

CHAPTER 2

FACTORS IMPACTING ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

2.1 Introduction

Student development and support activities in higher education are characterised by a multitude of forms, services and interpretations. Practices of student development and support in higher education institutions emphasise the variations in interpretation of what developmental and supportive needs the institutions should address.

This chapter investigates the contexts of student development and support, current trends and realities and impacting factors within the higher education landscape. The investigation focuses specifically on factors that impact on student development and support, for example: funding, politics, managerialism in education, quality assurance within the context of a developing country.

2.2 Higher education in a developing country

A literature survey brings to light a number of studies on higher education in developing countries across the globe, amongst others, South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, Nigeria and Mongolia. A study on higher education in the state of Mongolia, and specifically the recent fast-paced reforms implemented in that country, suggests that democratisation and economic transition in a developing country are key drivers of higher education reform (Weidman & Bat-Erdene, 2002). Similar studies were conducted in Hong Kong (Dowson & Bodycott, 2003), China (Qian, Verhoeven & Leuven, 2004), Middle-East and North Africa (Akkari, 2004). In all instances the focus was on the developing country contexts and the impact on higher education as a result of economic and social transformation and development.

Based on their findings in the Mongolian study, Weidman and Bat-Erdene (2002) propose a framework for influences characterising higher education in the new millennium. The framework is of particular interest if applied to the South African context where similarities to the Mongolian experience include the onset of political freedom, social change and rapid educational change and economic growth. When applied to the South African and African contexts the framework of Weidman and Bat-Erdene, indicates influencing factors that may be relevant to the South African higher education landscape. Further to this, these factors could also indicate areas of concern in the current transformational processes in South Africa.

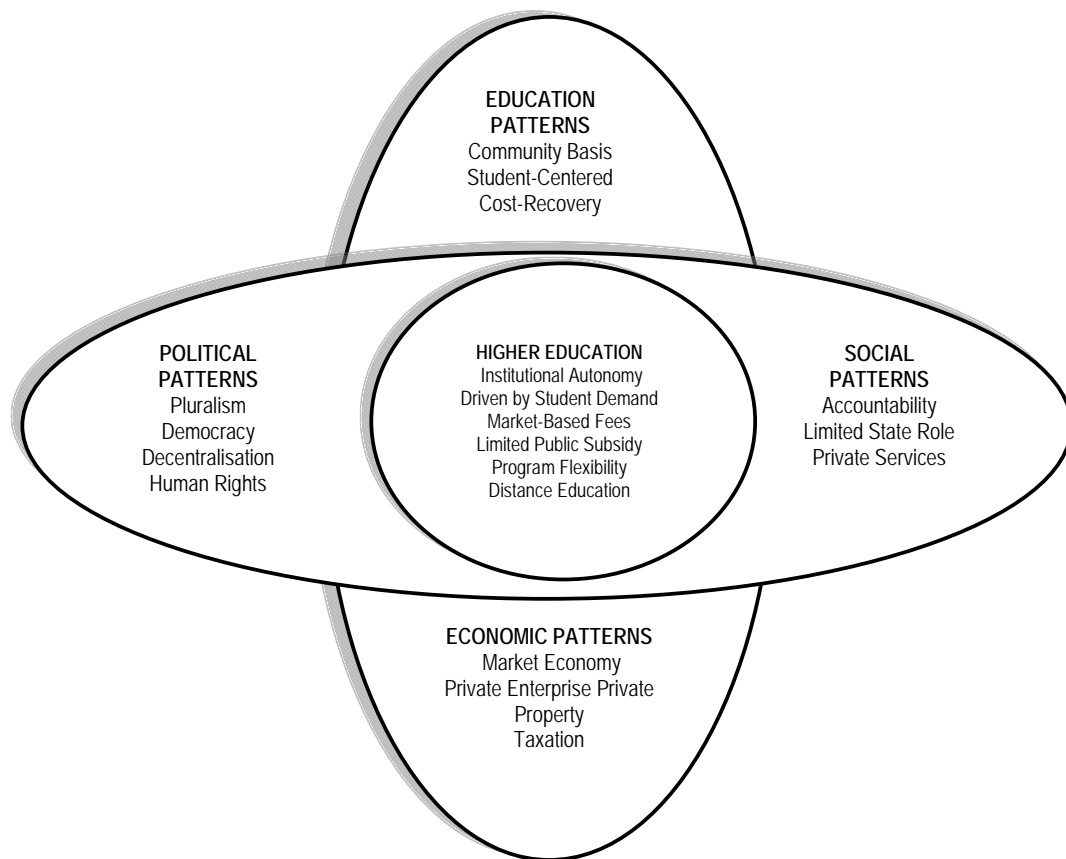


Figure 2.1: Higher education in the New Millennium: Social, Economic, Political and Education influences (Resource: Weidman JC, Bat-Erdene R, 2002:144)

In the following section the factors (or also called patterns), as identified by these authors, are brought into relation to the South African higher education experience.

2.2.1 Factors impacting on higher education in a developing country

2.2.1.1 Political patterns

From a political perspective it can be said that the notion of a transition based on democratic principles emphasises the implementation of core principles (often captured in a constitution) such as pluralism; diversity; human rights and a reduction of state control. This is of course also true within the educational realm.

The transformation in South African higher education has been exemplary in doing the above. In practice vigorous steps were taken by government towards the restructuring of institutions, changes in ethos and management at higher education institutions and also directives towards increased student participation and improved accessibility (Department of Education South Africa, 2001).

However, since it is a government driven and not an institutionally driven transformation the degree of government control is very high. It is almost impossible to move toward greater decentralisation, as an ideal, while the state has to implement and force the momentum for change. In fact current experience is that many aspects of higher education are becoming increasingly centralised (e.g. programme and qualification mix; determining student numbers or enrolments per programme) in order to facilitate and speed up the transformation. Unfortunately the ideal within a democracy is the opposite trend, namely decentralisation and increased autonomy in higher education. The paradox experienced within the South African context, as was the case with Mongolia, is leading to discomfort amongst academics and academic leadership and a public discourse on academic autonomy.

In addition to political factors, Weidman and Bat-Erdene also identified educational factors.

2.2.1.2 Education patterns

In contrast with the South African trend the documented experience about Mongolian Education (Weidman & Bat-Erdene, 2002) shows a decreased centralisation and increased community involvement. Curricula were increasingly tailored to localised socio-economic needs.

A similarity with the South African scenario is found in a move from a teacher-centred to a student-centred (learner-centred) model or approach. Evidence of this trend in South Africa is the shift towards outcomes-based education on all educational levels, including higher education. Although higher education proved more resistant to this change than other sectors of education the shift in emphasis can be considered a definitive educational pattern. Aspects of the implementation of an outcomes based educational system and a national qualification framework is discussed in-depth later in this chapter.

2.2.1.3 Economic patterns

I am of the opinion that in South Africa the same economic forces of privatisation, market driven economy, increased private ownership and taxation as was the case in Mongolia can be expected to impact heavily on higher education. The dynamic of the economy in a developing country is characterised by a strong and purposeful move towards a market economy. Concurrent with this it is typical that the state privatises many assets. For public higher education institutions this means that the institutions increasingly look for and depend on private investment and partnerships. Most importantly, it means a concurrent move towards increased efficiency in administration, teaching, research and community service. Higher education may now find itself within a new domain and business efficiency standards being applied. It now also needs to be competitive, productive and economically efficient in the economic input of resources vs. output ratio, i.e.. a return on investment. A serious risk factor arises in that should the economy in the developing country not be managed well it

may create a situation where higher education becomes unsustainable if no private funding, investment and partnerships are available. The actual output of higher education could be measured against vastly different criteria than the traditional valuables of higher education and academia and this may in turn require a cultural shift in traditional institutions.

2.2.1.4 Social factors

Along with economic and political factors it is inevitable that there would be required changes in social behaviour. The individual is potentially more empowered and gains greater access to education. In the context of the developing country there could be a scenario where the state becomes less involved and there is a marked increase in private providers. Such an increase in private providers has already become a critical challenge for educational ministries to deal with in the South African-context demonstrated by the implementation of strict accreditation, regulation and registration measures by the Department of Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2003a).

Another important social factor is the principle of increased accountability. In practice this means greater pressure on individuals and the private sector to contribute and assist in the provision of education. Political and social tension may typically occur should there be no harmony in the increase of private education providers, an increase in individuals taking responsibility to gain quality education and a controlled decentralisation of education.

2.2.1.5 The implication for higher education

The central sphere of the Weidman and Bat-Erdene framework reflects political, economic, educational and social influences generated within its own inter-national, national, regional and local contexts.

Higher education in South Africa, as it was in Mongolia, is not an isolated entity. The impact and interaction of political, social, economic

and general educational factors creates an intricate, delicate and involved scenario that determines the very nature and role of higher education.

This complex position of higher education in a developing country is investigated by Reddy (2002), who explains that changing government-university relationships is an important contextual trend. He states that university autonomy (the capacity for self-government) must be balanced with a higher education institution being accountable to society by fulfilling its mission. Reddy declares that with massification, globalisation, privatisation and expectations for quality assurance universities face a more complex relationship with society generally and government specifically.

Moja, Miller and Cloete (1996) propose three models that characterise government-higher education institution relationships:

- The state-control model: The system is created by and almost completely funded by the state.
- The state-supervision model: The state sees its task as supervising the higher education system to ensure academic quality and maintain a level of accountability.
- The state-interference model: The third model is when higher education institutions become opposition to the states development path. The state then aims to exert political and bureaucratic control while autonomy remains the policy.

During the apartheid era in South Africa (the period before 1994) the model of state-interference, was dominant. During this period the state controlled education to the extent of determining curricula and educational delivery. It can be said that there was total control on primary and secondary schooling levels and direct as well as indirect control on higher education level. Transformation in education since

1994 has allowed aspects of the second model of state-supervision to manifest but after more than a decade into the post apartheid era, state control over higher education is still firm and the relationship cannot be seen as truly supervisory only. The role of the state has become that of change agent and monitor of transformation and therefore complete autonomy is not possible or allowed. Examples of practices relevant to this argument would be the prescriptions regarding programme and qualification mixes at the various institutions and the proposed capping of student numbers per programme. One should however recognise that there is progress towards a state-supervision model.

2.2.2 The relationship between government and higher education institutions

Chapman and Austin (2002) estimated that half of the students enrolled in higher education worldwide live in developing countries. They based the estimations on the figures released by the World Bank in 2000. These authors also predict exponential growth in student numbers up to the year 2015 (World Bank, 2000) based on current trends, age profiles and population growth.

Extending access and strengthening the quality of higher education are emerging as key national priorities of governments across much of the developing world. Chapman and Austin also postulate that up to the year 2002 most of the effort to strengthen education was focussed on an institutional level (i.e.. initiatives to enhance the institution) and maintain that, while many of these efforts have been successful and will continue to be needed, the main challenge of the next decade centres on how institutions define and shape their external relationships with government, on the one hand, and with the larger citizenry, on the other.

Complex political, social and economic pressures now shape the future of higher education in the developing world.

A number of critical issues as identified by Chapman and Austin (2002), are:

- Seeking a new balance in government-university relationships.
- Coping with autonomy.
- Managing expansion while preserving equity, raising quality and controlling costs.
- Addressing new pressures and forms of accountability.
- Supporting academic staff in new roles.

The role of student development and support in the expansion of the higher education sector, ensuring high success rates, ensuring quality and stepping up to the pressures of accountability to the public and employment sectors, is evident. The management of access and capped student numbers, increasingly complex social and emotional issues impacting on student success, improving throughput and success rates are areas where student development and support may have a steering impact.

2.2.3 Transformation challenges from a student development and support perspective

Bargh, Scott and Smith (1996) write in a review of the changes in the higher education landscape in Britain, that:

Radical changes have taken place, not only in the shape of the higher education system and the scale and the character of institutions but in the links between universities and society, culture, science and innovation (p.12).

Bargh et al. (1996) also identify two overarching trends as a conceptual framework to understand changes that has indeed taken place. These trends are *massification* (i.e.. increased access to higher education) and *marketisation* (i.e.. increased business orientation). In addition the authors caution that

although the modern university is bigger and more market oriented, more fundamental changes are also taking place.

In South Africa, the Council on Higher Education (2004) elaborates on these issues in a paper on *Global patterns of change in higher education* by describing certain changes as powerful and identifies the following main areas of change:

- transition from an elite to a mass provision;
- the construction of radically new relations between government, society and universities;
- accelerated penetration of academic life by the market and market relations;
- a series of new demands and expectations coming from other social actors (fundamental revisions of how universities are defined, governed, funded and influenced by fields of force external to them);
- new ways in which universities manage themselves and carry out core activities;
- the construction of new professional identities;
- The accommodation of existing values and norms to new circumstances.

The principles highlighted by the Council echoes the exact same trends identified by Bargh in the United Kingdom, namely massification and marketisation. In step with international trends, massification is certainly an overt agenda in South Africa. This prerogative is stated clearly in the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001).

2.2.3.1 Trends in the transformation of higher education in South Africa

After the implementation of the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001), in South Africa, analysts are making the similar comments to those of Bargh and colleagues. *Massification* and *marketisation* has been prominent and formalised as strategic goals. Fundamental changes are taking place in the governance and curricula of higher education. Other examples

are the changing funding structure that is linked to output and the directives regarding programme and qualification mix strategies of the Department of Education. What is currently experienced as a evolutionary transformation in education in South Africa is not unique and has been experienced in developed and developing countries across the globe.

Scott (1995:32) identifies a number of modernisations that is impacting on higher education. He describes the modernisations as “revolutions of change” His work is based on the factors impacting on higher education in Britain and resulting in not merely changed institutions but different institutions from the traditional (pre 21st century) university.

The modernisations identified by Scott (1995) are categorised as:

- the political revolution: reforms in the welfare approaches of state and the setting up of research councils and increased funding structures.
- the socio-economic revolution: a period where higher education became almost compulsory and a new articulation developed between higher education and the labour market.
- the intellectual and innovation revolution: Bargh et al. (1996) also describes the fundamental changes in higher education as being mainly in the intellectual approach. According to the authors the change manifests as a slide towards relativism as plural discourses are preferred to universal truths and they express the change and similarity with the South African scenario, as follows:

Despite the vast difference in economic development status the similarity in educational change dynamic is evident when comparing recent transformations in the British higher education and the transformation in higher education in South Africa.

Similarity can be found in the growing trend towards the higher education system becoming a knowledge production system and the diffusion of traditional demarcations between academic disciplines on the one hand and also between academy and industry.

The critical difference between the British and South African experience perhaps being, that the transformations in Britain as identified and described by both Scott (1995) and Bargh, et. al. (1996), occurred over a period of two decades in Britain while in South Africa, after the political and social re-acceptance into the world arena post the 1994 democratic elections, the transformation happened (and is still continuing) at a highly accelerated pace.

2.2.3.2 Challenges for transformation as identified by the National Plan for Higher Education

The challenges faced by higher education in South Africa and as interpreted by Government are highlighted in the introductory passages of the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001).

