

Chapter 2

Higher Education in South Africa: The State of the Art

2.1. Introduction

Higher education in South Africa has undergone rapid changes and transformation since 27 April 1994 (Manamela, 1997: 58) changes are as a result of the promulgation of new legislation in the education and labour sectors. Statutes that have had significant influence on higher education are the National Education Policy Act, Higher Education Act, the National Qualifications Framework, Labour Relations Act and the National Constitution Act of 1993. Apart from these laws, each and every University is expected to have a statute that governs the University as legal entity. The University statute must be in harmony and consistent with the constitution of the country as well as the Higher Education Act.

Drastic changes in higher education were envisaged as far back as 1986. The Department of Education expressed concern about the lack of efficiency and duplication in departments within Universities. According to Court (1991:337), the widely heard assertions about the decline of Universities are difficult to substantiate empirically, but the “overall quality of higher education on the continent does not give grounds for complacency. The symptoms of a downward direction are evident in staff attrition, deteriorating infrastructure, reduced numbers and vitality of seminars, a lower volume of research, and the absence of books, laboratory equipment, computational facilities, journal subscriptions, and other basic necessities of University teaching”.

Court (1991:337-338) remarked that the decline in institutional research activity is particularly alarming because it jeopardises Africa’s ability to take advantage of worldwide advances in science and technology, its capacity to absorb and use new knowledge, and its need to develop indigenous graduate programmes in teaching and research that are necessary if Africa was to develop a truly independent scientific and intellectual capacity

(Court, 1991:337-338).

Amongst sounding boards to these concerns were the Committee of University Principals. The concept of rationalisation became a catch phrase of the government. The response to rationalisation were measures such as quality assurance, national qualification framework and the modularisation process which is a buzz word in almost all campuses. Some of the measures are actually contained in the Higher Education Act.

2.2 Rationalisation in higher education

The term “rationalisation” has become part of the daily vocabulary of South African Universities and of South African government discussions about Universities since 1986 (Bunting, 1993: 17). The need to “rationalise” the South African university system arose at this time primarily because the government was not able to fund universities at levels which took into account increases both in the consumer price index and in student enrolments. The full government subsidy formula amounts generated by the student enrolments of universities were about R100 million (or 12%) more than the total universities actually received in 1986 and about R200 million (or 17%) more than the total they actually received in 1987.

The universities reacted strongly to these decreases in funding by making vigorous representations about the effects of these cuts to the Minister of National Education in 1986. The Minister responded by expressing what were taken to be general government concerns about inefficiencies in the ways in which universities were using public funds. He highlighted problems concerning the duplication of services by universities, the retention of courses with low enrolments and low student outputs, and the overproduction of graduates in certain fields of study. He told the Committee of University Principals that he intended asking the universities and technikons Advisory Council (AUT) to undertake a major investigation into the issue of the rationalising of universities activities. The Minister did not attempt to define what he meant by “rationalise”. The only clue he gave was the reference he made to “inefficiencies in the university system” but he made no

attempt to explain what an efficient university system would be or how an efficient system would differ from the actual university system existing in 1986.

The initial reaction of the CUP was to ask the Minister not to make rationalisation an AUT responsibility. The CUP informed the Minister late in 1986 that universities recognised that at least some of their resources were being used in inefficient ways. But the CUP added that universities wished themselves to initiate investigations required for a programme of rationalisation. The CUP undertook to begin such a process as soon as it had completed what was termed its 'macro-investigation into universities'. The Minister agreed to defer any AUT investigation until an assessment had been made of the success of the CUP's program of rationalisation.

The CUP's macro-investigation into universities began in January 1987 and continued through most of that year. One of the final recommendations accepted by the CUP in January 1988 dealt with the issue of rationalisation. The recommendation was framed in this way

(CUP 1987: 121 - 122):

The need for rationalisation has been addressed in various places in the report. In the first place it should take place within tertiary institutions themselves through the elimination of unnecessary and overlapping courses, the combining of departments as well as the regrouping of departments and faculties. In the second place rationalisation should take place at a national and regional level in order to establish centres of excellence. An inevitable consequence will be that not all departments will be able to provide instruction over the full spectrum and up to the highest level.

In July 1988 the CUP gave its Academic Planning Committee (APC) the brief of investigating ways in which the university system could satisfy the government's efficiency requirements. But in keeping with the reference made to the need to establish 'centres of excellence', the APC was also asked to look at issues surrounding the quality of the academic programmes it investigated. The APC decided in October 1988 that it would begin its rationalisation reviews with what might be termed two "pilot studies". The

programmes selected were Surveying and Librarianship. The APC reviews began in November 1988 and were completed in September 1989. The final recommendations of the APC on Surveying and Librarianship were submitted in January 1990.

2.3 Modularisation

The requirements of the Higher Education Act and the NQF, namely that institutions of higher learning should provide programme based curricula, portable skills and that prior learning should be recognised in higher education, have prompted universities to embark on the modularisation process. Like other initiatives, modularisation has become the panacea for all curriculum ills, a view that suggests that a wide range of curriculum, organisational, and recruitment difficulties can be solved through modularisation (Bradley 1997: 45). This perception obscures the issues of “why modularisation?”. It fails to make explicit that the meaning of curriculum change is tantamount to the improvement of learning.

To improve learning, to provide meaning to the individual learner, and to promote learning opportunities are implicit in the meaning of curriculum change. Any action of curriculum change therefore needs to address the questions of “why?”. “Will this improve learning opportunities?”. It is therefore argued that modular transformation of a curriculum needs to question “why modularisation?” - in other words is modularisation used for improved learning, or for other organisational purposes?

