and economic decisions (2000: 247).

The post-apartheid South African state has resorted to the use of funding frameworks to exercise steering and state control. Neave (1995) has argued that funding frameworks provide for indirect and remote state control through the provision of rewards for output achievement.

Others have maintained that the exercise of state control through funding frameworks which govern the distribution of research income and teaching output funding, reflects a far more direct form of state steering (Scott, 1989; El-Khawas & Massey, 1996; Cave, Hanney, Henkel & Kogan, 1997; King Alexander, 2000). Whether remote or direct, the new relationship between state and higher education globally has been characterised by greater control of the former over the latter. In the words of Salter and Tapper (1994):

After decades of prod and nudge politics, of wait and see, the state has acquired powers which mark the qualitative shift in its relationship with the institutions of higher education. It is now in a position to orchestrate change on a scale and in a manner which knows no precedent (1994: 1).

3.8.6 The Evaluative State, managerialism and the market

The Evaluative State has not relied exclusively on performance measurement and rewards to control the activities of the higher education sector, but has also introduced the concept of competitive markets as an added means of steering universities in the direction required.

The state has encouraged institutions to compete with each other for additional forms of earmarked and priority-related state funding, through additional competitive research contracts administered by its research councils and research agencies (Dill, 1998). Indeed, funding cuts have compelled institutions to pursue these additional and alternative revenue generating routes, along with increasing their activities in pursuit of what has come to be known as third stream income. Business and industry, science councils and private donors have become the new market for funding opportunities and a shift towards greater entrepreneurialism in universities is discernable, as research contracts are vigorously pursued and knowledge generation is directed at the needs of new business partners.

Distinctly different forms of institutional management emerged in the wake of new pressures and priorities experienced by higher education institutions. Neave and Van Vught (1991) have argued that a new managerial approach to institutional management developed in response to the state's drive for greater efficiency and productivity.

In South Africa, as in many other countries, an ethos of contractualisation (Neave, 1998), understood as the increasing reliance on contractual funding arrangements, predominated as institutions were rewarded for compliance and punished for recalcitrant behaviour.

The idea of block funding for academic activities receded into the distance and was replaced by a framework of subsidy funding, one which required ongoing negotiation between institutions and the state over the goals and objectives to be reached in return for financial rewards.

In this regard, Neave (1998) has argued that the system of rewarding institutional performance has become a powerful lever driving change in higher education:

*Contractualisation is reckoned to be not only a most puissant lever bearing down on 'implementation lag' – obduracy can be subject to chastisement and trusty servants given their due desserts. It also involves a fundamental revision to the formal status of the university. If one cares to dwell upon it for a moment, contractualisation puts an end to the idea of the university as a service **to** the State and instead recasts it as a public service of which one of the funders and supporters **happens to be** the state (1998: 276).*

According to Maassen (1997), new goal-directed forms of management were required, aimed at ensuring that universities fulfilled policy goals, often quantified into performance indicators. Financial and other rewards were bestowed on condition that institutions performed satisfactorily against externally-articulated performance criteria. The need to negotiate and manage a variety of contracts with the state, agencies of the state and other third parties, a growing emphasis on effective planning as a pre-condition for public funding, and pressure to provide strategic information on demand – all these called for new and foreign forms of institutional leadership.

Managerialism in universities began to reflect corporate leadership models. Features such as new systems of line management and the increased appointments of consultants tasked with driving outputs and managing contracts began to characterise management in higher education institutions.

Primus inter pares (the first among equals) elections of academic leaders were gradually replaced by appointments of Vice Chancellors and Rectors as executive managers, and Deans and department heads as academic middle managers.

In concluding the discussion of the Evaluative State in Western Europe, Neave and others have argued that the Evaluative State emerged as a response to governments' reconceptualisation of the purpose of higher education and the formulation of a new role for the sector, one contributing to social and economic development and transformation. Higher education was tasked with meeting national and regional needs through the development of human capital and satisfying the knowledge requirements of economies where competitive growth was based on securing technological advantage.

And the system needed to be steered, through institutional compliance with planning, funding and quality regulatory frameworks, in the direction of achieving these goals and priorities.

3.8.7 The Evaluative State emerges in South Africa

In my study, I examine the effects of change in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa on institutions, as well as academics' perceptions of the impact of these on their working lives. I chose to focus on the implementation of quality assurance policy as a point at which tensions and contestations are revealed, as academics' views of quality and the purposes of higher education come up against the state's agenda for the transformation of universities in South Africa. Restructuring higher education to meet national and global needs resulted in upheavals that were intensely felt but minimally understood by those '*at the chalkface.*' (Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001). And the demands for equity, redress, effectiveness and efficiency, the new principles underpinning higher education delivery, exerted new pressures, compelling academics to become (somewhat reluctantly) agents of change.