The introductory section states that the key challenges facing the South African higher education system remain as initially outlined in the White Paper which culminated in the Higher Education Act (Department of Education South Africa, 2001):

To redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to **serve** a new **social order**, to meet pressing **national needs** and to **respond** to new realities and opportunities (p.1).

The role of higher education is defined by the National Plan to be threefold, namely:

- Human resource development
- High level skills training
- Production, acquisition and application of new knowledge

It is further stated in the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001), that:

These challenges have to be understood in the context of the impact on higher education systems world-wide of the changes associated with the phenomenon of **globalisation**. The onset of the 21st century has brought in its wake changes in **social, cultural and economic relations** spawned by the revolution in information and communications **technology**. Higher education has a critical and central role to play in contributing to the **development** of an information **society** in South Africa both in terms of skills development and research (p.5).

The Ministry, through this National Plan, poses the critical question on whether the South African higher education system is ready to meet these challenges. And then responds with the following statement:

The foundations in terms of the enabling policies and legislation are in place. However much remains to be done in terms of implementing the policies (p.6).

The challenges higher education are faced with, are fundamental and speaks to the very nature and role of higher education in a developing country and impacts on the very principles traditional teaching and learning models in higher education have been constructed on.

The subsequent challenge for student development and support services in higher education is to interpret these changes (or revolutions as Scott (1995) and Bargh et al. (1996) called them) and respond by pro-actively redefining the role and purpose of student development and support services in higher education.

The National Plan unambiguously states its **transformational purpose**:

The National Plan provides a framework for ensuring the fitness of the higher education system to contribute to the challenges that face South Africa in the 21st century. Its primary purpose is to ensure that:

- The higher education system achieves transformation objectives set out in the White Paper and is responsive to societal interests and needs.
- There is coherence with regard to the provision of higher education at the national level.
- Limited resources are used efficiently and effectively and there is accountability for the expenditure of public funds.
- The quality of academic programmes, including teaching and research, is improved across the system (p.6).

This purpose statement provides student development and support service and practices with all the impetus and motivation required to stimulate renewed debate on the development and support needs to be critically addressed by student development and support expertise. Student development and support service, once strategically positioned and service delivery with impact becomes a reality, has the potential to be a core agent of positive change within institutions of higher education. Within the South African context, as a developing

and rapidly transforming country, the challenge for student development and support service practitioners, managers and higher education institution managers, is to construct practical and relevant services, address service portfolios (scope of services offered), attend to the empowerment and integration of student development and support interventions into mainstream curricula and effective provisioning (particularly financial) for service delivery. The immediate challenge is to enhance institutional success as primarily measured by student success which could be considered the core business of higher education. The need for a direct link between student development and support services to the strategic objectives of all higher education institutions in South Africa is evident.

It stands to reason that the challenges faced by higher education on the institutional level cannot be addressed effectively without the specific expertise and input provided from the student development and support service domain.

In summary these include:

- Specialist input on and guidance of admission practices.
- Specialist interventions in student critical skills development programmes via core programme curricula and remedial services addressing higher order thinking skills; language proficiency (including reading speed and comprehension), classroom skills (including note-taking, listening, interactive assessment and presentation skills), study skills, writing and presentation skills, life long learning skills, team work skills, self management skills and other personal and social efficiency skills.
- Specialist support programmes and interventions to enhance academic success (all forms of counselling and remedial support to complement and enhance the teaching and learning endeavour).

The above suggests that institutions and higher education may need a comprehensive and coordinated strategy at national level. Inferring a strategy, that will include student development and support service as a critical participant towards addressing the goals of the National Plan, and specifically factors towards student success, graduation and throughput rates.

It has been argued now that the higher education landscape in South Africa is undergoing radical transition and transformation in various respects. Transition to democracy in the socio-political arena has enforced transformation in the form and content of higher education. Some of the actions taken by the Department of Education of South Africa to “redress and transform higher education to address a new social order and meet national needs” had enormous impact on the existing public institutions. The impact of some of the steps taken on national level deserves some attention.

Action steps by the Ministry include:

- Restructuring the institutional landscape by **merging institutions** and establishing 22 new institutions of higher education from the 36 former institutions (Department of Education South Africa, 1997).
- Implementing a **National Qualification Framework** with the effect of broadening opportunities for training and training providers and the **Higher Education Qualifications Framework** to regulate qualification types and levels in the sector (Department of Education South Africa, 2003a)
- Implementing an **outcomes-based education** model throughout the education system on basic, further and higher education levels.

The strategies and action steps taken are discussed in more detail in the following sections on mergers, outcomes-based education and the national qualification framework.

In all the preparatory and directing documents provided by the Department of Education South Africa (1995, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006) the shift toward social relevance (intending political, economical and social responsiveness) is propagated. In view of the shift in strategy in higher education it is also pertinent to take note of the argument of Lategan (1994) during the biennial SAARDHE Congress. Lategan (1994) warns that the “contemporary relevance” of a university is only the third task, with facilitating of learning and research being the primary tasks. He systematically analyses the purpose and nature of a university and concludes that if the university becomes the slave of the market place, scientifically founded teaching, learning and research are substituted because of pragmatic vocational (ideological?) demands and expectations. It is only when the university succeeds in taking upon itself academic tasks that involves the community, without implicating the core task of the university, that it can be true servant of the community, according to Lategan. The view that universities should focus on teaching, facilitation of learning and research as first and core priorities and only secondary to that be responsive to social needs is highly contested. In the very creation of Universities of Technology the view of Lategan is challenged by the Department of Education of South Africa. These Universities of Technology have the express purpose to “develop career-focussed technikon-type programmes to address regional needs” (Department of Education South Africa, 1997).

By placing such importance on the development of so-called career-focussed and technikon-type programmes the emphasis is placed on exactly the opposite of what Lategan sees as the priority task of the university. This statement by the ministry seems to indicate that the state does not view the priorities of the universities in quite the pure academic fashion as proposed by Lategan.

In reality higher education, in South Africa as in most of the world, finds itself in balancing act to promote academic activity (facilitating learning and research) and be accommodative and relevant in the socio-economic realm at the same time.

■ **Institutional mergers:** In the section setting out the background and approach of the National Working Group that made the recommendations on mergers to the Minister, it is stated that (Department of Education South Africa, 2002):

There is no single factor that underpins the case for mergers or new institutional and organisation forms. Instead, there are a range of factors linked to the specific context of different groups of institutions. For example the rationale for merging a historically white and a historically black institution may well differ from that of merging two small institutions (p.88).

In the one case the purpose may be that of overcoming the racial fragmentation of the higher education system. In the other, it may be that of achieving economies of scale and/ scope. In yet other cases the rationale may be that of streamlining governance and management structures and improving administrative systems. Or it may even be a combination of all of these factors.

The motivation for and purpose of creating a new institutional landscape in South African higher education is demonstrated by the goals stipulated by the Department of Education South Africa (2002):

- Increasing the overall participation rate (i.e.. access to higher education) from 15% to 20% (additional 200 000 students) through amongst others, improved efficiency in graduate outputs, increased recruitment of workers, mature students, women and the disabled, as well as students from the SADEC region.

- Shifting balance in enrolments from 49% to 40% in the humanities; from 26% to 30 % in business and commerce; from 25% to 30% in science engineering and technology.
- Enhancing the curricula to respond to changing needs, in particular, the skills and competencies required to function in the modern world such as communications, computer and information skills.
- Ensuring equity of access, especially in programmes in which black and women students are under-represented such as business and commerce, science, engineering and technology and postgraduate programmes.
- Ensuring equity of outcomes of higher education programmes, through developing academic development strategies to address unacceptable drop-out and failure rates, especially among African students.
- Addressing employment equity through measures to mentor, train and support young black and women academics.
- Sustaining existing, as well as building new research capacity.

At least two of these goals indicate a critical role for student development and support services (skills development, remediation, support) within higher education while the goal on shifting the balance of enrolments also suggests a critical and direct role for counselling and career guidance functions within student development and support.

The responses to these goals as demonstrated by the higher education sector vary greatly between institutions. As the implications of mergers, of which the majority had been implemented by January 2005, become clearer, the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of such a drastic reconfiguration continues.

- **The post-1994 higher education experience:** Cloete, Fehnel, Maassen, Moja, Perrold and Gibbon (1996) postulate that initially (that is post 1994) the new South Africa was a disaster for

historically black universities. The intentions of institutional redress and an increase in capacity did not materialise and, instead, student choice meant that many of these institutions bled their traditional students to the historically advantaged institutions.

This scenario then left government (Minister of Education) with little option but to investigate the institutional landscape in South Africa further and to implement changes. The National Working Group was set up in 2002 and the firm proposals for mergers and reconfiguration followed (Department of Education South Africa, 2002).

In a general survey on responses to the changes and merger plan, the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) requested responses from higher education on the experiences and perspectives of transformation (Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2002). CHET experienced, what was labelled “a serious apathy” from higher education and suggested that higher education in general may be “punch-drunk with policy changes of one kind or another”. Alternatively, a CHET-report deduced that the drastic changes in academic life and the demands on academics may have further caused a lack of enthusiasm for additional impositions on time.

■ **The post merger experience:** The CHET-report gives a reasonable summary of matters of mutual concerns within the higher education sector after the implementation of the mergers:

- **Autonomy:** Analysts at the CHET suggest that there may be a sense of threat to the autonomy of the higher education institution as the level of prescription and direct intervention by government is extremely high at this stage. Examples highlighted are the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) processes, Quality Assurance strategies (HEQC) and enrolment planning via the funding framework.

- Policy, steering and change: Concerns are raised about establishing an “appropriate relationship and balance between state driven policies and levers on the one hand and conditions and capacities conducive to change at the institutional level on the other”. It is even suggested that the current relationship between the state and higher education is one of mutual mistrust. Gibbon proposes that “the development of macro policy and the manner of deployment of the main levers for systemic steering (planning, quality assurance and funding) need to be shaped and informed by greater understanding of the dynamics and politics of institutional change and the various forms of resistance to change.” Gibbons goes further to say that government policy discourse and practice tends to regard the system as a homogenous entity which can be coherently steered through strong control. While in reality the system is constituted of a much more diverse and varied cluster of competing, self-interested elements. Gibbons feels very strongly that an overly punitive and combative approach precludes opportunities not only for greater co-operation but also for more compliant sectoral self-regulation.
- Funding and growth: Serious concerns exist on the conflicting agendas of ensuring provision in the human resources and skills needs of the country and increased participation in higher education whilst the other primary agenda is the capping of enrolments in higher education. A question arises on which priority to fund.
- Mergers and quality: Institutions may experience serious impact on research funding as mergers proceed. The merging of a low research-productivity institution and high research-productivity institution lowers the average output and credibility for research funding. If this happens it could result in a system of many second rate institutions which is contrary to the stated intention of the merger plan.

It is argued that the discourse, as a result of the enforced transformations, has shifted from equity-related issues to a discourse on making higher education more effective at producing quality graduates. It is stated by this author that higher education should be afforded the means and the manoeuvrability to play its role in high level human resource development.

When reflecting on the debates surrounding the transformation of higher education it becomes clear that mergers in higher education have not resulted fully in the fast-tracking of change, as it was anticipated by the policy makers. Transformation towards greater access, market orientation, gender and race equality has not happened as expected. Cloete et al. (2002) state that studies of various countries showed that while all those countries (Central and Eastern Europe, Brazil, India, Cameroon, Japan, USA and Australia) had widely divergent systems, they all had one thing in common, namely that reforms in higher education produced unanticipated outcomes. It seems that what is planned seldom happens in the pre-planned form. But even more important, outcomes occur that may not be part of the transformation plan. In South Africa it can be speculated that such outcomes are, amongst others, student unrest and dissatisfaction with changes, unexpected market responses, employment difficulties and growing unemployment trends.

In essence then, it becomes clear that the transformation and restructuring of the higher education landscape through various mergers had impact and effects not anticipated by the initial plan and institutions now battle to overcome these effects.

■ **Transformation for fundamental change:** The question may be asked whether transformation did indeed bring about the fundamental changes as intended. Cloete et al. (2002) compared the impact of transformations on individual level versus institutional

level and concluded that although institutions may have changed at face value (i.e.. student profiles and numbers) the actual redress for individuals has not happened. Public higher education, according to these researchers, is still very much an elitist system with little change in the gap between those who have it and those who don't.

Cloete and Fehnel (2002) show that the period post-1994 saw higher education institutions engaging in a range of actions and activities to position themselves in the new terrain. It was during this phase and in the scramble to present marketable programmes (in order to attract fee paying students) that a considerable drift across the binary divide between universities and technikons happened. Universities previously focussed on academic and technikons on career- and vocational programmes. In reality the distinction blurred over time as both institutional types endeavoured to offer a broader spectrum of options and a so called “academic drift” took place. The National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001) suggested a loosening of boundaries between institutional types but, according to those authors it has resulted in a slow but sure move towards uniformity. The National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001) also attempted to restrict the drift by declaring that the boundaries will not be loosened for the next five years. However the authors correctly point out that the National Plan then, in contradiction, also announced a merger between two such institutions, namely UNISA and Technikon SA.

Jansen (2002) distinguishes specific merger effects:

- The curriculum effects: referring to the curriculum resulting from the merger between two institutions, which has three possible outcomes, namely an unchanged curriculum, a fully integrated curriculum and a partially changed curriculum.

- The efficiency effects: referring to the cost-saving effect of the merger as calculated (before and after the merger) by taking into account full time equivalent enrolments (FTE's), staff costs, operational costs and hidden costs such as liabilities and debt.
- The equity effects: referring to the impact of the merger on staff and student profiles, specifically with regard to race and gender.
- The staffing effects: referring to the various categories of staff and the effects of the merger on motivation and morale.
- The student effects: referring to the student experience of the merger. Specifically what role students played in the institution, how their aspirations and perceptions were affected, etc.
- The organisational Integration effects: referring to the development of a new institutional identity rather than an "additional identity".
- The physical integration effects: referring to how the merger addressed issues of control, administration, legal matters and, specifically, the extent to which the merger addressed the physical organisation of space and facilities to facilitate organisational and curriculum integration.

It is the firm position of Jansen (2002) that politics is the prime factor in driving mergers. It follows logically then that the outcomes of mergers then cannot depend too strongly on the economic and organisational rationality that underpins merger initiatives in established economies. "For merger constituencies within transitional institutions are not simply passive respondents to change pressures in the external environment, they are also active shapers of the meaning of that environment in all its historical and social complexity. Institutional actors not only condition the kinds of mergers that result from government action; they also determine which mergers proceed in the first place" (p.15).

Jansen (2002) postulates a theory of contingency in explaining mergers. The author conducted an extensive study of five earliest merger cases in South Africa. On the basis of the case-study outcomes it is proposed that neither a general application of organisational theory (merging in response to external environmental factors) nor political explanations sit easy with the actual dynamics of the mergers recorded. On this basis the authors formulated the “thesis of contingency” implying that the origins, forms and outcomes of mergers are conditioned by, and contingent on, the specific forms of interaction between institutional micro-politics, on the one hand, and governmental macro-politics on the other, especially in turbulent or transitional contexts.