2.4 Key Problems in Higher Education

The Council on Higher Education Task Team report (2000:17-22) outlines most of the pressing problems in higher education. A number of conditions and developments within higher education represent fundamental challenges to the system and major obstacles to the achievement of policy goals. The system and individual institutions manifest two different though connected kinds of problems and weaknesses. These can be loosely characterised as “structural” (fundamental, long-standing, contextual) and “conjunctural”

(immediate, contextual). Structural problems include:

1. The geographic location of institutions which was based on ideological and political considerations rather than rational and coherent planning. This results in fragmentation and unnecessary duplication.
2. The continued and even increasing fragmentation of the system. The higher education system still does not function in the co-ordinated way envisaged by the White Paper. Neither the existing planning instruments nor the institutions have produced meaningful co-ordination or collaboration. There are only a few and limited examples of successful co-operative initiatives and programmes between institutions. Many of the features of apartheid fragmentation continue within the system and among institutions. Excessively competitive behaviour and practices increasingly abound with potentially damaging effects on other institutions, especially those in the more rural areas. Public universities and technikons appear to regard their immediate neighbours and other public institutions as market competitors rather than as colleagues striving towards a unified and co-ordinated higher education system. This is inevitable in a context of falling enrolments and the absence of a clear, explicit and comprehensive national planning framework.

The competition among public providers is particularly evident where traditional contact institutions have embarked on large-scale distance provision. There are now over 39 000 students in such arrangements, mostly at historically Afrikaans-medium universities. The full time equivalent (FTE) number is, however, uncertain given differences in the manner in which institutions report such enrolments while an increase in distance provision has resulted, without any national planning, in the establishment of learning centers in various cities and towns (as support bases for students). The establishment of satellite campuses by some institutions has also been on the increase. These are partial replicas of the main campuses offering services such as daily contact tuition and library facilities. It is also evident that there are growing instances of “programme creep” - historical types of institutions (universities, technikons and colleges) beginning to

offer programmes and qualifications that were traditionally offered by other institutional types.

Some of the changes may be positive although they occur mainly as individualised initiatives by institutions, frequently with no or little reference to real socio-economic and educational needs and to the programme offerings of neighbouring institutions however the absence of well-established and optimally functioning accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms creates major concerns about the quality of teaching and learning. The major dangers they pose are a lack of institutional focus; mission incoherence; rampant and even destructive competition in which historically advantaged institutions could reinforce their inherited privileges; unwarranted duplication of activities and programmes; exclusive focus on only “paying” programmes; excessive marketisation and commodification with little attention to social and educational goals; and insufficient attention to quality. All of these could ultimately hamper the achievement of a national, integrated, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system, a key goal of the White Paper.

3. There are major inefficiencies related to student throughput rates, graduation rates, student dropouts, student repetition and the retention of failing students, and unit costs across the system.

South African universities and technikons produced about 75 000 graduates and diplomates in 1998 on a head count enrolment base of 600 000 students (350 000 in contact programmes and 250 000 in distance learning programmes). If the system had achieved reasonable throughput rates of 20% for contact programmes and 12% for distance learning programmes, then at least 100 000 graduates/diplomates would have been produced by the higher education system in 1998. The inefficiency of the system resulted in South Africa producing 25 000 fewer graduates/diplomates in 1998.

Unacceptably large numbers and proportions of students drop out of the system each year. This is particularly true in the case of first-time entering undergraduates, that is students who had not previously been registered at a higher education institution. Although the system's intake of first-time entering undergraduates has averaged about 120 000 for the past few years, at least 30 000 (25%) of these new undergraduate students drop out of universities or technikons at the end of their first year of study. The total number of students that drop out of South African universities and technikons is at least 100 000 students per year, out of an enrolment total of about 600 000 students.

Another major aspect of inefficiency in the system is the retention of failing students in the system. A number of institutions report poor success rates by course (averages of 70% and below), low graduation rates (often 15% or below), and yet record no academic exclusions. This means that their enrolment (and subsidy student) totals are inflated by repeating students who have little or no prospect of completing their studies. Of course, such prospects are not unrelated to whether there are appropriate academic support and development initiatives at institutions.

Finally, costs per enrolled student and per graduate/diplomate vary widely across programmes and institutions in the higher education system. These variations are often the result of low student enrolments in specialised courses and programmes, the unwillingness of institutions to co-operate in the offering of expensive programmes and poor student success and throughput rates (CHE, Shape and Size Task Team Report, 2001:18).

4. There are skewed patterns of distribution of students in the various fields of study - science, engineering and technology (SET), business and commerce, and the humanities and education.

In terms of national development needs, there is a greater concentration of

students in the humanities and education fields relative to other fields. In 1999 about 15% of all students in universities and technikons were following teacher training programmes and about 35% other humanities programmes. About 25% of students were enrolled in programmes in business and management studies, with a further 25% in the broad fields of life and physical sciences, engineering, computer science, all the health sciences, and in various fields of applied technology. It is important that a balance that is appropriate to the needs of a developing country exists in the distribution of students across the different fields.

These enrolment patterns are displayed among graduates and diplomates. Generally, some 75 000 graduates/diplomates, 25 000 leave with qualifications in the broad humanities, 10 000 with teaching qualifications (most of which are upgrading of qualifications of teachers already in service) and 20 000 with qualifications in business (including office administration), accountancy, and management. Only 20 000 graduates obtain qualifications in fields related to science, engineering and technology. Of great concern is the fact that these proportions may not be appropriate for the development challenges that face South Africa. However, the crucial issue is not only the field of graduation but also the quality of the graduates.

5. In addition, the distribution of students in the various levels and fields of study - SET, business and commerce, and humanities and education- and at certain institutions is skewed in terms of race and gender.

Gender equity improved in higher education enrolments between 1993 and 1999. Whereas 43% of students were female in 1993, their proportion increased to 52% in 1999. This change, however, masks inequities in the distribution of female students across academic programmes as well as at higher levels of post-graduate training. Female students tend to be clustered in the humanities and, in particular, teacher education programmes. They remain seriously under-represented in science, engineering and technology and in business and management. These are

programmes that produce higher levels of private benefits to successful graduates than those in education and the humanities.