The difference between the emergence of the Evaluative State in Western Europe in the 1980's and in South Africa in the post-apartheid era was essentially a difference of pace and intensity. Change in the form of state-steering in South Africa was rapid rather than evolutionary, and involved a hybrid model of steering through both legislation and the simultaneous design of frameworks which defined incentives, targets and goals, as well as the systems for evaluating institutional performance against these. Rather than choosing to steer higher education through a system of measuring and rewarding performance, as opposed to using legislative enactment, the South African state committed itself to achieving change in the sector by both means, through both legislation and the constant evaluation of performance.

In a very short period of time all of the activities the institutions engaged in both on a daily and a long-term basis - teaching, research, community outreach, planning, funding, governance and quality assurance – almost simultaneously felt the impact of external intervention.

Interviews with university academics and senior managers for this research revealed the huge impact of these interventions on people's working lives and the new sources of stress and strain that academics and other staff had to manage on a daily basis.

Early post-apartheid policy (DOE, 1996; 1997 and 2001) stated clearly that government would steer through incentives and evaluation and that quality would become both a key principle for transforming higher education and the basis for a new relationship between government and the sector (NCHE, 1996). Not only was the drive to efficiency becoming a new and powerful indicator of quality but external quality assurance processes became the point at which 'national priorities were operationalised,' through the evaluation of performance against policy goals and through the measurement of institutional outputs desired by the state (Neave, 1994).

Control over the outputs of the sector was exercised by the setting of benchmarks, performance indicators, targets and objectives by the state in major areas of institutional production.

Teaching outputs were evaluated in terms of graduate numbers, time-to-degree and pass rates, while research outputs were measured according to article publications, project completion and post-graduate success. Institutions could be rewarded for efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in these areas by the allocation of state funding, while positive external evaluation awarded status and the promise of self-regulation and conditional autonomy.

This is the way in which the literature described strategic evaluation as a component of state steering in the Evaluative State. It is also the way major South African higher education policy documents in the post-apartheid era, namely the NCHE (1996), White Paper 3 (1997), and the National Plan for Higher Education (2001), variously described the role of planning, funding and quality assurance in steering higher education.

3.9 Conclusion

Through this literature review, I have presented an argument which suggests that higher education policy reform has significantly changed the way in which universities function, by introducing new purposes, roles and requirements, for higher education.

This fundamental reconstruction of the idea of the university, and the patterns and practices of academic work, has had tremendous impact on the professional lives of academics and other university workers.

I have argued that the new utilitarian view of universities, coupled with the determination of governments to control and steer universities in order that they may serve new functions, has resulted in the emergence of the Evaluative State. The notion of quality has become politically contested, and the adoption by the Evaluative State of a particular view of quality as fitness for external purposes has spawned new and conservative practices in universities. The practices of managerialism, the growth of audit culture, and an increasing in performativity have signified a shift towards greater political control over the behaviours and activities of academics and university managers alike. In this context the domain of quality assurance and quality evaluation has become a new site of ideological struggle.

Arguments have been made for the possibility of employing the conservative tools of the Evaluative State towards progressive goals associated with transformation, equity and social justice in South Africa (Singh, 2006; Lange, 2006). Singh and Lange have argued that the progressive goals employed by the South African state, namely the pursuit of equity and democracy, justify the use of an accountability framework, which they understand to be conservative, for evaluating quality in universities.

In their view, adopting quality evaluation technologies associated with the Evaluative State is the only means of monitoring the progress made by the higher education sector towards equity and democratisation. In the case of UWC, however, accountability to the Evaluative State has stimulated the development of a new entrepreneurial, market-directed focus, at the expense of the pursuit of progressive goals associated with redress and social justice.

This study will attempt to account for the impact of the Evaluative post-apartheid state on the transformation choices made by one university, which has been persuaded and cajoled into valuing strategic goal achievement above all else. The research will shed light on the ideological struggles waged by academics as their views of the purpose and function of universities, and their roles within them, confront the demands and requirements of the Evaluative State.

Although attempts have been made in the literature to account for the declining attraction of the academic profession and the pervasiveness of a sense of loss and powerlessness amongst academics in the context of rising quality assurance demands, very little research has directly linked the experiences and behaviours of academics to the machinations of the Evaluative State.

A second gap in the literature is the lack of research on academics in South Africa. Only a few studies (Lockett, 2003; Webster and Mosoetsa, 2003) have been conducted into the experiences of academics and university managers in the context of higher education change. Substantial research across academic positions, disciplines and institutions is needed, and unless we provide good accounts of the impact of the Evaluative State in South Africa on academic practice, policy makers will continue blindly to import global practices into higher education policy, and remain oblivious to the negative consequences they might have on the academic project.

A third gap is the dearth of studies into the conceptions academics have of quality. There are a few accounts that scratch at the surface, but these have often been aimed at slotting views into Harvey and Green's five definitions of quality.

My research interest resides in discovering whether alternative conceptualisations of quality exist in universities as South Africa grapples with addressing the full range of knowledge challenges of the twenty-first century.

The next chapter accounts for the methodology decisions of this study, provides a rationale for the research strategy, including data collection and analysis, and examines the design limitations of the study.