In understanding the mergers in public institutions of higher education in South Africa, the transitional context is all important. The transformation from an apartheid to a post-apartheid society necessitated change in the educational system. Jansen (2002) identifies what he calls the twin logic for mergers in the macro-political environment, i.e.. resolving the apartheid legacy and incorporating the higher education system within the context of a competitive globalised economy. The author argues that the micro-political arena should also be considered. Not one of the five case studies documented was without contestation and opposition from the partners involved. What the study effectively showed, according to the authors, was that the ways in which incorporation happens is relatively independent of the physical characteristics of the merger partners or the political, legal and policy claims of what the merger actually is, or will achieve. The form of a merger is rather determined at the interface of state macro-politics and institutional micro-politics and understanding “how each plays itself out within particular contexts” (Jansen, 2002:165).

In conclusion it can be said that fundamental change was intended and it has already happened in areas controllable by the state (e.g.

finances, programme mix, student profiles). However, at the same time there is little evidence of a major change in the core of academic functioning and approach. Traditional paradigms on the role and purpose of the university, resistance to changing teaching practices (refer next section) still seem to persist.

Implementing a National Qualifications Framework: Proceeding with the implementation of a framework, to regulate and align national qualifications in South Africa, is a truly ambitious venture. Besides the implication for higher education in general such a framework has notable implications for student development and support. The following sections provide an overview of the implementation approach and the impact on higher education in general and specifically student development and support

■ **A brief overview of the NQF and the impact of labour sector on education:** The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was legislated in 1995 as part of the Act on Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 1995) and the promulgation of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) by Act 85 of 1995). The Higher Education Qualification Framework was promulgated in 2007.

SAQA indicates, in a discussion document on the NQF, that the concept and formation of the framework has its origins in the labour movement of the 1970,s (South African Qualifications Authority, 2002). Since the 1970's the demands of the black trade unions were repeatedly rejected on the basis that the workers were unskilled. It lead to the labour sector seeing training and skills development as means to achieving their demands. Initiative from the labour sector was ratified by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1991. In the same period, since the mid to late 1970's the national uprising and protest in schools led to the education system being totally discredited. The National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) was established and proceeded

to develop proposals for the restructuring and transformation of formal education (National Education Coordinating Committee, 1993). By 1992 proposals were drafted to enforce a non-sexist, non-racist and democratic and most importantly a unitary system of education and training.

The Department of Education had its own policy discussion initiative which resulted in the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) (Cloete et al, 2002). The initiative did not proceed successfully, since the negotiating partners at the time, totally rejected the three stream approach (academic, vocational and vocationally-oriented). The rejection was based on a political stance and informed by the strong views in parties opposing government.

In 1992 the Department of Manpower (Department of Labour, 2000), met with the trade unions and established eight working groups to develop a national training strategy. The groups were composed of representatives from all required sectors, including the state, labour, unions, employers, providers of education and training. Working Group 2 reached agreement on an integrated framework. Consequently three documents were published, namely (National Qualifications Framework, 2005):

- The ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994)
- The Discussion Document on a National Training Strategy Initiative (1994)
- The CEPD Implementation Plan for Education and Training (1994).

The White Paper on Education and Training followed in 1995. This gave a final indication of the need for a national qualifications framework.

In response to the above development the Inter-Ministerial Working Group was established to draft the framework and on 4 October 1995 the South African Qualifications Authority Act was promulgated. The Authority became functional in May of the following year (National Qualifications Framework, 2005). The interactive relationship between education and labour was now firmly entrenched by the legislation. This approach forced the higher education agenda to include labour market needs and stronger emphasis placed on additional skills development (e.g. communication, team work, self management) while competing and cooperating with the labour sector in the provision of higher education.

This partnership between education and labour sectors impacted positively on the student development and support units by renewed emphasis on the skills of graduates and critical review of curriculum content.

■ **The discourse on new educational strategies and approaches:** With the implementation of the NQF the change to an outcomes-based educational approach in higher education was finally formalised and legislated. Kraak (Jansen, 1999) identified three prominent discourses in education and training since the 1980's and shows how the discourses progressed over time. I indicate how the legislation and implementation of the qualification framework was the outcome of an evolving discourse over more than a decade. The first phase was the radical "People's Education" movement which emerged from the struggle phase in the mid 1980's. The second period is the phase just prior to the 1994 democratic election that witnessed the "systemic discourse" (concerned with issues of structure). The third period, according to Kraak (2003) is the phase from April 1994 to present and in sharp contrast with the earlier phases. This is the early period of the implementation of the NQF.

Kraak (1999) sees the systemic discourse as the most valuable for educational reform in South Africa and emphasises the synergy between this school of thought and the debates on globalisation and high participation plus high skill imperatives as well as the development of trans-disciplinary knowledge. It was during this phase that critical developments shaping the current educational landscape took place, for example:

- The National Education Policy Initiative (National Education Coordination Committee, 1993): Basically conducted a comprehensive investigation into identifying the relationship between a range of education and training policy options.
- The National Training Strategy Initiative of the National Training Board (1991-1994): The board was the first truly multipartite structure and introduced an important paradigm shift towards an integrated approach between education and training.

A national qualifications framework was the final evidence of such a new approach drawing from both education and training sectors. This concept of a national framework was formulated in a discussion document of the ANC, called “A framework for Lifelong Learning”. This was a proposal constructed around the basic idea of a nationally integrated curriculum with a single qualification structure (Jansen & Christie, 1999).

Young (Jansen & Christie, 1999) identifies several benefits of a National Qualifications Framework:

- The NQF is inclusive. The framework accommodates all to become qualified.
- The NQF is not limited to training provided by accredited educational institutions.

- The NQF abolishes distinct educational and vocational tracks.
- The NQF is appropriate for learners at any age (including adults)
- The NQF is not selective but functions on a basis of recognition, encouragement and promotion.

There are five basic premises underlying the NQF in South Africa according to Goodwin-Davey (2000):

- Centrality of learning in education: This refers to the shift from focussing on teaching to a focus on learning.
- Quality in education: An educational system without quality has no value for the learners or for the society which supports them.
- Opportunity for education.
- Narrowing the gap between education and training.
- Accredited education.

Goodwin-Davey (2002) indicates that although significant changes and shifts have already been achieved in terms of the intended parity and alignment of education and training since the democratic transition in 1994, the true integration that was foreseen in early documents has in fact not occurred. It is her firm contention that the two systems may be moving towards a system of alignment and articulation through the NQF and the Human Resource Development Strategy but that full alignment and integration is still to be achieved.

It is further maintained by this author, that although the NQF is gaining prominence and popularity in South Africa problems are becoming increasingly evident. Problems include aspects such as the time taken to register standards and qualifications and in general the complexity of the systems.

Goodwin-Davey (2000) goes further and introduces an interesting new perspective. She declares that South Africa has gradually matured from the process of policy formulation and has progressed in policy implementation. The next five years, according to Goodwin-Davey will hold a challenge of grappling with policy impact. It is a phase wherein academics and analysts will investigate the impact policy development and implementation has had on national development and transformation goals.

On 13 June 2005 the South African Qualifications Authority released the NQF Impact study report (South African Qualifications Authority, 2005). This exercise is a world first with a systematic and empirical evaluation of the progress and impact of the qualifications framework.

The essence of the findings is that the NQF has positive impact on the following areas:

- the nature of learning programmes
- organisational, economic and societal benefits;
- contribution to other strategies;
- implementation of an outcomes-based approach;
- motivation of learners by certification and recognition of skills.

The impact study will be longitudinal and five criteria for future measurement were identified:

- creating an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- facilitating access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
- enhancing the quality of education and training;
- accelerating the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities;

- contributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

The fifth criterion for future measurements (as stated above), is most important from the student development and support service perspective. It relates directly to an assessment of the degree of successful achievement of the critical cross-field outcomes. The 12 critical-cross-field outcomes clearly imply holistic development in the context of the NQF and this means that higher education is given a direct challenge to attend to these outcomes effectively. Student development and support units (section, directorate, bureau, department) are by its nature and the specific expertise it offers the instrumental partner in taking up this challenge.

Implementing Outcomes-based Education (OBE)

The implementation of an outcomes based education system has strong implications for the traditionally discipline based structures within higher education. The following sections interrogate aspects of this implementation and specifically from a student development and support perspective.

■ **Defining outcomes-based education:** William Spady, an American educationist, is regarded by many as the father of the transformational outcomes-based education. Spady denies this but his work has had a major influence on the South African educational policy (Gultig et al. 1998).

Spady offered his own explanation of outcomes-based education during a presentation at the former Technikon Pretoria (now Tshwane University of Technology) in 1994:

OBE means clearly focussing and organising in an educational system around what is essential for all

students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising the curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens. (Tshwane University of Technology, 2004).

Gultig et al. (1998) highlight the immediate implications when implementing outcomes-based education in South Africa. They identify the changes required in methodology as one of the most obvious implications. Such fundamental change is required because according to the OBE approach, learning is directed towards acquiring abilities and skills, rather than memorising content.

This suggests that educators are required to:

- emphasise activity-based learning (students need maximum opportunity for exploration of ideas and practising of skills);
- create of cooperative as well as individual learning contexts (students need to develop skills of both independent/individual and group work);
- as an OBE-facilitator, focus on formative assessment (the nature and process of learning as important as the content of learning);
- set learning tasks that effectively integrate theory and practice and also transfer skills to broader contexts.

Spady sees the keys to an outcomes-based system as:

- developing a *clear set of learning outcomes* around which all of the system's components can be focussed;
- establishing *conditions and opportunities* that enable and encourage all students to achieve the essential outcomes.

This shift in thinking implies that higher education practitioners now have to make a change in their approach and skills from being providers of content (lecturing) to being facilitators of learning. To be a facilitator of learning implies that the higher education practitioner now primarily focus on guiding learners through the learning (exploring, experiencing, applying) processes and experiences. These processes include self exploration, analysis and finally the construction of content as opposed to the current and former system where the lecturer is the provider of content.

■ **Towards defined and measurable outcomes:** Spady is adamant that outcomes should be clear learning results that students should be able to demonstrate at the end of the learning process and cannot be vague statements about values, beliefs, attitude or psychological states of mind. Learning-outcomes are statements of what learners should be able to do. It must be demonstrable – as observable evidence of learning is required. Learning-outcomes involve actual "doing" instead of just "knowing". It is important that since outcomes expect students to carry out the processes defined within an outcome statement, that those processes are carefully captured in the learning outcome statement through demonstration verbs. It is finally also critical to remember that outcomes are achieved at the end of the learning process and therefore should represent the ultimate goal in the learning.

The OBE model distinguishes between critical cross field outcomes, exit level outcomes and specific outcomes (Spady, 2004).

For the purpose of this study *exit level outcomes*, are understood as those primary outcomes that define the *broad performance capability*, while the *specific learning outcomes* are understood as those outcomes that represent the *specific curriculum skills and*

knowledge components. Spady formulates this understanding by saying that the purpose of outcomes-based education, is to focus on the future performance abilities of students. OBE as a model of education then rejects the prevalent notion that students of differing abilities or aptitudes should be given different curricula and learning opportunities. It is precisely this notion that underlies the move towards inclusive education in South Africa. During an international conference hosted by the South African Association for Learners with Educational Difficulty (SAALED) practitioners in special needs education in all sectors of education, including higher education, had varied views on this principle propagated by OBE purists. The dissenting view is that some learners may still require alternative outcomes based on their specific abilities (SAALED, 2005).

OBE is already a reality in the South African primary and secondary schooling system and will be fully implemented throughout these sectors from the so called Receiving year (pre grade one) to Grade 12 (final schooling exit year) by 2009.

Higher education cannot be untouched and unchanged by the changes in educational approach in South Africa, for two critical reasons:

- learners exiting the schooling system and accessing the higher education system will be conditioned to the OBE approach;
- the National Qualifications Framework is structured to recognise specific outcomes and is therefore directly related to an outcomes-based education and training system.

■ **The consequences for higher education:** The shift towards an outcomes-based education model has consequences for higher education. Learners become higher education students and enter the system with different expectations on how learning is facilitated. Due to changes in the curriculum for primary and secondary

education it is expected that they are generally more conditioned in the self-directed learning mode. Traditional modes of teaching in higher education are therefore challenged. At the same time lecturers find it difficult and in some instances impossible to shift to a facilitation of learning and abandon lecturing modes. Lecturers cite student numbers, physical infrastructure (large linear lecture halls), learner resources (facilitators, group facilities, laboratories, libraries, internet and other resources) as reasons for avoiding the OBE approach in higher education.

In apparent support of a move away from highly structured curriculum, Polanyi (Reeves, 1988) writes about the "Tyranny of pre-packaged information and the concept of personal knowledge". He states that instead of offering an open world of nature and man to be explored and experienced, education has been allowed to set in a series of moulds labelled curriculum or syllabus. The existence of curricula and syllabi is the result of a shaping of inherited knowledge and skills into traditional forms and is a process very peculiar to the Western culture, according to Polanyi.

It is this school of thinking and discomfort that has ultimately lead to a questioning of the traditional paradigms of teaching and the use of a curriculum to direct teaching content and activity.

From the student development and support services perspective, Polanyi's explanation has relevance as it strongly focuses on the transfer of skills and the effectiveness of formal educational systems in doing so.

Polanyi (Reeves, 1988) explains that there have, in his view, always been two forms of education running side by side:

- Firstly, he identifies the category **community education**: referring to the skills and individual learns by growing up within a

specific community and being exposed to various realities, experiences and knowledge within a community. It includes the personal and social skills required to function effectively within a community and also importantly the so called "on the job training" experiences by apprenticeships. He considers this the natural and spontaneous form of education.

- Secondly he identifies the category **specialised education**: referring to educational formats where the individual is withdrawn and taught "bookish and theoretical knowledge" related to a specific function in society (life skills).

The theory of Polanyi is traced to the original clash between Roman and Greek versus the Barbarian cultures they came into contact with (Reeves, 1988). The Roman and Greek cultures valued structured and formalised teaching whilst the so called barbarian cultures depended on community education. Polanyi demonstrates how the community education for the masses has gone on all the time throughout history but it has always been undervalued and unnoticed. Polanyi puts a case for a more universal education to accommodate and integrate both the advantages of the community and specialised education models/ formats.

Polanyi's categories (Reeves,1988) may be extremely simplified and his assessment does not give full credit to the value of the specialised education category, but this manner of thinking is the essence of the motivations underlying a move from curriculum and syllabus based education to an outcomes-based educational format. Central to his argument is the shift from an assessment approach that was mainly focussed on assessing the retention of learning content (traditional, question-paper type tests), to an assessment approach that includes assessment of learning processes and the experience of learning (reflection on learning).

Polanyi's in-depth analysis of educational paradigms from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and the origins of the paradigms in the twentieth and twenty first century reveals a critical factor in understanding outcomes-based education (Reeves, 1988). The consistent unease and lack of success in practising either formalised (specialised) education or informal (apprenticeship) education on all levels of education has led to the formation of a new paradigm that dictates an integrated approach for learning. An integrated approach will effectively accommodate both the formalised or specialised learning and informal or apprenticeship learning within the higher education practice.