Black, and in particular African, student enrolments also increased rapidly between 1993 and 1999. Compared to 40% in 1993, in 1999 59% of all students in universities and technikons were African. Concomitantly, the representation of white students in the higher education system fell from 47% in 1993 to 29% in 1999. The rapid increase in African students, however, masks an inequity similar to that of female students. In 1999 large proportions of African students were enrolled in distance education programmes, most of which were in the humanities and teacher-upgrade programmes while the numbers and proportions of African students in programmes in science, engineering and technology and in business/management remained low. Post-graduate enrolments across most fields were also extremely low as well. A further trend that causes worry is that at historically Afrikaans-medium universities, the predominant form of incorporation of African students has been through the enrolment of distance students who are seldom seen on campus.

6. In many fields and disciplines and at different levels academic and administrative staff also display extremely poor patterns of race and gender representation and distribution.

The academic and senior administrative staff complements of universities and technikons have remained highly inequitable in that institutions still have academic staff and senior administrative bodies that are male-dominated (see pages 78-79). In academic staff bodies this is particularly true of the ranks of professor and associate professor. The historically white universities and technikons, including those that have experienced rapid changes in the racial composition of their student bodies, continue to have academic and senior administrative staff bodies that are dominated by whites.

7. Finally, most institutions have extremely low research outputs and even those institutions that demonstrate a high ratio of research outputs relative to other institutions have uneven levels of outputs.

Available data indicates that the research outputs of the higher education system have declined since 1994, thus compromising the research and development agenda of the country. In 1998, about 65% of all publications recognised for subsidy purposes were produced by only six of the 21 universities. These same six institutions also produce close to 70% of South Africa's total masters and doctoral graduates. The Task Team, however acknowledges that the technikons initially were not expected to conduct research and produce high-level graduates and that historically black universities were not designed as knowledge-producing institutions.

These structural characteristics of the higher education system undermine cost-effectiveness, efficiency and equity. In addition they also generate the kind of differentiation that is neither desirable, sustainable or equitable.

The conjunctural problems of the system include:

1. The decline in student enrolments within the public higher education sector since the increased enrolments predicted by the National Commission on Higher Education have not materialised. Indeed, there have been dramatic declines at many institutions while a serious decline in the retention rates of students from the first to succeeding years of study has compounded the problem. The overall participation rate has remained static and was estimated at 15% for the age group 20-24 for 1999. This is low for a country striving to become competitive in the global knowledge-based economy.

Student enrolments have not grown for a number of reasons: first, the secondary school system has failed to produce sufficient numbers of qualified school-leavers to meet the intake targets of the higher education system. Second, the public higher education system has failed to “sell itself” to those school-leavers and mature students moving into the private higher and further education sectors. Third, public higher education has failed to retain all students until they graduate.

2. The possible crippling effects on the ability of several institutions to continue to fund their activities because of the relationship between enrolments and funding as well as their inability to attract more diverse sources of funding. The inability of many poor students to pay their tuition fees, as well as the institutions' lack of capacity to collect fees, has resulted in increases in student debt. As a result number of institutions that have experienced declining student enrolments and/or institutional debt during recent years - essentially the historically black universities and the two traditional distance institutions - and could eventually find themselves under severe financial and other pressures. Declining enrolments could possibly reduce the subsidies of individual historically black universities by between 11% and 52%, with an average loss of 23%. There is also the prospect of the higher education system as a whole suffering a loss of 6% of its current allocation in government funding in the near future (Shape and Size Task Team Report 200:19).

Although a new funding framework has to be finalised, the proposed framework will only distribute funds in a different way and will not necessarily inject any increased funds into the system. However, the challenge is not simply the formulation and technical implementation of a “goal orientated new funding system” as proposed by the White Paper but that a new funding system should be linked to the substantive achievement of an accessible, sustainable, robust new higher education landscape. The issue of institutional redress funding too has to be approached within such an overall context.

3. There has been a tremendous increase in private higher education institutions mainly in the form of small, single-purpose providers including local institutions that operate independently or in partnership with local public or overseas public and private institutions, and a number of overseas private and public institutions. Despite the fact that currently there are no accurate figures for FTE enrolments within the private sector, private institutions that contribute to the diversification of the higher education system could be sources of innovation. However, they are presently inadequately regulated in terms of registration, accreditation and quality assurance. This lack of proper management raises concerns around quality, the effective protection of learners and possible adverse effects on the public higher education system.

4. Many institutions experience fragile governance capacity (council, management and administration, students) and, at some, the crises persist. The 1997 White Paper introduced institutional governance based on co-operative governance. Co-operative governance has been severely tested at many institutions, where “agreement in principle” has not always translated into “unity in practice”. Competing and sometimes irreconcilable claims and interests have led to institutional paralysis and/or a loss of coherence and direction at various institutions.

A large number of conditions have given rise to weak and/or inadequate governance and management. The problems at these institutions go well beyond episodic student protests but relate fundamentally to institutional leadership and legitimate authority and management. Yet the principle of co-operative governance and the inclusion of different stakeholders in the new institutional governance arrangements holds real and potential value for higher education institutions in particular and society at large.

The Department of Education recognises that in the new environment education and training initiatives to improve effective governance, including leadership, management and student capacity development programmes, are a necessity. The small number of people available and able to provide national and institutional leadership also has to be increased as well. It should, nevertheless, be kept in mind that the capacity development needs of institutions are quite varied. They range from more conventional and very specific interventions to augment the already existing skills and capacity to the need for multi-skilled institutional support teams to help the leadership of an institution to stabilise, focus and re-direct the institution. It is also evident that the need for training is not restricted to institutional managers and administrators but extends to members of councils and student leaders as well.

5. The current higher education information systems are sorely inadequate, especially in relation to information on financial matters. Further, many institutions lack the capacity to provide and process basic data and information while many have a very limited or no culture of reflective institutional research. A much more responsive and modern information system that provides policy relevant “real time” data on students and staff is thus essential for steering the public and private higher education arenas. As the development of an effective Higher Education Management Information System and institutional research are essential it is gratifying that a new system is in the process of being developed. The student module has already been implemented and the staff module will be implemented in 2001.