It can be deduced from this background information that an integrated approach for learning, as propagated by Polanyi, may be theoretically sound but that there are serious problems and resistance amongst academics in making it common practice not to mention the difficulties in organising this approach into a community of learning/ university structure. The reasons given, namely student numbers and physical facilities, are logistical factors that could potentially be overcome. It will unfortunately require radical changes in thinking about schedules, staff and student ratios, and also the typical physical design of facilities (changing large lecture rooms into smaller venues). From a student development and support service perspective however the notion of an integrated approach with an emphasis on skills development can be strongly endorsed.

■ **The motivation for change:** The following passage from the writings of C.S. Lewis on English Literature contributes towards an understanding of the growing unease with traditional curriculum based education and assessment:

Everyone now laughs at the old test-paper with its context questions... What good can that sort of thing do a boy? But

surely to demand that the test-paper should do the boy any good is like demanding that the thermometer should heat the room. It was the reading of the text which was supposed to do the boy good; you set the paper to find out if he read it! (Lewis, 1962:14).

The above provides evidence that even in the early sixties there was some scholarly debate on the mode of learning and assessment.

Resistance to such change stems from the conventional belief of most academics that disciplines have their own inherent structures and can only be properly studied in logical steps. Even Polanyi sees the academic notion of knowledge, ordered in "disciplines" as hard to challenge because it has so much scholarly integrity and experience behind it. A factor that further complicates the change is the difficulty in establishing relevant and reliable assessment practices. The struggle to establish assessment practices that has credibility is a critical point of retraction and a disabling force in the implementation the principles of outcomes-based education on all levels.

Polanyi (as cited in Reeves,1988) formulated the challenge for secondary and higher education in particular, by posing the question:

How do we set learners in secondary and higher education back on to the path of discovery which they have lost? Can the pre-packaged system of education be changed? Can these dry bones live? (p.16).

The author further states that there is a challenge that should be met with a kind of "aggressiveness" that manifests in presenting subject matter as that which challenges, disturbs, even invades, for

only then does it become relevant while personal involvement and commitment grows. It constitutes a process of moving from the known to the unknown. This is evidence of a shift from the former prevailing paradigms (with a singular emphasis on discovery of knowledge) towards a paradigm with the emphasis on both the discovery and the construction of knowledge (Innes, 2004). It is from this school of thought that the move towards outcomes-based education gained momentum.

In all discourse on outcomes-based education it is consistently not the fundamental principles but the practical application that raise concern and where resistance is generated. In addition the impact of increased accountability of teachers and learners are also a point of contention and very limited research has been done to date on teacher experiences in this regard.

In South Africa the changes in educational practice were guided by the Curriculum 2005 plan (Department of Education South Africa) and the subsequent establishment of the National Qualifications Framework. The OBE curriculum has been implemented gradually from grade levels in the primary schooling phase and with the first cohort of Grade 12 learners to graduate in 2008 (Beeld, 2005). Higher education institutions have been slowly transforming the institutional approaches by implementing OBE in all newly developed programmes. All programmes require registration and approval from the Council for Higher Education and this enforces transformation in this regard.

Evidence from studies in the United States and United Kingdom confirm similar problems in implementation of the curriculum approach than those experienced in South Africa. The following section reports on evidence found in literature on the experiences in countries that have implemented outcomes-based education systems

■ **Curricula and syllabi versus outcomes:** Rustique-Forrester (2005) declares that recent studies have produced conflicting findings on if improved student performance manifests. The author quotes the "Texas miracle"-incident to demonstrate the danger. Initially the project was judged to be a huge success. However an audit uncovered that results of students were merely adjusted to adhere to the policy stipulations. The gains of the "No Child left behind" -legislation in the United States, that were initially reported and ascribed to the increased accountability, was based on this project but the incident severely discredited the approach.

Limited evidence of research was found about the reforms in the United States and about how (traditional) teachers are responding to the demands of increased accountability in their own classrooms. A discourse is continued on a range of forums but questions remain mostly unanswered about the ways in which their beliefs, expectations and perceptions of teachers and students may be changing amidst the pressures of a profoundly changing policy climate. Rustique-Forrester (2005) records that surveys on teachers have found that while teachers support accountability, the implementation of more frequent testing (i.e.. continuous assessment in the South African discourse) and the use of tests to make high stakes decisions for graduation and placement are leading to curriculum decisions and instructional practices that many traditional teachers believe to conflict with their own professional judgement.

Although no research evidence on the experiences of academics in higher education in South Africa could be found, it can be argued that traditional lecturers in higher education have much the same experience and take the same view as those in the United States. In fact if it is taken into account that the changes in the South African higher education environment were so intense and were

enforced in a very short time frame, these experiences may even be more intense and dominant.

The national reform strategy in England (in response to the Education Reform Act of 1988) resulted in a nationalised curriculum, national assessments, increased choices, national performance targets, national inspection and even a national ranking of institutions by newspapers. The theory of action behind these reforms was that greater control by the central government, combined with the use of market forces, would improve the education system and enable stakeholders to achieve greater choice among institutions on the basis of their quality.

According to Rustique-Forrester (2005) a core feature of the reforms was the establishment of a National Curriculum in the UK, in 1992. Since the implementation of the National Curriculum it has been indicated by researchers that exclusion from the education system has increased. National task teams were even composed to investigate this phenomenon. Findings highlighted factors such as poor discipline, increased hostility in the institutional environment and the breakdown of authority as critical factors and results of the new curriculum.

In South Africa, recent reports in the national media (*Rapport*, 2005) highlight similar problems in secondary schools – even at this relatively early stage of the reform. In this newspaper survey teachers claimed that there is reason for concern about their safety with tales of threats, insubordination and even violence in the classrooms (*Rapport*, 2005). These reports suggest negative perceptions from teachers and serious problems with the required logistical support for implementation of OBE (smaller class groups and the accessibility of resources amongst others) which could be critical factors in the successful implementation.

Open criticism from sectors of higher education is levelled against the implementation of the system because of the perceived negative impact on the quality of learning. In a newspaper report on teacher retrenchments in the Western Cape the following observation was made by a higher educationist: “To implement a new curriculum in a country where a previously well-resourced provincial department (the Western Cape) finds itself in a serious staffing and financial crisis and where the other provinces have large numbers of under-qualified teachers could only mean further demoralisation and waste (*Die Burger*, 1998). Even though this may only be a journalistic report the fact that such a perception exist, is relevant.

For student development and support this scenario suggests an extreme challenge. The emphasis is placed on the support of learning as a process, development of self management skills, interpersonal and other related life skills, development of specialist skills, remediation of underdeveloped skills and continuous support to students and learning facilitators. This new emphasis places student development and support services within the institution of higher education in a completely different context than the traditional sidelined supportive and reactive mode of operation. Evidence exists of the increased mainstreaming of interventions and outcomes with skills development (academic, personal and social skills).

2.2.4 Overview of political factors impacting on higher education

Huisman and Currie (2004) investigated the concept of “accountability” and the shift from academic to political accountability in higher education policies in Europe and the United States. The authors particularly emphasise that political accountability used what they call “soft” mechanisms that seem to offer little change in the quality of education in these countries. Evidence exists of similar trends in South Africa as a developing country.

The *Daily Mail and Guardian* (2001) reports a “Crisis at the Chalk Face” stating that there is a growing malaise in higher education and it is damaging core academic functions. The problems cited, highlight another phenomenon that came with the change in educational approach. The fact that students are now seen as clients is placing pressure on academics to be much more responsive to their needs. The editorial team, speculated that most academics seemed pessimistic and they “do not seem to recognise the extent to which the new economy and society was being restructured in a way that demands new skills and different career trajectories”. Very few academics are seen by this article as being able to innovate and establish external links and to adjust and make progress.

2.2.4.1 Politically driven transformation in higher education in South Africa

Ensor (2004) critically analyses transformation efforts since the mid 90s in South Africa. Efforts to reshape the curriculum in higher education and the responses of Universities, to a series of policy initiatives concerned with higher education curriculum reform were reviewed.

Ensor (2004) identifies firstly, globalisation and secondly, reconstruction and development, as the contextual factors and then identifies two prominent discourses in the curriculum development arena:

- Accreditation-accumulation-and-transfer discourse
- Subject-discipline discourse

The two discourses as identified above are seen by Ensor (2004) as the primary drives in reshaping education policy and specifically higher education policy.

Ensor (2004) then shows how, in spite of the influence of the credit-exchange discourse in policy, undergraduate curricula continue to be presented on a largely disciplinary basis. This finding is based on analysis of responses by a number of science and humanities faculties and suggests that fundamental change in the higher education curriculum is slow. This may be due to factors such as resistance by educators but perhaps it might also be a situation where changes are taking place but the actions are merely superficial.

Formulating the essence of the political impact on education, Skinner (as cited in Jansen and Christie, 1999) speculates that all the current questions about the political agenda in education, revolves around the curriculum. According to this author, it is literally a matter of who decides on the learning outcomes and what the political implications of the learning outcomes are. Skinner adds an interesting dimension to the debate through his argument, stating that none of the earlier knowledge requirements as is created by the demands of the modernistic economy, actually require that methods of facilitating of learning be intrinsically democratic nor that they develop in students the skills of independent thought necessary for a democracy.

Skinner then takes a position against the marketisation (refer to the earlier arguments of Bargh, Scott and Smith (1996) as on p 48) and politicisation of education and calls the current trend in education, an “ideology of the marketplace with educational systems and policies being put in place to support ideology”.

The Southern African political history and the paced transformation since 1994 had very visible and deep felt political impact on education with rather drastic paradigm shifts in the educational law (schooling systems), approach (towards outcomes based education) and qualification structures. Higher education is not exempt and all of these politically motivated changes impacted deeply on higher education.

Areas of change due to political motivations, amongst others, are:

- shift towards an outcomes based approach in higher education,
- new qualification structure with greater emphasis on articulation between education and training paths,
- increased competition by private service providers,
- increased competition, by training providers (specifically learner-ships) within the labour sector.

Most of these factors are complex issues that are closely linked with economic and labour agendas in South Africa.

The next section elucidates on the economic factors impacting on higher education.

2.2.5 Economic factors and institutional finances

Dennison (1984) made an analysis of the approach of educationalists towards financial matters within education. His analysis is mostly within the context of the British educational system but it is apparent how much relevance there is to the South African context.

Dennison finds that there is indeed a core factor in the understanding of education and financial resources. According to the author, educators, from all sectors of education and also specifically those in management and decision making positions tend to practice their profession in "non-cost" terms. By this he means that major expenses are paid "elsewhere", e.g. in Britain, municipal accounts are covered by local authorities, books are provided by the Department of Education, salaries are provided by Central government. There are more such sponsors that provide infrastructure and resources in the British educational system. This implies that the actual financial implications of the daily services are distanced and the practitioners including higher education, are not thinking in terms of business principles.

In South Africa the scenario may have been very similar for the higher education sector, within public education during the pre-transition phase (pre 1994). Academics became increasingly aware of the resource management implications of their teaching activities, post 1994 and since the redistribution of educational funds despite the increased spending on education by government (Department of Education South Africa, 2001). The changes in educational funding, setting up of funding frameworks and establishment of new funding criteria, forced educators and managers to be increasingly aware of and move towards effectively managing aspects such as current and capital budgets, setting financial priorities, investigating funding options and opportunities and generally linking activities to financial implications.

The National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001) unambiguously states the intention to steer the implementation of the goals of the plan through "a planning process with funding and an appropriate regulatory framework that will be the main levers".

A report by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) indicates that higher education institutions acquire (on average) 50% of its income from public funding. The system of governance requires the institutions to be accountable for the use of public money and achieve demonstrable results in the public interest with it. CHET maintains that on the one hand the funding mechanisms provide the state with a way to fulfil its obligation to support higher education but on the other hand it provides government with a powerful instrument for steering the system in the direction of specific national policy goals and targets.

It is stated in the discussion document on the funding of public higher education, that funding will be planned and structured to address the transformation goals and the 1982/1983 funding framework is considered inadequate to this purpose. In a report on the Implications of changes in higher education (Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2004) the pilot

study group, mandated by CHET, highlighted that the subsidy formula was applied to both historically white (HWI) and historically black institutions (HBI) without a needs analysis to determine the needs of the historically black and disadvantaged institutions. The report also lists complicating factors such as the relatively low fees base at HBI; resistance from students to pay higher fees and increased demand for access.

In a defining statement, National Government in SA declared their approach by positioning the funding framework as a "steering mechanism". It is a given then that national and specifically transformational goals will be directed by this most critical aspect, i.e.. state funding of the public institutions. The goal oriented funding approach realised through a system of:

- "block grants" or general purpose grants based on full time equivalent (FTE) student enrolments;
- "earmarked funds" designed to achieve specific purposes.

The funding framework document makes specific reference to funding of what is called, "support activities", including academic development and foundation programmes. The beneficial outcomes intended by funding these activities are stated as being:

- significantly lowering first-year dropout rates;
- higher first and subsequent year pass rates;
- more effective utilisation of facilities for second- and third-year students;
- improved utilisation of staff, particularly with respect to senior students.

Pilot-project participants felt that further to this, successful strategies in financing and implementing academic support, as a financial investment, would require:

- Redesigning some of the curricula to build in necessary academic support mechanisms;

- Making some academic development courses (e.g. language) credit-bearing;
- Introducing special foundation or bridging programmes (e.g. in science, engineering and technology).

In addition, the current formula distinguishes between two broad academic categories (once again against the backdrop of national goals and labour needs).

The two categories with separate funding factor loadings are:

- natural sciences (which includes health sciences, engineering, life and physical sciences, agriculture, mathematical and computer sciences);
- humanities (a catch all category for all other disciplines), (Department of Education South Africa, 2001).

The following table provides a summary of financial redress strategies in higher education in South Africa and indicates the shifts in funding priorities.

Table 2.1: Summary of financial redress strategies in higher education in South Africa (1998 – 2006)

| Overview: Redress funding since 1998 - 2000 | | |
|--|---|---|
| Era of Minister S Bengu | 1994 – mid 1999 | R200 million allocated by the Dept of Finance, for redress |
| Era of Minister K Asmal: | Mid 1999 – 2004 | No clear record exist; total allocation of approx R60 million redress to 6 x HDI's with financial difficulties (some because of fiscal mismanagement) No funding to Technikons. |
| | August 2000+ | R30 million made available for academic development programmes designed to address success rates of first-time, first entry educationally disadvantaged students |
| Trend: | No further record of official financial redress strategies on institutional basis | |
| Trend: | Increased state funding of student financial aid scheme (Initially TEFSA later NSFAS/ National student financial aid scheme) | |
| Trend: | Gradual shift from institutional redress (of the historically disadvantaged institutions) to redress aimed at individuals regardless of the institutions they attended. | |
| Era of Minister N Pandor | 2004 | New funding framework announced with a distinctly different approach. |
| | 2005+ | Revised funding framework with adjustments in additional funding and grant categories |

Despite the continued actions of redress in funding, the following aspects are of critical importance to the student development and support units in the various institutions:

- Non-allocation of a direct subsidy which means that as in the past these activities are funded with goodwill and based on the institutional priorities and not necessarily by national instruction;
- No priority as a category for earmarked funding.