The problems and weaknesses of the higher education system are extensive and varied. They will not disappear by themselves or be overcome by institutions on their own but should be confronted at a national level and addressed with vigour.

The Task Team's proposals for reconfiguring the system and institutions cannot and will not immediately solve all the structural and conjunctural problems that afflict the system and institutions. This will require extensive, integrated, iterative national planning as well as multiple co-ordinated interventions and initiatives. The proposals will, however, provide a more rational, focused, effective and efficient framework and basis for overcoming the problems over a period of time.

The systemic problem of the higher education system in its lack of overall coherence, rationality and appropriateness in relation to socio-economic development needs. It should also relate to the size of the system (overall enrolments, participation rates and numbers of institutions), the shape of the system (the nature of institutions, their mandates and focus, the levels and range of their programme offerings, their field/disciplinary orientations), and modes of educational delivery (contact, distance).

The key policy objective that must define the overall capacity (size) of the higher education system is the need to develop the high level and varied intellectual and conceptual knowledge, abilities and skills needed to meet the local, regional, national and international requirements of a developing democracy. These capabilities must thus not be confined to simply economic goals but must address the needs of social, intellectual and cultural development. This includes intellectual and conceptual knowledge and skills at the levels of knowledge production and dissemination as well as ongoing development of professionals at different levels, for different economic and social sectors, in different fields and disciplines and through different educational and pedagogic modes (shape).

2.5 National Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996

The purpose of this Act is to “provide for the determination of a national policy for education; to amend the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act, 1984, so as to substitute certain definitions; to provide afresh for the determination

of policy on salaries and conditions of employment of educators; and to provide for matters connected therewith”.

2.5.1 Principles of the national education policy

In terms of section 4 of the Act, the policy contemplated in section 3 shall be directed toward -

- a the advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every person guaranteed in terms of Chapter 3 of the Constitution, and in terms of international conventions ratified by Parliament, and in particular the right -
 - i) of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever;
 - ii) of every person to basic education and equal access to education institutions;
 - iii) of a parent or guardian in respect of the education of his or her child or ward;
 - iv) of every child in respect of his or her education;
 - v) of every student to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable;
 - vi) of every person to establish, where practicable, education institutions based on a common language, culture or religion, as long as there is no discrimination on the ground of race;
 - vii) of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution;
- b) enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes;
- c) achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in

education provision, including the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women;

- d) endeavouring to ensure that no person is denied the opportunity to receive an education to the maximum of his or her ability as a result of physical disability;
- e) providing for and encouraging lifelong learning;
- f) achieving an integrated approach to education and training within a national qualifications framework;
- g) cultivating skills, disciplines and capacities necessary for reconstruction and development;
- h) recognising the aptitudes, abilities, interests, prior knowledge and experience of students;
- i) encouraging independent and critical thought;
- j) promoting a culture of respect for teaching and learning in education institutions;
- k) promoting enquiry, research and the advancement of knowledge’;
- l) enhancing the quality of education and educational innovation through systematic research and development on education, monitoring and evaluating education provision and performance, and training educators and education managers;
- m) ensuring broad public participation in the development of education policy and the representation of stakeholders in the governance of all aspects of the education system;
- n) achieving the cost-effectiveness use of education resources and sustainable implementation of education services;
- o) achieving close co-operation between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education, including the development of capacity in the departments of education, and the effective management of the national education system.

Whereas the national education policy enshrines noble objectives about learners and educators, it is nevertheless silent on supporting personnel in the education sector which section includes the administrative arm and the non skilled work force.

While the National Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996 provides guidelines to education in general, from elementary level to tertiary level, the Higher Education Act No 101 of 1997, provides guidelines on the provision of higher education in South Africa.

2.6 Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997

The purpose of this act as outlined in the preamble, is to:

- establish a single co-ordinated higher education system which promotes co-operative governance and provides for programme-based higher education;
- restructure and transform programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs of the Republic;
- redress past discrimination and ensure representivity and equal access;
- provide optimal opportunities for learning and the creation of knowledge;
- promote the values which underlie an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom;
- respect freedom of religion, belief and opinion;
- respect and encourage democracy, academic freedom, freedom of speech and expression, creativity, scholarship and research;
- pursue excellence, promote the full realisation of the potential of every student and employee, tolerance of ideas and appreciation of diversity;
- respond to the needs of the Republic and of the communities served by the institutions;
- contribute to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality;
- and for higher education institutions to enjoy freedom and autonomy in their relationship with the state within the context of public accountability and the national need for advanced skills and scientific knowledge.

2.7 Council on Higher Education

Section 1 of the Higher Education Act provides for the establishment of a Council on Higher Education as a juristic person as well.

2.7.1 The Functions of the Council on Higher Education

In terms of section 5(1) of the Act, the Council on Higher Education may advise the Minister on any aspect of higher education on its own initiative and must:

- a. advise the Minister on any aspect of higher education at the request of the Minister;
 - b. arrange and co-ordinate conferences;
 - c. subject to section 7(2), through its permanent committee, the Higher Quality Committee -
 - (I) promote quality assurance in higher education;
 - (ii) audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions; and
 - (iii) accredit programmes of higher education;
 - d. publish information regarding developments in higher education, including an annual report on the state of higher education, on a regular basis;
 - e. promote access of students to higher education institutions; and
 - f. perform any other function -
 - (I) conferred on or assigned to it in terms of this Act;
 - (ii) delegated or assigned to it by the Minister by Notice in the Gazette.
6. The advice contemplated in subsection (1) (a) includes advice on:
- a. quality promotion and quality assurance;
 - b. research
 - c. the structure of the higher education system;

- d. the planning of the higher education system;
- e. a mechanism for the allocation of public funds;
- f. student financial aid;
- g. student support services;
- h. governance of higher education institutions and the higher education system; and
- i. language policy.