Specific funding areas for earmarked funding are identified as:

- National student financial aid scheme;
- Institutional development and redress;
- Interest and redemption payments on approved loans;
- Approved capital projects;
- Research development;
- Other development projects as identified in the National Plan.

It is evident from the framework funding categories, that student development and support, despite the increased pressures and needs has no direct funding category or mechanism from national government level and is dependent on allocations from the academic or administrative budgets of the institution.

The funding framework and current funding debates are reasons for serious concern in student development and support. The traditional funding approach to these services consistently avoided/ neglected this critical area within higher education. This position was based on an assumption that students reaching the higher education levels do not require serious academic support interventions. Experience in the field of student development and support, proved the opposite. With increased pressure for service delivery in all areas, institutions tended to extend and increase formal interventions by the service units in student development and support, whilst funding had to be provided through cross subsidisation within the institutional budgets.

The lack of a formal funding framework as a guiding mechanism for student development and support, reflects clearly in the diverse service portfolios

(variations in range and scope of services), fragmented structures within institutions, varied line functions, differences in academic vs non-academic status, and other manifestations (refer Table 2.3).

However, in March 2005, the South African National Department of Education announced an adjusted strategy that does change the funding position of student development and support functions in at least some categories. The Ministry announced an approach wherein specific funding is to be targeted for what is called “academic development initiatives”. This signals progress and opportunity for access to better funding but student development and support practitioners still need to challenge the definition of academic development and the funding mechanism.

The pilot study project group endorsed the intentions of funding these types of initiatives and suggested that positive evidence of the impact were found in their survey (Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2004).

The prime value of the work done by the pilot study project group, is in the greater recognition of the value of institutional inputs towards national policy. Many of the recommendations made in 2001 came to be accommodated in the revised funding framework in 2005.

The new “goal-oriented, performance-related” funding framework can be expected to impact fundamentally on higher education institutions as government is using funding to steer and shape institutional behaviours to make them congruent with national policy goals. Whereas the previous SAPSE-formula was conceived as a cost sharing approach the new formula is consistent with the White Paper and favours a planning-steering approach. The new approach has been supported by higher education with reservations about the impact on institutional autonomy. The fact that the new funding formula has high incentive for growth in student numbers – due to the higher input subsidy factor – is a reason for more concern as growth in student numbers impacts directly on student development and support practices. To

this effect the Department of Education has embarked on a student enrolment planning process that may dictate specific growth areas and numbers.

In commenting on the funding strategies, The Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) noted that:

There are concerns that while higher education institutions may apply for funding for foundation programmes, there are no designated mechanisms for supporting academic development (e.g. extended curriculum programmes, tutoring and mentoring schemes). The burden of funding the redress of the inadequacies of South Africa's schooling system will thus continue to be borne by the institutions. (Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2004: 14).

This statement by CHET echoes the concerns of the student development and support managers and practitioners regarding funding of activities under increased pressure for effective service delivery and impact on student success rates.

The funding of student development and support activity is however part of a bigger scenario of funding in higher education and also impacted on (directly and indirectly) by local, national and global economic factors.

2.2.5.1 National economy and local economy: Dennison (1984) aptly describes the interrelationship between the national (and local) economy by identifying the following:

...the dominant question concerns the willingness and the ability of the economy to support an education service and in relation the effects on the intentions and functions of the service of economic factors. Clearly the inverse question has also to be posed, about the economic contribution of education (p.13).

The study, by Dennison, indicates that there is a clear correlation between education and the patterns of economic growth through phases of expansion and reconciliation. In some activities in the national and local economy the economic dependence on the work of educational institutions, is well established and beyond dispute. This phenomenon is most recognisable when the objective of producing workers with particular expertise and skills, and in numbers that the economy requires, is formulated by the economic environment and becomes dominant in education.

Cheng et al. (2003) point out that the *direct effect* (or value) of education on economic and other developments, is very often and unfortunately not so obvious and tangible in the shorter term. It requires a long period for human development through education to show impact. Even though we believe, says Cheng, that human resource development is the key to economic development; particularly in the new century demonstrable impact is slow to emerge.

If the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2001) then states a prime goal as “the increase human resource development” it must then also be recognised that the return (or according to Cheng “effect”) on the economy ,of such an investment by higher education, could potentially only be determined after an extended period of time. Only after those who have been educated actively participated in the workplace and productive activities of the economy for some time can the outcomes be converted to a productivity measurement. Further to this it is an accepted phenomenon that the knowledge and skills learned during a study or training period requires rather long adjustment- and application periods at the rock-face, before they can be applied to full and positive effect.

Cheng et al. (2003) take an interesting position on the *indirect effects* of education on the economy. It is their view that education can also have an indirect effect on the technology of production, quality of human resources and the socio-economic behaviour of the society.

A potential contribution by student development and support to the “indirect effect”:

From the student development and support perspective the so called indirect effect via quality of human resources is particularly important. The quality of human resources is becoming more and more important, especially in the new economy where the work environment often changes very quickly and the nature of tasks are very demanding and challenging to personal qualities and job attitudes (Burton-Jones, 1999; Frey, 1999). The value of the student development and support input in this regard, is further apparent from the statement by Fallon (1987:116) that “education and particularly higher education needs to prepare students with appropriate qualities and competencies”. In further exploring this imperative, Levin (1997) identified 12 personal competencies for high value added-industries in the new century. They are initiative, cooperation, working in groups, peer training, critical thinking skills like reasoning and evaluation, decision making, obtaining and using information, planning and learning skills and finally also social and multicultural skills.

The imperative for higher education is then to attend to those economy based demands by empowering student development and support units and strategically applying the expertise to address the development of popularly called "soft skills" in addition to the subject based knowledge and skills. **The student development and support practitioner then becomes a partner in the preparation and provision of a value added entity to the economic and social environment.** This argument also underpins the approach to embed

in the critical cross field outcomes in all South African higher education programme curricula.

In South African context the relationship between higher education and the national economy is firmly entrenched in the funding formulae generated by the Department of Education (Department of Education South Africa, 2004). It just reinforces the higher education and economy interrelationship by linking funding for education directly to the primary needs of the country, i.e.. producing graduates in the fields of Science, Engineering and Technology and providing superior funding for those students as opposed to the areas of Social, Management and Humanities.

2.2.5.2 Global economy and competitiveness: Currie and Newson (1998) politically locate globalisation within a framework of neo-liberalism (also Cheng et al, 2003; Ng & Mok, 2003). The philosophy supports free trade and the operation of market mechanisms, also within the public sector. This philosophy includes aspects such as reduced government funding of the public sector, the marketisation of public services, the privatisation of state activities and exposure to competition from private providers as typical trends.

Higher education in South Africa has not escaped the impact and challenges of a free market economy, as identified by Currie and Newson. As a developing economy as in South Africa rapidly transforms into a free-market and global-economy the very issues highlighted by these authors also challenges higher education, for example:

- An announcement by the Minister of Education, in the budget speech before parliament (2005), that funding for higher education needs to be investigated and cannot further escalate.
- Intensified marketing and recruitment strategies by institutions of

higher education to attract local and international students from non-traditional feeding areas.

- The substantial increase in the number of private providers of Higher education required of the Ministry to implement a first ever registration and accreditation system for private providers.

Deem (2001) highlights the changes in funding regimes, organisational and cultural inclusion of new groups of students as the central effects of globalisation on higher education. Concern is expressed by Morley (2003) about the "permeable boundaries" feature of globalisation and the effect of it in higher education. She sites developments like borderless universities, e-learning and trans-national provision as trends to illustrate this phenomenon.

In a contribution-paper to the Transformation Debates Forum of the Centre for Higher Education Transformation, Badat (2003) says that, historically, in both the advanced capitalist countries and the newly industrialising countries the state was central in facilitating global competitiveness and innovation through the development of infrastructure, support for research and development and the development of skilled person-power. In addition the author identifies higher education as the local component in the drive of newly industrialised countries to become part of the global innovation economy and to acquire innovation rents in the global economy. Importantly, Badat sees the key element of success of the newly industrialised country as the ability of the state to transform higher education in the direction of the expansion of science and technology education and to integrate it into a national system of innovation. This constitutes a clear vision that the higher education sector becomes a vehicle for economic development through research and innovation.

The impact of globalisation is demonstrated by Cloete et al. (2002) in citing the conceptual guide of Clarke, to explain the changes of what they call the higher education programme portfolio (the latter refers to

the mix and scope of academic programmes offered by higher education institutions). The authors indicate that specialisation and the resulting processes of differentiation taking place at the level of academic disciplines have had the effect of making some institutions of higher education more capable of responding to increasingly diverse demands than others in the context where economic, political and cultural systems within nations have grown and become more elaborate. They further assert that it was not cognitive changes in the disciplines that provided a strong stimulus for the introduction of certain types of programmes, but market pressures to attract students and notions of what employers require, particularly within the context of globalisation. This analysis explores the relationship of cause and effect between the changes in higher education and impact of globalisation.

According to Reddy (2002) globalisation is heavily dependent on highly skilled workers and the formation of networks between companies across borders, between companies and non-governmental agencies and between companies and government. He finds that globalisation is both an *inclusionary and an exclusionary phenomenon* as the standard of living has increased for some; for 80% of the world population however, the standard of living has deteriorated. It is precisely for this purpose that the state then starts to place high emphasis on the role of higher education to both promote globalisation but also counteract the negative effects.

In South Africa certain state interventions can be identified that purposefully directed education towards addressing global issues. These interventions, since 1994, are reflected in the following excerpts from two critical policy documents

- **Report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE):** The National Commission on Higher Education provided a basic framework for transformation in higher education (NCHE, 1996).

The report comments specifically on reconstruction and development policies and practices in South Africa's present transitional phase and the pronounced impact it will have on higher education. It is stated that new research agendas and new learning programmes will need to mobilise the cultural, social and economic potential of the country and all its people (as cited by Badat, 2003).

The NCHE report further notes:

South African higher education.... confronts changes characterised as "globalisation". Knowledge, information and culture increasingly inhabit a borderless world: new computer and communication technologies are transforming the way people work, produce and consume. **As South Africa locates itself in this network of global exchanges and interactions, higher education will have to produce the skills and technological innovations necessary for successful participation in the global market.** The report further states that: ..if knowledge is the electricity of the new globalisation, higher education institutions must seize the opportunity of becoming major generators of this power source (p.3).

The NCHE report then gives clear indication of the required role and function of higher education in relation to the South African economy and globalisation.

In addition to addressing the legacy of apartheid and the internal social inequalities of its own structures, higher education is charged with the task of addressing the reconstruction and development agenda and globalisation.

The White Paper on Higher Education captures the dual task and expectation:

■ **White Paper on Higher Education (Department of Education South Africa, 1998):** The transformation of higher education is part of the broader process of South Africa's political, social and economic transition, which includes redistributive social policies aimed at equity. The policy challenge is to ensure that we engage critically and creatively with the *global imperatives* as we determine our national and regional goals, priorities and responsibilities.

Reddy (2002) cautions that we should take seriously the observation that the implications of globalisation for higher education are that managerialism gradually comes to dominate the organisation of teaching and research, and that research endeavours are increasingly applied to the requirements of government or industry. In this regard one should note the introduction and purpose of the establishment of technikons and more recently universities of technology and comprehensive universities in South Africa. It is bluntly stated in the founding documents, that it is the purpose of these institutions to serve industry and government (Department of Education South Africa, 1997).

Postiglione (2002) provides perspective on the impact of globalisation and the accompanying changes in Chinese higher education in a chapter on Expansion, Consolidation and Globalisation. As China exited the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiouping's economic reforms and opening up to the outside world had an enormously positive effect on Chinese higher education. In a short post revolution period China embarked on a breakneck-paced expansion. The mission of the sector shifted from an emphasis on class-struggle to an emphasis on economic-reform.

According to Postiglione, the globalisation of the Chinese economy is further compelling Chinese universities to adapt and compete like never before. In practical terms it means that universities are forced to

improve operational efficiency as state allocations fail to keep pace with expansions.

This is a scenario with which South African higher education can easily identify, considering the post 1994 political-, economic- and educational changes. In many respects the South African scenario is similar to that in China and recent public debates where vice-chancellors openly criticised government funding, or the inadequacy thereof reflects similar growing pains (Pityana, 2005) where university-administrators are forced to look beyond the state for assistance in an effort to keep pace with these changes (*Rapport newspaper*, 2005).

Pityana (2005) makes it clear that current state funding of higher education and the perceived lack of state support is leading the sector into a crisis and that there may be an apparent stability at institutions but that there is a serious underlying discontent and crisis looming.

On the topic of the globalisation effect and the impact on quality in higher education Marginson (as cited in Morley, 2003) gives yet another perspective. He states that “global competition determines domestic economic behaviour”. Marginson observes that workers are told that they have to be more flexible, self-managing, entrepreneurial and responsive to a rapidly changing environment similarly academics are also being propelled towards the global perspectives.

The cited views confirm that there are fundamental changes in the macro-environment that has to be pro-actively addressed by the student development and support practices in higher education. In view of economic impact and globalisation effects it is evident that skills development, in order for students to be global citizens, will and can not only be the responsibility of the subject specialists within the institution of higher education. Skills development and supportive expertise could be provided as mainstream curricular activities and towards achieving the outcomes dictated by globalisation. Student development and support practitioners potentially have the critical knowledge and skill within

the university to contribute towards and co- address these demands from the economy, the state and the globe.

2.2.6 Social change and higher education

Contemporary society has become increasingly diverse and complex in its social structures and dynamic. As much as social change impacts on all other areas of life it also impacts heavily on the higher education sector. Democratisation, human rights, inclusivity, accountability, HIV-Aids and also technology driven changes are but a few of the major social change factors impacting equally on higher education. The role of the student development and support practitioner and manager as potential facilitator of sociological and cultural change on campus subsequently becomes prominent.

Baxter-Magolda, Terenzini and Hutchings (2003) identify changing trends in five different arenas:

2.2.6.1 Changing socio-political profile of students: the authors indicate that the current diversity in the student population is greater than at any point in history. The salient characteristics of the present day student body at the average higher education institution include diversity in age, socio-economic status, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and learning- and physical ability. These factors translate into diversity in student needs, expectations and demands. From the student development and support perspective this again translates to changes in service and delivery approaches; a broader diversity of services (developmental and supportive) and renewed thinking about the role and position of the function within the university. The ever increasing diversity in the student body requires expansion in perspectives and assumptions about student development and support which is a formidable challenge for both subject educators and student development and support practitioners.

2.2.6.2 Changing nature of the collegiate experience: El-Khawas (1996) reports that enrolment patterns over time at higher education institutions indicate that educational needs within modern society are completely differentiated. Part-time, post graduate enrolments and short programme enrolments are increasing in the United States. Transfer between institutions and intermitted study is also a growing phenomenon. Four to five years full time study is no longer the most viable, obvious and only option for students.