The objectives of the Act as far as a unified higher education system is concerned are the co-ordination of the governance, planning and financing of the sector as a unified system. It is trusted that a unified higher education system will lead to a unified quality assurance system (Jacobs 1999: 8).

2.7.1.1 Quality promotion and quality assurance function of the Council on Higher Education

In South Africa the need to address quality through quality assurance is a pressing issue because in this rapidly changing society, characterised by growth in the numbers of high-risk students and severe cuts in state subsidies, the impoverishment of universities in terms of their teaching and research tasks has become a reality (Strydom, 1993: 83; Strydom 1998:18).

In recent years, governments and employers in many countries have been concerned with reducing expenditure on higher education while at the same time increasing access to larger numbers and a greater diversity of students. This has had implications for the perceived quality of higher education provision. The relevance of higher education in its current form to the restructuring of contemporary societies has also been an issue, while the nature of higher education is changing in response to pressures for universities to provide creative and imaginative solutions to crucial social and economic issues. In order to manage higher education in a more rational way, and to achieve new purposes,

governments in many countries have set up national quality assurance systems in which universities have been compelled to demonstrate their accountability to external stakeholders (Webstock 1999:13; Dowling 1999:1). In South Africa, however, quality assurance is made possible by the Higher Education Act No 101 of 1997. Section 7 of the Higher Education Act provides that:

1. the CHE must establish the Higher Education Quality Committee as a permanent
2. committee to perform the quality promotion and quality assurance functions of the CHE in terms of this Act.
3. the CHE and the Higher Education Quality Committee must comply with the policies and criteria formulated by SAQA in terms of section (5) (1) (a) (ii) of the South African Qualification Authority Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995).
4. the Higher Education Quality Committee may, with the concurrence of the CHE, delegate any quality promotion and quality assurance functions to other appropriate bodies capable of performing such functions.
5. The delegation under subsection (3) -
 - a. must be in writing and published by notice in the Gazette;
 - b. is subject to such conditions as the Higher Education Quality Education Committee may determine; and
 - c. does not prevent the performance of such functions by the Higher Education Quality Committee.
5. The CHE may charge fees for any service rendered by the Higher Education Quality Committee to any person, institution or organ of state.
6. The Minister must make regulations to give effect to quality promotion and quality assurance in terms of this Act.

Quality has different meanings, depending on who is defining the quality criteria and for which purposes a quality assessment procedures are used (Verkleij 1999: 2; Webstock 1999:13; Fourie and Strydom 1999:18). Verkleij (1992:2) further cites Harvey and Green (1993) who distinguish five broad categories of definitions:

- a. quality as exceptional;
- b. quality as perfection or consistency (zero errors);

- c. quality as fitness for purpose (mission orientation, consumer orientation) (compare Balls, 1985: 96; Williams, 1990: 74; Wicks, 1992: 58);
- d. quality as value for money and
- e. quality as transformation (Verkleij 1999: 2).

Notwithstanding the lack of unanimity regarding definitions of quality, Dowling (1999:14) maintains that quality assurance is the internal system adopted by a university to demonstrate to itself and others to what extent the institution is fulfilling the mission and goals it has set for itself. It applies at all levels of operation, from system wide to the smallest unit, and is essentially concerned with how each part of the institution satisfies itself that it is achieving its own goals within the context of the broader goals set.

Universities would be wise to develop a plan for their own quality development, which should incorporate infra structural elements, intentions, the assignment of particular responsibilities, timetables, and indicators of system performance. While each institution is at present free to develop its own approach, given the national uncertainties, existing literature suggests that there are a number of basic characteristics of an institutional scheme for quality development which are likely to lead to improvement in the functioning of the various activities of the specific institution. These are :

- the system should be rooted in the culture of the institution in question;
- it should be developmental (improvement-oriented) rather than comparative in nature;
- it should produce an honest and reality based view and be responsibly transparent to the public and potential clients without damaging the institution in the process;
- the scheme should employ multi year cycles of activity with all the major aspects of the institution coming under review in one cycle;
- it should employ systematically gathered opinions of both clients and professional participants at the university;
- the institution's judgements about its performance should be validated through the use of unbiased, highly qualified external peers;
- it should be adequately funded, including both support of an effective and growing

infrastructure for quality development and funds to support the recommended improvements which result from the quality development activities;

- the scheme should be generally responsive to reasonable requests from government and other stakeholders (Kells, 1995:41).

2.7.2 The Significance of Quality Assurance

According to Dowling, (1999:14-15) as well as Kallie and Strydom (1998:18) the following reasons exist for the need of a quality assurance system:

2.10.1 there are clear indications at a national level that universities will have to demonstrate their accountability through an external review process;

2.10.2 it is clear that there will be severe resource constraints on universities and they will have to do more with less;

2.10.3 by concentrating on quality assurance for the purpose of improving educational activities, public confidence in universities is likely to be enhanced and the perceived need for outside control lessened;

2.10.4 the vast quality differentials between institutions of higher education in South Africa need to be addressed;

2.10.5 there is a growing need to evaluate the transformation process of universities;

2.10.6 quality assurance in its present form in universities is piecemeal, not systematically applied and not sufficiently based on self-evaluation processes;

2.10.7 information on effective innovative practises needs to be shared; and

2.10.8 all the whole areas of the universities' operations have been relatively neglected with respect to assuring quality.

- 2.10.9 the mystification of higher education which, some fear, might lead to the lowering of standards;
- 2.10.10. society's renewed interest in higher education has been a long standing concern for employers, both as graduate recruiters and as research and training collaborators;
- 2.10.11. The quality of higher education has been a long standing concern for employers, both as graduate recruiters and as research and training collaborators;
- 2.10.12. The changed role of governments in relation to higher education. Higher education systems have become so complex that central government control sometimes appears inefficient and
- 2.10.13. Globalization and internationalisation which increase the importance of insight into the quality of institutions and their programmes, and the standards of their graduates.