There is good reason to believe that the trend is no different in South Africa. Factors such as the enrolment increases at distant education units and shifts in post-graduate study and changes in the programme and qualification mixes of universities suggest a similar trend.

2.2.6.3 Changing understanding of how students learn: In a post-modern society, higher education is expected to prepare students to wrestle with the complex problems they will encounter in the post-modern world. According to Baxter-Magolda et al. critical reflective thinking skills, the ability to gather and evaluate evidence, and the ability to make personal judgments are essential learning outcomes if students are to get beyond relativity.

Gardner (1983) argues that as educators, we must now recognise and purposefully respond to the fact that intelligence is not merely one-dimensional and that students have multiple-intelligences. This body of knowledge about how students learn grew exponentially over the last number of years.

Teaching and learning practices in higher education are deeply impacted by this knowledge and it directly determines learning outcomes aspired to. Traditional “talk-and-chalk” practices just do not address the teaching or learning needs within the modern university any more. The changing understanding of how students learn is also heavily informed by post modern constructivism. In essence the

constructivist-paradigm has the implication that universities cannot present knowledge in units of solid and undisputable fact but must now manage facilitation of learning in such a manner that students are allowed to construct their own knowledge and truth (Garrison & Archer, 2000).

Gravett (2004:46) even suggests that higher education has to constantly revisit, rethink and evaluate “the criteria by which it practices education”. Gravett explains that it means that higher education should distinguish between tradition and high standards and not cling to education-habits that are often merely based on tradition.

Student learning-research (the body of research focussing on investigating the relationship between what students learn and how they engage in learning), allows a deeper understanding of learning in the post-modern context. Learning is now understood as a process where facilitator and student work towards a shared understanding of the object of learning that is being explored (Gravett, 2004). This new paradigm now represents a huge shift in thinking, and subsequently teaching practices within higher education, from a highly structured behavioural approach towards a constructivist approach to learning.

The paradigm shift then inevitably raises the question on what the learning environment should be like in order to accommodate a constructivist approach to learning. Brown and Duguid (1996) suggest that a supportive environment is an absolute strategic requirement for constructivist learning. Such a supportive environment is characterised by flexibility, in organisation and planning (to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes in diverse manner and tempo), and secondly by nurturing relationships between facilitators and students (respectful, congruence, shared passions). Such flexibility in academic practice may be very foreign or uncomfortable for a higher education system that is traditionally highly structured through disciplines and course curricula.

2.2.6.4 Changing nature of teaching: Baxter-Magolda et al. (1983) state that it is a generally accepted principle in modern education that the mere transfer of knowledge is no longer sufficient. The more appropriate approach would be to teach students to construct knowledge, to evaluate information and evidence and to become adept in making informed decisions. This may even require modelling of these processes and engaging students in practicing them. The role and task of the traditional teacher has then shifted from “informer-instructor to facilitator-mentor”. Collaboration, active engagement and inclusion characterise these contemporary instructional approaches.

In real terms, the boundaries between the entities of facilitator, learner and learning have become slightly blurred and is not as strictly defined as it may have been in the past.

2.2.6.5 Changing nature of outcomes assessment: The dynamic nature of contemporary forms of facilitating learning and learning practices as referred to in the previous passages now also require continuous assessment. Continuous assessment represents a significant conceptual shift that extends beyond the mere focus on outcomes of the learning but implies an examination of the whole learning **process** as well. This format of assessment also implies an assessment of the cumulative and constructed knowledge, insight and skill - an integrated assessment of knowledge and skill as opposed to the almost strictly discipline based assessment of the former approaches.

The five areas of major change, as identified by Baxter-Magolda et al. (1983) further signifies not only change in approach and content but change in the final definition of success within the educational context.

While paradigm shifts are certainly initiated by educationalists themselves it does not occur isolated and uninfluenced from the macro-social environment as

the motivations for change are mostly in response to needs and requirements from the broader social environment (including the labour sector). Changes in social and political culture have a complex and nuanced impact on the educational environment and the reverse may also happen. There is, however, always a close relationship, albeit at times strained and at times comfortable, between education and the social environment.

2.2.7 Education systems and priorities

Higher education is a complex and constantly adjusting and changing phenomenon by its very nature. In previous sections aspects of change in content and change in approach were extensively elucidated on. However, in addition to the above factors change also manifests in various subtle dimensions as well. Such change dimension may include the type or profile of the student applying for admission to higher education, the growing recognition of indigenous knowledge and globalisation and the interaction between sub-systems in education. Change is the essence of growth and responsiveness is accepted as the mainstay for relevance of the higher education sector. It is most often through research and community impact, that the sector leads positive change within a society. Equally, change may unfortunately also have a negative impact and be to the detriment of society. How the sector and individual university deals with change often determines its role and status in society and the economy.

In the following section a number of Indicators that signify change in higher education will be discussed in more detail.

■ **Changing student profiles and needs:** Osbourne, Marks and Turner (2004) did an analysis of the types of applicants for admission to higher education. They identified six categories of applicants, as indicated in the table below.

Table 2.2: Application categories in higher education from a South African perspective and the implications for student development and support (SDS)

| Category of applicant | South African perspective | Implications for SDS |
|---|---|---|
| “Delayed traditional students” | For both historical (apartheid system excluding many students from studying) and financial reasons (affordability) many students entering the system are older and more mature. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These students are more mature with specific needs. In many instances the delayed study means having been outside an academic environment and at times also an unfitness in academic skills, reading, writing, classroom skills, memorising, etc. ▪ Social adjustment on campus may also be a specific challenge. |
| “Late starters” (who have undergone a life transforming event). | Due to employment equity, transformation strategies, etc. many students are (re-) entering the system to “start a new career path” – either to gain from or overcome the impact of the above mentioned actions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The above factors are also true for this category of student ▪ In addition, because of specific life changing events emotional stress and trauma, loss of identity and other psychological factors, may impact on academic success. ▪ This category of student is mostly under pressure to perform well as they need to adjust a career path in the shortest possible time. |
| “Single parents” | Increasing phenomenon in the SA society. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The single parent student has severe personal pressures in |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | Impact of HIV Aids is also a critical factor in SA. | managing time, finances and adjusting socially. Special support is required. |
| “Careerists” (currently in employment but seeking a qualification to make progress). | The changing nature of the workplace and demands on skill and knowledge, as well as the lifelong learning paradigm motivates individuals to continue with HE study. | ▪ These students tend to be highly focussed and determined. Often part-time students with heavy workloads and family responsibilities. Support into the consequences of these factors is required. |
| “Escapees” (who are currently in employment but wants a qualification as a way out of current job) | Drastic changes in the workplace (labour legislation and the rise of unionism) have caused a new dynamic in the workplace. | ▪ This category of student may suffer all of the above complications with added pressures of performing well in the shortest possible time. |
| “Personal growers” pursuing education for its own sake. | Opening up of opportunities and alternatives, new and adjusted career paths as opposed to the traditional options causing individuals to pursue new A paradigm of lifelong learning is already well established and makes mature students want to pursue further education. | ▪ This category of student is often also intent on the experience of process and places demand on educators and support staff to create a pleasant, stimulating and educationally sound environment. Levels of motivation may vary. |

The above description of student profile and needs also demonstrate the possible reasons why students enter higher education. However, should a shift in the dominant profile occur towards any of the categories it would have a far-reaching impact on the required or needed approach by higher education. A shift could also be caused by a factor external to the sector or university, e.g. economic change or legislated change. The ability of the sector to analyse, predict and ultimately deal effectively with changes in student profiles may be core to survival. There is a prominent change factor are identifiable in South Africa, namely the purposeful and government driven transformation of the higher education landscape with the consequent changes in institutional types, qualification offerings, feeding areas for universities; research emphasis and niche areas. Institutions had to respond to what constituted dramatic change for some but a change that impacted on the whole sector.

There are further factors regarding educational systems and priorities that are important from the student development and support perspective.

■ **Recognition and development of indigenous knowledge:** In South Africa and Africa in general, there is a growing discourse in the development and recognition of indigenous knowledge. Kraak (2003) puts a case for the relationship between indigenous knowledges and Western science. In developing countries with a colonial history there is a tendency for indigenous knowledges to be "museumised" according to Kraak (2003). The instruments for planning and modernisation which Western science offers to the world in the post-independence phases tend to dominate social and economic development in the third world. He states that the modernisation utopianism has not delivered on its promises for most third world and developing economies, particularly under the recent onslaught of globalisation and therefore the growing awareness and appreciation of indigenous knowledge. Kraak (1999:2) quotes a plea by Indian academic, Visvanathan, for recognition of the role of indigenous knowledge; where Visvanathan declares that both the

Western-scientific and indigenous forms, should co-exist in a dialogical relationship

The author concludes that revivalism, romanticism about the past, and even anti-development rhetoric are all insufficient responses to the phenomenon of globalisation and collectively fail to understand the gains that can be made through co-existence and dialogue between modern and indigenous knowledge structures.

Outcomes based education and the emphasis on achieved learning could potentially facilitate good synergy between indigenous, traditional and new knowledge.

■ **Pressures of globalisation and policy making in education:** The issue of globalisation is extensively addressed in section 1.2.5.2. Within the debate about the impact of educational systems and priorities, Cheng et al. (2003) pursue issues on the impact of globalisation and the economy on education. They argue that “the impact of globalisation is felt by all, but at the same time the benefit of advancement is not experienced by all”.

Cheng et al. (2003) explain that some people are concerned about whether the existing education can meet the needs of new economic developments in this millennium and how education should be changed to prepare future generations for the knowledge-based economy, while others are concerned about how the education system should be resourced and funded in a more efficient and effective way in order to meet the growing demands for education. The first concern relates to the issues of external economic effectiveness (strategic impact) for the future economic development and the second concern to the issues of internal effectiveness (operational impact) for using resources to fund different types of educational services. It is further stated that: "When one reviews the infrastructural changes of societies and communities in the past two decades, one can observe the prevalence of neo-liberalism in the

globalisation of education, resulting in the subordination of education to labour market requirements." Cheng et al. (2003:2).

Cheng and his colleagues argue that, given the fact that humans are now facing a serious problem of the depletion of scarce resources, thus making productivity improvement a critical concern from a socio, political and economic point of view and education policy makers should take into account the following aspects:

- Meeting short-term and long term economic demands of society at different levels of education.
- Identifying, procuring and allocating appropriate resources for inputs into the education system.
- Making appropriate provision for education (e.g. an excellent development on South Africa would be the full scale implementation of the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) as a professional qualification option for academics in addition to any specialised qualification) (TUT, 2005).
- Changing the internal structures of the education system to meet different purposes in operation and education.
- Enhancing the efficiency of internal processes of the system and its sub-systems.

According to Coombs (1994) educational policy making is often characterised by extraordinary complexity, involving many participants and stakeholders on many levels. It is proposed by this author also that it is inevitable that economic considerations must be entertained in education policy making.

Davies and Noble (2006) are making a valuable contribution in the policy development domain with their creative work towards establishing evidence-based policy development models. The evidence-based approach is a clear alternative for the opinion-based approach that has

historically been the departure and premise for policy making in all spheres of government, including education. The authors state an evidence-based policy development process will integrate experience, expertise and judgement with the best available external evidence from systematic research. If the evidence-based approach is applied within higher education it holds positive practical implications and opportunities for student development and support. The accommodation of student needs (academic, personal and social), as identified by research, in both national and institutional policies could inform and address both funding and structural decisions.

■ **Sub-systems in education:** The education system is an open system that interacts with the external environment. It means that the education system produces some outputs to the external environment, and the latter reacts with some feedback into the education system. In responding to the feedback the education system may then change its inputs or internal processes to manage the positive or negative impacts of outputs. The crucial factor in this relationship is often whether the subsequent economic benefits can actually meet the expectations and needs of the stakeholders and community.

Socio-political agendas (national and local) often become entwined in these inputs to the educational system which may upset the delicate balance between the education and economic sectors.

Cheng et al., (2003) distinguish between the various demands that are experienced by an education system. The authors identify "social demands", "national demands" and "private demands".

The South African experience has shown that the education system, due to its size and entrenched modes of operating is undoubtedly a difficult ship to turn and mismatches often happen in the supply-and-demand relationship. The core issue in education planning and financing then becomes how to ensure a sensible match between supply and demand.

The interaction between education and economic policy places strong demand on the flexibility and adaptability of the structures and processes within the education system.

2.2.8 Education and political socialisation

Despite considerable variety in the range of opinions and evidence concerning the political impact of the school as an educational institution in Western societies, it has been suggested that in African societies the school, being more open to deliberate manipulation by the state, can be used to reinforce or counteract the traditional values passed on by family and local community (Harber, 1998). Harber illustrates that, in the mid-sixties very few developing countries were concerned about the political content of popular education since those countries didn't have a clearly defined ideology. However, since then, two major developments took place: Firstly, many developing countries created a clearer ideology and secondly the sociology of education increasingly turned its attention to the "hidden curriculum" where students learn values implicit to the order, organisation and other factors. This is learning that takes place in addition to the mainstream curriculum. Students can then learn political values at school, purely because the schooling system is managed by and reflects the political agenda of the governing party. Harber claims that just because politics does not appear on the timetable it definitely does not mean that it is not part of the curriculum.

Harber (1989) identifies three main concepts in this regard:

- **Political indoctrination:** Political indoctrination refers to the intentional inculcation of political views. This is not very common to Africa and developing countries as the means to verify and control do not necessarily exist. The better established traditional universities fiercely protect the principle of academic freedom and this mostly counteracts indoctrination.
- **Political socialisation:** Political socialisation refers to the learning of preferences and predispositions to political values. In the South African

education system this is apparent in the emphasis on democracy, human rights and individual freedom.

- **Political education:** Political education refers to the attempt to create awareness of political phenomena, by facilitating open and balanced discussion and analysis. The curriculum statements issued by the South African Department of Education, on the learning area in Life Orientation, clearly and openly accommodates political education as part of the schooling curriculum.

Education, especially higher education and politics are inextricably linked in all societies. Students become socialised into a political rhetoric and what Herman in Morrow and King (1998) calls “a high degree of political activism” through the hidden curriculum and carries these values into the higher education system. In the context of higher education the political awareness is then vented through political organisations catering for the sentiments and promulgating the values of these students. Herman (Morrow & King, 1998) indicated though that there is evidence of the political energy being harnessed with positive effect on learning in the phase leading up to 1995 but that the effect has diminished since then. Herman explains this phenomenon by the fact that the excitement of the struggle was replaced by the reality of poverty and hopelessness. He says that without a tradition of school learning and without the prospects of employment after qualifying, formal education has become a meaningless in the experience of the youth. This position of Herman may be somewhat extreme but remains relevant to the understanding of the psychology and career planning of the student. It simply means that the organised political activity during the struggle has not been successfully replaced by organised academic activity.

Further to the above social effects, educational decision- and policy making in the current developing context of South Africa is politically driven and educators do not easily accept changes as they are not always seen as educationally and pedagogically sound. Such a dynamic causes difficulty and even resistance in change and transformation.