As quality assurance and evaluation or appraisal go hand in hand and, over the past two decades, university systems in the western world have been subject to particularly intense appraisal, both from within and without (Bitzer, 1993: 28). In South Africa, institutional self-evaluation (ISE) is becoming part and parcel of post-secondary education because institutions' future autonomy will increasingly depend on their own capacity for self renewal and readiness to deal with efficiency and effectiveness problems.

2.7.3 Internal Quality Assurance

Mechanisms for ensuring quality assurance can be either externally based or internally based. There are advantages and limitations for each group.

2.7.3.1 Institutional self- evaluation

ISE can be described as a process whereby an institution deliberately collects information about itself, conducts an assessment of its activities in the light of its stated goals to determine discrepancies, and determines what action needs to be taken in order to put into effect those decisions that will facilitate its activities and result in corrective measures. Institutional self evaluation is an aid to management because it evaluates institutional mission accomplishment and facilitates strategic and operational management (Kells, 1988:13; Nicholls, 1989:40). As such ISE can be regarded as a tool to improve the quality of higher education institutions (Van Vught, 1991: 17).

Educational or academic quality concerns the instructional and research activities of an educational institution and broadly relates to the level of its students' learning experience in a course. This experience builds upon the students' personal abilities and qualities, the nature and content of the educational process (teaching, learning and assessment) and a judgement of the extent to which the aims of the course have been achieved as demonstrated by the final assessment of student performance (CUP 1987: 90; Kells, 1992: 94).

It may subsequently be concluded that educational quality depends on how well the various components or units of a course, programme or institution cohere in achieving its educational objectives.

2.7.3.2 External Quality Assurance

Institutional self-evaluation alone is not sufficient for quality improvement. Optimal results in quality improvement seem to be found in the supplementary co-existence of the processes of institutional self-evaluation and accreditation, in an irreversible sequence (Strydom, 1993: 85).

In this regard De Weert (1990:68) mentions “ Without external evaluation there would be little internal evaluation or self - evaluation attempts to effect institutional improvement... but a specific sequence on internal followed by external evaluation... allows the institution time to meet or plan for the correction of deficiencies”.

2.7.4 Accreditation

Accreditation is a process whereby the comparability and recognition of educational standards are promoted. It is used to raise norms and standards of educational activities to a level that will assure quality education. Accreditation also serves the purpose of confirming whether a discipline has achieved its goals as claimed (Strydom, 1993: 85).

As a condition, it suggests the status granted to a scientific discipline that has been found by a peer group (including professional and public representatives) to comply with criteria that have a bearing on educational quality of the discipline and assists in improving that quality; as a collective activity it leads to the development and validation of standards, the assessment of the adequacy of operations, peer judgement and counselling to convince the academic community and the general public of the integrity and quality of the discipline (Millard, 1993: 85).

Naturally, an accreditation body for universities will have its founding in the Committee of University Principals, which should create a structure in the form of a University Accrediting Committee (UAC) to enhance quality by means of accreditation disciplines. The main functions of such a committee would be:

- to establish cooperation between this committee and professional bodies;
- to support universities in preparing for accreditation of their disciplines;

- to establish visiting panels (comprising peers nominated by the universities involved) for disciplines to be accredited;
- to acknowledge the outcomes of the visiting panels' findings obtained in cooperation with the universities concerned; and
- facilitate the accreditation process in non- accredited disciplines by means of candidacy for accreditation (Strydom 1993: 85).

2.7.5 Appointment and Conditions of Service of Employees of Public Higher Education Institutions

Section 34 of the Act provides the following with regard to such employees:

1. The council of a public higher education institution must appoint the employees of the public higher education institution.
2. Notwithstanding subsection (1) the academic employees of the public higher education institution must be appointed by the council after consultation with the senate.
3. The council must determine the conditions of service, disciplinary provisions, privileges and functions of the employees of the public higher education institution, subject to the applicable labour law.

2.8 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa(Act No 108 of 1996)

As organs of civil society universities are also subject to the provisions of the South African constitution, because in terms of the application of the Bill of Rights, the following provisions as contained in section 8 apply, namely that:

1. The Bill of Rights applies to all law, and binds the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and all organs of state.
2. A provision of the Bill of Rights to a natural or a juristic person if, and to the extent that, it is applicable, taking into account the nature of the right and the nature of any duty imposed by the right.
3. When applying a provision of the Bill of Rights to a natural or juristic person in terms of subsection (2), a court-

- a. in order to give effect to a right in the Bill, must apply, or if necessary develop, the common law to the extent that legislation does not give effect to that right; and
 - b. may develop rules of the common law to limit the right, provided that the limitation is in accordance with section 36(1).
4. A juristic person is entitled to the rights in the Bill of Rights to the extent required by the nature of the rights and the nature of that juristic person.

The constitution also recognises equality of all persons before the law. The following section 9, is more succinct and provides that:

1. Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
2. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.
3. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against any one on grounds including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
4. No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.
5. Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

Human Dignity

- 10 Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.

Life

11. Everyone has the right to life.

Education

1. Everyone has the right -
 - a. to a basic education, including adult basic education; and
 - b. to further education which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

2. Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account-
 - a. equity defined as follows “Equity should mean more than access into higher education. It must incorporate equity of opportunity - environments in which learners, through academic support, excellent teaching and mentoring and other initiatives, genuinely have every chance of succeeding. Equity, to be meaningful, is also ensuring that learners have access to quality education, and graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession” (CHE Report, 2000:10)
 - b. practicability; and
 - c. the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

3. Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that -
 - a. do not discriminate on the basis of race;
 - b. are registered with the state; and

- c. maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

4. Subsection (3) does not preclude state subsidies for independent educational institutions.

The Constitution recognises and protects academic freedom and freedom of scientific research as part of the right to freedom of expression. It also entrenches the right of all to further education. However since all freedom, including academic freedom, brings with it accountability academics are not politically accountable to any particular political party or constituency, but have a moral responsibility first and foremost to the institution that employs them and to the students of that institution and secondly to the broader community (Carpenter, 1997: 9)

The term “accountability” is a current day catch word for critics of an eminently criticisable establishment. We thus frequently hear demands not only for educational but also for corporate and governmental accountability. The term “accountability” is taken to cover a wide range of the philosophies and mechanisms governing the relationship between any public institution, its governing bodies and the whole of society, which includes the political environment(Odendaal, 1997: 5).