The student development and support manager and practitioner needs to be fully aware of this subtle but strong influence on the political mindset of students and educators as it impacts on the learning needs and context of development and support.

2.2.9 The utilisation of educational technology

Dede (2005) places the impact of educational technology on student learning and student learning styles in some perspective, based on his experiences at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

His point of departure is that Universities should re-structure “to accommodate technology in teaching and learning”. The degree to which a university does this would depend on a clearly defined policy as to what, where and when to apply technology. In this regard, Dede highlights organisational structures as a potential hindrance in the full implementation of the available technology. Highly structured organisations, with hard set borders between disciplines do not accommodate technology well. Cost- and learning-effective technologies have to be applied across disciplines. Dede further argues that effective application of technology in higher education does not succeed with an approach of “build it and they will come”. It is not enough to merely create technological infrastructure and presume that facilitators of learning and students will now use it and actually utilise the infrastructure. He relates factors such as people infrastructure (support staff), student computer access and financing as having direct impact on the effective implementation of technology.

Dede (2005) is convinced that in the very same way that the steam engine changed the forms of transportation and the microchip, satellites and fibre optics are changing the forms of communication, so will technology change the form of teaching.

The question remains: How important is the implementation of technology for student development and support in higher education? In answering, the student development and support practitioner should accommodate and pro-actively manage the following factors:

- Increased access to services via the web: Providing skills development modules, interactive opportunity, etc. has now become a reality for the student development and support unit.
- Extending traditional synchronic, on-campus type services to a broader student base to include a-synchronic and synchronic development and support to post-graduate, part-time and distant-education students.
- Provide e-learning platform to facilitate learning experiences on-line (e.g. access to lectures by subject field specialists; inter-group discussions; review and research; construction and development of content; multi-campus teamwork experiences) options and on-line assessment (Van der Merwe, 2003).
- Optimising the application of expertise to serve student population across multi-campus through video-conferencing and recording technologies.
- Skills development programmes to empower students for the optimal utilisation of learning technologies.
- Programmes for the professional development of academic staff to enhance educational and subject based skills, for example offering the on-line modules for the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (Le Grange, 2005).

Dede (2005) aptly describes the impact of technology on the learning styles of students. He asserts that higher education can prosper by using these emerging technologies to facilitate learning.

It may be safe to assume that universities in developing countries are not yet fully geared for this challenge. However, the imperative and impact of globalisation needs to be considered and in order to become or remain

competitive and deliver students able to compete in the global market the universities dare not ignore those issues. Student development and support units have the potential to become critical partners in establishing a culture of teaching and learning through technology.

2.3 Management perspectives in higher education relevant to student development and support

Pratt (as cited in Lockwood & Davies, 1985) highlights the complex and changing social-environment of universities and states that universities face an external environment which is unstable and forever changing. Uncountable pressures stem from national circumstances that are interrelated, and a range of bodies exert these pressures. Not only are these pressures interrelated but they are sometimes conflicting and it is difficult to predict their consequences, which are mostly unforeseen and perhaps even undesirable.

The above paints a very sombre picture of the modern-day university management scenario, but in reality relates well to the actual experiences at universities in developing countries. The strong social and political agendas in developing contexts often dictate the educational policies and higher education then has to find a vision and determine its mission within that context. Some aspects of this phenomenon were discussed in various other sections of the chapter. From a purely management perspective, however, the student development and support manager should also be acutely aware of the very specific dynamics in higher education and his or her specific institution.

2.3.1 The context of university management and governance

A number of authors elaborate on the various management models that are or may be applied within higher education (Lockwood & Davies, 1985; Morrow & King, 1998; Reeves & Baron, 1978).

Some of the models described in the management of higher education are:

- Economic model based on input-output analysis: focus on measurement of costs; production factors; cost and value of output.
- Economic model with market orientation: focus on demand and supply principles; types and levels of markets.
- Bureaucratic model: institution is highly structured and organised, division of labour; hierarchical systems.
- Collegiality model: operates on shared ownership, plurality, managed by committee or guild.

To better understand these models and the interrelationship, Bargh, Scott and Smith (1996), compare them to layers at an archaeological-site with the collegiate layer the deepest and original layer and the bureaucratic and economic layers being more recent.

In effect South African universities have elements of all of the above models, with highly structured organisations (faculties), financial management and control systems with budgeting and reporting mechanisms, increased marketisation (for financial and socio-political reasons) and elements of ingrained collegiality (managing by committee and forum).

Underlying these theories about universities as organisations is the "open system theory" of Katz and Kahn (1966:62), who defined open systems as "systems which maintain themselves through constant commerce with their environment, i.e.. a continuous inflow and outflow of energy through permeable boundaries". This definition, although dated, still very aptly describes the functioning of the modern university. The "constant commerce with the environment" is critical for the sustainable institution or system. What becomes important to manage, though, is the ability of the university to maintain equilibrium between input and output. This depends on the flexibility of its internal processes (financial, academic and administration). The latter relates directly to the internal management of the organisation. Against this background, it can be understood why political decision-making and rapid changes in educational policies, always place extreme pressure on university

management and governance structures to keep the organisation functional and intact.

This experience is familiar to universities in most developed and developing countries as is documented about the Europe by Sporn (2004), about the United Kingdom by Lockwood and Davies (1985), about Sweden and the United States by Sandison (1994), about Nigeria by Onwunli and Agho (2004), about the Middle East and North Africa by Akkari (2004).

Sporn (2004) takes a critical look, from a university management perspective, at higher education reform in Europe and the actual impact on university management. She indicates that the reforms have triggered a new distribution of power and strengthened institutional leadership, and further highlights the neo-liberal, economical and management-orientated models that emerged as a result of the reforms in education in Europe. Davies (as cited in Lockwood and Davies, 1985) formulated six characteristics to describe the internal life of a university. He states that the more pressure a university experiences (labelled a phase of contraction) the more polarised, divided and self-serving the sub-units of the organisation become. As a consequence manageability decreases and decision-making becomes slow at a time where swift responses may be required.

The student development and support practitioner and specifically manager can not be ignorant of the relationship between the government of the day and the institutional management. In addition it is of strategic importance to be critically aware of the institutional response and the management trends evolving within the institution. The student development and support practitioner and manager rely strongly on the collegial partnerships with faculty to ensure access to students and effective service delivery. In order to manage financial needs and positioning within the institution it is important to respond accurately and appropriately to the specific management style and approach followed by institutional management at any given time.

Subtle dimensions of management in higher education that are specifically important from the student development and support perspective are discussed in the next section.

2.3.2 A comment on managerialism in higher education: organisational versus university management

The collegiate model, as described in the previous section, may be the generally preferred and default model for academics by nature of their work and academic tradition but is not necessarily the most effective model of governance in a phase of unfavourable economic conditions. Shared and committee-based decision-making may impede on the well-being of the university as a decline in resources and other factors lead academics to be defensive of their own disciplines at the cost of objective decisions.

This is a problem inherent to modern universities, namely the consistent conflict between disciplinary and institutional imperatives (Bargh, Scott and Smith, 1996). A fundamental conflict exists between professional authority (assigned to academics by peers based on knowledge and performance) and hierarchical authority (assigned by the organisational structure). As new management and business-orientated models are imposed on universities, ostensibly to secure better performance, monitor state funding and imperatives, account for output and results, academics find it increasingly difficult to sustain the collegial approach while submitting to organisational authority.

Becher and Kogan (1992) argue that the individual nature of knowledge generation is ill suited to the imposition of hierarchically distributed management objectives

In many circles the debate and resistance has evolved into warning against impeding on academic autonomy. An example of this type of conflict manifested after the establishment of the Council for Academic Autonomy in the United Kingdom. The Council openly stated that it finds the requirements of management for greater accountability in direct opposition to the requirements

of professionals for greater autonomy. The supporters of executive management would argue that this approach will improve effective decision-making with the benefit of improving the academic environment and therefore supporting academic autonomy.

There is, of course, a subtle distinction between executive and commercial management that needs to be recognised here. Executive management is not as strictly market orientated in approach and the dominant idea is that the executive management approach “provides clear roles for management and the accountable body”. In other words, management has the primary function to monitor and provide an enabling environment by setting objectives while the accountable body (academic discipline/ department/ division) is responsible to determine the content of such objectives.

The South African university management approach is in fact dictated by the White Paper for Education - as was formulated by the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). The NCHE sets *co-operative governance* and *partnerships* as pillars of the new educational landscape. The White Paper envisaged that governance at the institutional level should become more democratic and participatory and dictated the establishment of “institutional forums” i.e.. maintaining elements of collegiality. The dictates of the White Paper then also, although partly influenced by the larger social and political agenda attempted to enforce greater collegialism in an educational system where increased managerialism tended to dominate in the last decades.

According to the Council on Higher Education report on *Global Patterns, Local Issues* (Cloete and Kulati, 2003) the Ministry should make an attempt to reconcile managerialism and cooperative governance. The report distinguishes between three forms of institutional governance in South African higher education since 1994:

- Managerial leadership (subdivided between strategic managerialism and entrepreneurialism).

- Transformative leadership (sub-divided between reformed collegialism and transformative managerialism).
- Crisis management (or failed leadership).

The authors of the report regard the middle category, namely *transformative leadership*, as the ideal within the context of a developing country. They point out though that very limited numbers of higher education institutions in South Africa meet that ideal.

In an analysis report following on the above, Cloete et al. (2003) describe the dilemma in higher education in South Africa as follows:

Co-operative governance is a rather unique and ambitious, governance model that like the new constitution embodies the best ideals of the new democracy. But not unlike the new constitution, implementing the democratic principles has proved to be daunting and contested (p.426).

Onwunli and Agho (2004) report on a study at the Federal University in Nigeria and the experiences of academics related to governance at their university. The finding is that the majority of academics experienced marginalisation in decision-making and are excluded from policy decisions in matters such as admissions criteria, selections, standards, human resources etc. Interestingly, the high ranked academics, who actually participated in decision-making, had the opposite experience. Onwunli and Agho recommend improved consultation in decision-making. This study suggests that, in Nigeria, the move towards managerialism has been drastic with little collegiality and participation in decision-making hence academics' negative experience.

The importance of the managerialism versus leadership versus collegialism debate in the context of student development and support is that it is once again a factor for the student development and support manager and practitioner to take cognisance of. The trend in an institution would determine

the strategic management, positioning, functioning, partnerships and financing of the function and the manager should be acutely aware of this as it would inform strategic decisions. The manager should be aware of any threat of exclusion and sidelining in decision-making and implement creative strategies to counteract. In view of the critical factors discussed in section 1.2.5 and the vulnerability and dependence of student development and support units on internal decision-making (for financing and partnerships) it is of utmost importance to analyse and manage this aspect effectively within a institution.

2.3.3 Accountability, quality assurance and performance evaluation

Jones (1986:107) states that “the pursuit of quality assurance and accountability, leads to little more than a pseudo effectiveness and efficiency”. In his opinion, it is at the interface in education where true quality can manifest while managerial systems cannot reach or quantify that action effectively.

In 2002 the Higher Education Quality Committee was established as the new mechanism for quality assurance for public and private providers of higher education in South Africa (HEQC, 2002). In industry, quality assurance aims are formulated to ensure zero defect and error reduction and prevention. There is an attempt to apply the same principles to public services (Strydom, 2001).

The founding document of the HEQC (CHE, 2004), states that the new regulatory framework for governing education makes quality central to the achievement of the goals of the NQF. The establishment of a national quality assurance system is seen as a critical component in the restructuring of higher education. The following statement appears in the founding document (CHE, 2004):

Quality is identified as one of the principles that should guide the transformation of higher education together with equity and redress, democratisation, development, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability (p.1).

It may be deduced from the above statement that the quality assurance strategy for higher education in South Africa is not only implemented to address the quality of the academic project, but is also to be used as a mechanism to guide and enforce a broader agenda, namely that of transformation. Westerheijden (2000), a strong critic of quality assurance strategies in higher education, bluntly calls it a euphemism for control by the funding bodies.

On the international front, various authors have commented on the implementation of quality assurance measures in education in general and higher education in particular. In the debate on why higher education should follow industry in implementing quality assurance measures there are many diverse perspectives according to Woodhouse (1996). He found that the dissent about quality assurance stems mostly from disagreement on the suitability of models imposed on higher education as they are all essentially adaptations from industrial quality assurance models. Woodhouse feels that this situation distracts from the synergistic development of a sustainable model that would truly address capacity and productivity in higher education.

The critical issue seems to be that quality assurance leads to greater emphasis on matters of routine and less emphasis on traditional matters of trust, authority and expertise, not even mentioning of application, innovation and creativity.

Morley (2003) asserts that peer assessors, quality officers and managers are often driven by paradoxical and contradictory aims, while, at the same time there is a democratising driver in quality assurance. Morley says that since they want a better deal for students - more information, product specification and risk reduction in a knowledge driven economy - therefore the values of a consumer driven society are now firmly embedded in higher education.

Quality assurance is firmly linked to a knowledge economy. Change in higher education is being driven, in part, by the needs of large trans-national companies, and related knowledge-based industries are being formed and

nurtured. Boundaries between government, higher education and industry have been loosened and redefined, according to Morley (2003). (Also refer the sections on economy driven change). Unfortunately this is where the paradox lies for higher education. While it is being funded by the state it is expected to meet the needs of the private sector economy. Universities are increasingly known and labelled as the producers of knowledge workers and employment rates are seen as a good *performance indicator*.

Economic and environmental changes have caused a move away from the traditional priority of acquiring knowledge and practicing it in a life-long career, to a priority of transferable skills, life-long learning and career changes. Morley states that in such a process knowledge is diffused, configured and reconfigured when the market concept of best *value* has become pertinent. As institutions compete for student intakes, research opportunity, funding and positioning, the implementation of industry-related quality assurance principles has almost become essential.

While investigating the dilemma of quality assurance in higher education, Morley (2003) argues that quality assurance is located in the systematic discourse of modernism. There are clear elements of positivism as quality reviewers are claiming to uncover a single "truth" about the complexity of learning. According to Morley, quality assurance provides little scope for interpretive pluralism.

Implementing quality assurance measures require the assumption that a university is first and foremost an organisation where performance can be observed. This highlights the essence of the debate and the reason for resistance to industrial-type quality assurance mechanisms in higher education.

Organisations are regularly required to provide audit trails documenting how issues move through committee cycles to a point of satisfactory resolution. The concern is that the types of audits requested for quality assurance imply a linear rationality which completely overlooks micro-politics and creativity in the academic endeavour. Potential paradoxes that arise could be that, within a

specific academic context (subject area or discipline), higher expectations and goals may elicit poorer scores. The evidence based methodology is therefore in conflict with a post-modernist approach in academy.

In 1998, Shore and Shelwyn (1998) embarked on an analysis of Scottish university documents prepared for students to evaluate courses. The study was done during a phase of transition and implementation of quality assurance measures at the university. Outcomes of the study revealed that nearly almost 60% of the evaluation form that was used was devoted to the evaluation of what was called “the lecturers style and skill”, a small proportion to evaluation of what was called in this study “the actual content of the course”. It is further critical to note, within the context of this study, that there are no items in these evaluation questionnaires directed at student development and support services nor did the analysis-report of Shore and Shelwyn attend to this aspect at all. The negation of the topic occurs despite the attention that these services receive in policy-making in the UK and current discourses (refer to Chapter 1 for discussion on the experience in the UK).