2.9 The National Qualifications Framework - The South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995

The purpose of this Act is to provide for the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework and for this purpose to establish the South African Qualifications Authority; and to provide matters connected therewith.

2.9.1 What is the National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework is a new approach to education and training. It provides opportunities for one to learn regardless of age, circumstances and the level of education and training one may have. It allows individuals to learn on an ongoing basis called lifelong learning.

2.9.2 How did the NQF begin

The compartmentalisation of education and training, the absence of norms and standards for education and training and the lack of international recognition of South African qualifications, led to the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No.58 of 1995). The establishment of SAQA was a major step forward with regard to the setting of standards and the monitoring of the quality of education and training at all levels(Jacobs 1999: 8).

During the period 1989-1994 Cosatu, employers, providers of education and training, representatives from the 'old' Departments of Education and the Department of Labour, the ANC and the Centre for Education Policy Development began to look at ways in which education and training in South Africa could be improved.

In April 1994, a task team consisting of members of the National Training Board, business, organised labour, the state and providers of education and training was set up. After many meetings, debates and reports, a discussion document called A National Training Strategy Initiative (1994) was produced. It included proposals on how to close the gap between education and training with the key recommendation of the document to establish the NQF. This document emphasised that it intended to introduce a human resource development system in which there is an integrated approach to education and training which meets the economic and social needs of the country and the development needs of the individual.

A year later, the government's policy document, White Paper on Education and Training 1995, gave details of the National Qualifications Framework and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The South African Qualifications Authority Act, (Act No 58 of 1995) was passed on 4 October 1995. This law empowers SAQA to set up and maintain the NQF.

2.9.3 Objectives of the National Qualifications Framework

The objectives of the National Qualifications Framework are:

2.9.4 Principles of the NQF

The NQF embodies the following principles:

Legitimacy

The NQF creates the opportunity for a wide range of people to participate in the planning and co-ordination of standards and qualifications. These people can come from government, communities, the labour movement, education and training, business and industry. They can be learners, women, youths- in fact representatives from any grouping which has a particular concern with and interest in an area of learning.

Integration

A major difference between the NQF approach and the old education system is that it brings together education and training. Education is regarded as the area of learning where the learner gains knowledge while training is seen as the area of learning where the learner gains skills.

The NQF will join these areas of learning which have always been separated in what is called an integrated approach to education and training. With this integrated approach the learner is able to move more easily from one level of learning to another.

Progression

The NQF allows the learner to move through the different levels by gaining credits and qualifications that are nationally recognised. The learner will have to achieve a certain number of credits in an appropriate combination before he/she receive a qualification enabling him/her to move to the next level of the NQF.

Portability

The NQF allows the learner to transfer qualifications and credits more easily from one learning situation to another. In a work environment, this could mean movement between industries and in a formal study environment, it will enable movement between types of learning institutions.

Articulation

Since the urgent need for articulation (mobility) within the tertiary education sector was felt (AUT 1992: NASOP 02 - 316) the NQF allows the learner to move between the education and work environments, once he/she has successfully completed his/her credits. This means the learner can move from a work situation to a study situation, and back again, according to his/her circumstances and choices.

Recognition of prior learning

With the NQF the learner can gain recognition for learning done in either formal or informal situations he/she will be assessed on what he/she has learned to establish his/her understanding, information and skills, and then be placed at the appropriate level of education and training. This is particularly important for people who have left school many years before without completing their formal schooling, and for those who have been working for some time and want to continue their studies.

The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) states that “Learning and skills which people have acquired through experience and on-site training or self-education could be formally assessed and credited towards certificates, in order to enable them to qualify for entry to additional education and/or training”.

Guidance of learners

If a learner would like to explore his/her choices of work and studies, he/she will be able to do so since specially trained counsellors will explain the new approach to education and training, and help learners to make decisions about which learning and career paths to follow.

Democratic Participation

The NQF will make sure that relevant, nationally represented groupings participate fully in the writing of standards. These groupings will also be responsible for checking the standards on a regular basis. Standards will also be revised and updated regularly to respond to changes in the environment. For example, technology develops very fast and there is a need to keep up with the changes.

Equality of Opportunity

The NQF provides common learning outcomes but enables learners with different needs such as children and adults or learners in and outside the formal school system can advance at their own pace.

2.9.5 SAQA's Functions

The SAQA Bulletin (1997:5) outlines the following key functions of the body:

- To oversee the development of the NQF. It must formulate and publish policies and criteria both for registration of bodies responsible for establishing educational and training standards, and for the accreditation of bodies responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements.
- To oversee the implementation of the NQF. It must ensure the registration, accreditation and assignment of functions to the bodies referred to above, as well as the registration of national standards and qualifications. It must also take steps to ensure that provisions for accreditation are complied with and that standards and registered qualifications are internationally comparable.
- To advise the Ministers of Education and Labour.
- To consult with all affected parties. It must also comply with various rights and powers of bodies in terms of the Constitution and Acts of Parliament.

2.10 Funding of Public Higher Education institutions

Funding of higher education is a thorny issue to the university employees, particularly administrators. Funding also determines the introduction of new programmes and services for both students and staff.

2.10.1 Allocation of funds by the Minister

Section 39 of the Higher Education Act has the following provisions about funding of tertiary institutions:

1. The Minister must, after consulting the CHE and with the concurrence of the Minister of Finance, determine the policy on the funding of public higher education, which must include appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities, and publish such policy by notice in the *Gazette*.
2. The Minister must subject to the policy determined in terms of subsection (1), allocate public funds to public higher education on a fair and transparent basis.
3. The Minister may, subject to the policy determined in terms of subsection (1), impose -
 - a. any reasonable condition in respect of an allocation contemplated in subsection (2), and
 - b. different conditions in respect of different public higher education institutions, different instructional programmes or different allocations, if there is a reasonable basis for such differentiation.