In the South African context the student is increasingly positioned as the customer or client and customer satisfaction is isolated as one of the most important goals. The subsequent positioning of the student as a customer empowers the student and reinforces rights. To see the student as a customer sits easy with modern day student politics and democratic discourse. However, from an education and pedagogical perspective it also negates the transactional relationship between student and facilitator and the students' responsibility to also perform certain tasks, learning and assessment activities.

Bensimon (1995) sees it as no surprise that within the British higher education system, the radical student organisations enthusiastically support quality assurance and finds the greater emphasis on recognition of the individual customer or client so acceptable.

The application of quality assurance and quality auditing at institutions of higher education in South Africa also impacts on student development and support

activities. As those activities are focussed on supportive (reactive) and developmental (pro-active) interventions within the teaching and learning processes it becomes a big challenge to the practitioner to engage the student as a partner in a transactional relationship, as opposed to the student being a customer. The relationship involves mutual responsibilities and input towards a satisfactory result for both parties. A paradigm of consumerism poses problems for effective application of student development and support within the institution as it impacts directly on the success achieved in the service offering.

2.4 Practices in student development and support

Student development and support manifest in a multitude of services and structures across the higher education landscape. Current practices are merely a reflection of the strategic and operational interpretation of the function within a specific institution. For example in some institutions in South Africa counselling, skills development and support are uncoordinated and peripheral functions while in others they are integrated, focussed on the curriculum and mainstreamed (refer to Chapter 4). However, the primary purpose stated, in almost all cases is to enhance student learning and contribute towards increased student success. Secondary to this are goals such as the avoidance of drop-outs or improved retention, skills development, contributing to the learning and facilitation of learning activity, social responsibility and other similar goals. It is the intention of this study to investigate this phenomenon and determine what factors impact on the provision and management of student development and support. Findings are detailed and reported in Chapter 5.

To enhance learning, Comer (as cited in Glazer, 2004) does not recommend any particular content or practice as much as "relationships, relationships, relationships" (Glazer, 2004). His approach is anchored in the theory that good relationships make student, adult and organisational development possible. At the same time traditionalists like Glazer severely critique the lack of academic focus in the Comer approach (Glazer, 2004).

The formulation of an inclusive definition on student development and support is an aspect that consensus has not yet been reached in the South African, African or international literature. All definitions capture an aspect or focus on certain aspects.

An inclusive definition formulated by me would capture the following:

The concept “student development and support services” is broadly understood as all those services involved in curricular and co-curricular activities that directly support and enhance the learning and facilitation of learning activities within the higher education institution. This is a very inclusive definition, covering both the developmental inputs (skills programmes) and the supportive (counselling type) inputs. The definition includes both primary modalities of development (facilitation of learning and learning aspects) and support (counselling and guidance), as opposed to the traditional purely reactive and supportive focus. Both modalities involve aspects of pro-activity and prevention as well as reactive and remedial aspects.

2.4.1 Environmental scan for current student development and support in higher education

The following is a summary of student development and support (SDS) services at 31 institutions of higher education. The specific line function and positioning within the institution is also indicated where information is available. Data collated from available and accessible resources on the world wide web.

Table 2.3: Summary of survey: Student development and support services at institutions of higher education

| HE-INSTITUTION* | BROAD SERVICE PORTFOLIO IN SD & S RELATED ACTIVITIES | POSITIONING (Line function) |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| SOUTH AFRICAN | | |
| Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directorate of Student Development and Support: Integrated services for academic skills development, and counselling Integrated unit and holistic person development approach | DVC: Academic + Student Affairs |
| University of Pretoria (UP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Academic Dev: Academic skills programmes Unit for Counselling: Support services <p>Approach: Separate units</p> | Faculty: Human Sc. Student Affairs |
| University of the Western Cape (UWC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Academic Development: Academic skills programmes with a focus on writing, computers and centres | DVC: Student Services |
| University of South Africa (UNISA) – distance education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureau for Counselling, Career Development and Academic Development | DVC: Operations (Services) |
| University of Stellenbosch (US) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directorate for Academic Support with sub-sections | DVC: Academic |
| University of Cape Town (UCT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Higher Education Development with a focus on academic development | DVC: Academic |
| AFRICAN | | |
| University of Ghana (UG) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the Dean of Students offer counselling and support | Student services |

| | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| | Approach: ad hoc | |
| University of Botswana (UB) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Academic Development focussed on staff and students Approach: aligned with staff development ; focussed on academic skills | Student Services |
| Kenyatta University (KU) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Student Welfare and Counselling (incl academic skills) Approach: integrated and holistic | DVC Academic |
| Moi University (MU) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the Dean of Students offer counselling support along with sport; discipline and student life coordination) Approach: Clustered with other services but integrated; service on demand | Chief Academic Officer |
| University of Dar-es-Salaam (UDSM-Tanzania) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit within the Directorate for Student Services with a focus on integrated counselling on personal, social and academic matters. Approach: integrated and holistic | Chief Administrative Officer |
| Makerere University (MU-Uganda) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dedicated unit for sd+s functions | none |
| University of Namibia (UNAM) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Teaching and Learning development with a focus on academic skills development Approach: Academic focus; aligned with staff development | Academic |
| ASIAN | | |
| Chulangkorn University Thailand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Counselling and Student Development; Integrated unit and holistic person dev. approach | Student Services |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Asian Institute of Management (India) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Recruitment, Placement and Career Counselling <p>Approach: Career focused services</p> | Students Services |
| National University of Singapore | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Development of Teaching and Learning with most support services online <p>Integrated unit and holistic person development approach – but mostly online services</p> | Student Resources |
| Bilkent University, Turkey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated with units for Career Development, Student development and Counselling <p>Approach: aligned; coordinated</p> | Dean of Students |
| Hong Kong University | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Personal Counselling and Skills Development Unit for Careers Education and Placement <p>Approach: Separate ; not coordinated</p> | Student Services |
| EUROPEAN, UNITED KINGDOM AND MIDDLE EAST | | |
| University of Oxford | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Student Health and Welfare <p>Approach: Ad hoc counselling (fairly integrated)</p> | Dean of Students |
| University of Cambridge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Careers Service <p>Approach: focussed on career related support</p> | Dean of Students |
| University of Leicester | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit for Educational Development and Support with Careers Service, Counselling, and Student Learning Centre <p>Approach: Integrated unit and holistic</p> | |

| AMERICAN (NORTH) | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit for Academic Resources with a focus on academic support ▪ Unit for Personal Counselling ▪ Unit for Career Counselling Approach: Fully aligned | Director for Academic Resources |
| Harvard University | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit for University counselling and Academic Support Integrated unit and holistic person development approach | Director of Mental Health Services |
| University of Missouri (St Louis) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit for Counselling (including career-, personal and academic counselling) Integrated unit and holistic person development approach | Dean of Students |
| AUSTRALIAN | | |
| University of Curtin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit for Learning Support focussed on online language, writing and study skills Approach: Academic skills development focus | Administrative |
| University of Queensland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit for Student Support Services integrated counselling, skills development and employment Integrated unit and holistic person development approach | Administrative |
| Deakin University | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit for Academic Skills Approach: Academic skills development focus | Student Life |
| * Institutions sampled randomly | | |

Analysis of the information on service portfolios and positioning indicate that there is no absolute trend in structuring. There is however an increased tendency towards integrating and aligning services (UNISA, University of Stellenbosch, Australian and American and Asian Universities). Further investigation follows in Chapter 5.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, a variety of factors impacting on Student Development and Support, were identified and investigated. It became increasingly clear through the literature survey, that these factors do not merely impact on higher education in general but has serious implications for the student development and support functions in institutions of higher education.

Table 2.4 represents a summarised construction of the factors identified as impacting on higher education and student development and support in particular.

Table 2.4: Summary of factors identified that impact on student development and support functions

| CATEGORISATION OF IMPACTING FACTORS | | |
|---|--|---|
| Macro-level factors | Meso-level factors | Micro-level factors |
| These factors relate primarily to <i>international trends</i> and challenges facing higher education. | These factors relate primarily to the <i>national</i> changes and challenges for higher education. | These factors relate primarily to <i>institutional</i> realities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National economic status. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional histories: HBI versus HWI phenomenon. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National labour agenda. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional responses to transformation. |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing countries: specific dynamics in education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation of the HE landscape and mergers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic management and priorities within institutions. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerialism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a national qualifications framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective management. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance in higher education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of outcomes based education model. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability, quality orientation. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a new funding framework. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic relevance and positioning. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government policy development and control, accountability measures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student needs |

Macro-level factors identified include those factors that can be considered *international trends* and of which evidence can be found on an international scale.

These factors include:

- Globalisation: the impact of global perspectives, the need for higher education to educate for the global market:
- Marketisation of education and industry: Increased market orientation with the implications of relevance, setting of client oriented priorities, input-output orientation and factors that are not traditionally integral to higher education. This requires a mind-shift by educators in terms of views on disciplines and systems within education. Evidence was found of debate and conflicting positions with regard to a market orientation in higher education.

- The move towards managerialism in education: Steady move towards a business-orientated management approach and applications in higher education. This implies input-output thinking, different priorities in terms of core business, finance-based decision-making models and also quality assurance systems. Various authors quote the threats and problems this poses for higher education and argue the irrelevance of managerialism. Supporting views also exist with emphasis on the positive impacts being better managed institutions with respect to processes, quality of output and utilisation of resources.
- Specific dynamics and the impact of change, politics and economics in developing countries: The specific dynamic that exist in developing countries with a strong emphasis on economic growth priorities and the impact thereof on higher education. Growing economies may allow improved funding, but mostly require of higher education to be more competitive and less dependent on the state. In addition developing countries like South Africa and other African states, China and similar deals with specific political dynamics (e.g. entrenchment of democracy, transformation and corrective actions) that impact heavily on the higher education sector.

Meso-level factors identified relate primarily to challenges on a *national level*.

These include factors in the areas of:

- National economy: Specific priorities in funding and economic growth in the national arena impacts deeply on funding for education. A developing country like South Africa has high emphasis on international partnerships, investment and improved international competitiveness. This has direct implications for higher education with increased pressure to be relevant and to contribute to the national economic growth and international standing.
- Labour agenda and the implementation of a qualifications framework: The priority on skills development in a developing country has direct implications for higher education. Firstly through direct competition in terms of qualifications being issued by institutions other than educational institutions (labour sector) and secondly, the very strong career-focus in qualifications

and outcomes towards qualifications. These factors exert direct pressure on higher education to also to shift its emphasis to career focussed education. The overt focus on skills development in the context of education and training creates a specific challenge for student development and support practitioners and managers to become partners in the academic project and active participate in addressing the skills development needs.

- Transformation and mergers in higher education: The fast-paced transformation of the higher education landscape by means of the merging and restructuring of institutions has direct impact and implication for student development and support functions. While institutions restructure and reform the debate on strategic positioning and structures, integration and alignment with institutional curricula creates an opportunity for a more prominent and strategic role for the student development and support function within higher education.
- Implementation of an outcomes-based education model: The shift towards OBE has various implications for higher education. Much evidence was found of an active debate on both the positive and negative impact of OBE. The implementation of continuous assessment and a shift from lecturing to facilitating is still not concluded and there are even signs of some resistance amongst academia. The accommodation of critical cross-field outcomes, however, creates critical opportunities for student development and support expertise to become a more relevant partner in establishing a new institutional curriculum.
- Implementation of funding framework: Public funding of higher education in a developing country like South Africa has become and is being used as a steering mechanism for government agendas. The adjusted funding formula, for the first time, makes provision for the funding of developmental strategies, and demonstrates some progress, though it is still not sufficiently considering the role of student development and support in the context of a higher education institution. The funding framework exerts pressure on institutions to improve throughput and success rates with a subsequent renewed emphasis on the potential contribution of student development and support units in addressing risk factors and contribute directly towards student success.

Micro-level factors identified have to do with specific institutional realities or responses. These include factors in the following areas:

- Institutional histories: In the context of South African political history some institutions have a legacy of being historically black institutions (HBI's) while others were historically white institutions (HWI's). Not all past inconsistencies were cancelled with the onset of new political dispensation after the 1994-elections. Historical difficulties face all of these institutions while a new politically generated landscape also created challenges. The most serious factors in this regard, are the inability of HBI's to compete effectively and secure government funding (performance criteria of the funding framework) as well as private sponsor- and donor ships, effective management and democratisation, physical location, improve public image and confidence, achieve international standing and improve innovation and research capacity.
- Institutional responses to transformation: While the transformation of the higher education landscape impacts in many areas it also elicited varied responses from higher education institutions. The implementation of new educational approach (OBE), restructuring of the educational landscape (mergers) and cultural diversity on formerly almost homogenous campuses are very big challenges facing institutions. The degree and effectiveness of institutional responses are reflected in active debate in policy, management and government circles. It has not been a smooth transition for higher education in South Africa and complex dilemmas arose. Examples of issues that institutions are battling with are the development of new academic policies, language policies and decisions on language of instruction, diversity in leadership, cultural integration, views on academic autonomy versus focussed and directed initiatives, dealing with community engagement and poverty and more.
- Strategic management and priorities within institutions and evidence of effective management: During the post-merger phase all newly established institutions of higher education in South Africa had to submit first Three year rolling plans (strategic plans) and of late five year rolling plans and

Institutional Operating Plans to the Ministry of Education for scrutiny and approval. These plans had to be aligned to national priorities and specifically demonstrate the operationalisation of the National Plan for Higher Education. This process forces on individual institutions a process of planning and review of existing goals and objectives. This process of institutional reflection and planning is of particular importance to Student Development and Support functions as it creates opportunity for strategic positioning and role definition within institutions.

- Accountability and quality orientation: The establishment of the HEQC and the start of the systematic institutional audit process have serious impact on individual institutions. It creates a scenario where institutional management is held fully accountable and has to provide evidence to the actual quality and standard of academic offering and the support environment. The auditing process and subsequent publication of audit reports is a brand new challenge for transparency and accountability in higher education institutions in South Africa. The fact that the HEQC is including academic support activities in the audit of academic quality again creates excellent opportunity from a student development and support perspective.
- Relevance and public image: Institutions are facing a challenge in establishing themselves as relevant to community and national needs and developing a public image of good quality education. A consequence of the mergers of South African institutions was the creation of new institutions (and institutional types) with the result that institutions are in a renewed phase of competition to establish a type of “national hierarchy” and specific public image while competing for domain.
- A process of typification (establishing categories of institutional types) has ensued and institutions are developing and positioning themselves in niche markets in for example career-orientated programmes, innovation and entrepreneurship, international or local focus and research.

In the following chapter a theoretical framework for the study is clarified. The interpretation of these findings in the literature survey and the subsequent investigation of the perspectives of managers and practitioners are done in terms of this theoretical framework.