2.10.2 Funds of Public Higher Education Institutions

Section 40 of the Act provides a list of sources for university funding:

- (a) funds allocated by the Minister in terms of section 39;
- (b) any donations or contributions received by the institution;
- (c) money raised by the institution;
- (d) money raised by means of loans;
- (e) income derived from investments;
- (f) money received for services rendered to any other institution or person;
- (g) money payable by students for higher education programmes provided by the institution;

- (h) money received from students or employees of the institution for accommodation or other services provided by the institution; and
- (i) other receipts from whatever source.

The provisions of section 40 are glaringly silent about research as a source of funding for a tertiary institution. It is surprising that mention of research is not made when it actually constitute the core business of tertiary education especially since funding from research is covered by sections (f) and (i) This omission constitutes a serious limitation in the Act. The researcher is of the opinion that higher education should have as one of its central purposes the encouragement of research. The latter idea is also missing from the purpose of the Act as outlined in the preamble.

2.10.3 State funding for higher education

A number of significant trends have converged which place extreme demands on states to meet the funding needs for higher education. The most significant of these trends include the competing demands for state funds; declining federal commitments to student financial aid; the sluggish state economies; declines in disposable family income; and the increased demand for post secondary education (Hossler, Lund, Ramin, Westfall and Irish, 197: 161; Gold 1990: 69 -82)

Many states find themselves struggling in a heated environment where - with great effort, sweat, and political dust swirling above their heads - they attempt to make difficult funding decisions which leave unaltered the basic role and mission of higher education as well as the important values of student access, choice, and educational opportunity. Governments are by far the largest source of revenue for public institutions (Hossler et al 1990:161).

2.10.4 State Financing Trends

The trends converging on higher education that make the financing environment so precarious can roughly be placed into one of two classifications: economic trends and public policy trends (Hossler et al 1990: 163) although these two broad trends are admittedly artificial and tend to categorize and separate two interconnected and dynamic phenomena. They are useful, however, as conceptual tools which help to focus the discussion.

2.10.4.1 Economic Trends

One of the most serious trends faced by states is the simple fact that state revenues have failed to keep up with budget projections. Given the recent unpredictable nature of the economy and government spending, many structural, long-term problems still exist which make predictable and stable government appropriations to higher education and other state programmes uncertain.

Similar to budget short falls at government level, students and families have seen their purchasing power erode while the burden of financing higher education has fallen on students and their families (Hossler et al 1990: 164).

2.10.4.2 Public Policy Trends

Economic trends are not the only factors that affect higher education financing. As a result of lean budgets, state policy makers have been forced to make difficult spending decisions and, in the process, making clear policy choices. Hossler et al (1990:165) maintain that as appropriations to higher education have been under pressure, so too has state support for student financial aid. However in South Africa the situation is slightly different as the South African government's spending on education has been increasing since 1994.

For example government is spending in the 1999 / 2000 financial year was R 47.8 billion while in the 2000/2001 financial year it was R50.7 billion on education. In the arena of higher education, there is a massive pumping in of finance to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme which has a growth of 13% from R390 million to R443,5 million. Since 1994 almost R1,7 billion has been allocated to students.

2.11 Budget Cuts

Higher education in South Africa, like anywhere all over the world currently faces serious financial and subsidy cuts. The Sowetan (22 February 2000) reported that it was expected that R7 billion would be allocated to higher education but the education minister Kader Asmal told vice chancellors and other top representatives of tertiary institutions towards the end of 1999 that this would form a significant proportion of the overall education budget. However, the R7 billion allocation would translate into a decrease of about four to five percent in the annual subsidy allocation to tertiary education.

This cut is expected to put further strain on the budgets of certain tertiary institutions, especially the historically disadvantaged institutions which are reported to be facing dwindling student enrolment figures. On the other hand, Naidu reported from the Star (Monday 7, February 2000): “The Universities of Fort Hare, Transkei, the North, North West, Zululand and the Medical University of South Africa have been plagued by a variety of problems, including bad management, lack of leadership, escalating debts and dwindling student numbers”.

Student enrolments at these tertiary institutions have not grown for the following reasons: first, the secondary school system fails to produce sufficient numbers of qualified school-leavers to meet the intake targets of the higher education system. Second, public higher education system has failed to sell itself to those school leavers and mature students moving into the private higher and further education sectors. Third, public higher education has failed to retain all students until they graduate (CHE Report, 2000:20). The position of the Council on Higher Education report on plummeting student numbers can be equated with a blaming the victim syndrome.

The researcher views the fact that universities are battling and competing for students as consistent with the notion of increased accessibility and the students' right to choose. This competition for students also depicts the crisis in the entire education department, especially the primary education sector.

Papo (1998: 10) presents the statistics of the dwindling student enrolment in this fashion:

Table 1. Higher education admissions in South Africa 1996, and 1993 (%)

Contact institutions	1996	1993
Historically white universities	14	15
Historically black universities	14	26
Historically white technikons	16	23
Historically black technikons	7	23
Distance learning institutions		
Universities	40	49
Technikons	63	32

2.12 Key challenges facing higher education

These challenges can be grouped under three headings: effectiveness challenges, efficiency challenges and equity challenges (Shape and Size Task Team Report, 2000:22).

2.12.1 Effectiveness Challenges

The effectiveness of the higher education system in delivering the objectives of the White Paper can be judged in a number of areas. For example, the production of 25 000 fewer graduates in 1998 seriously impacts on the labour market where graduates have a 30% more higher chance to be employed than school-leavers. The reconfiguration of higher education is thus faced with the challenge of increasing the absolute number of graduates and diplomates to address the shortage of high-level skills on the labour market. In this regard, the accelerated construction of appropriate programme mixes which are responsive to the growth and development needs of the country as well as to individual needs for employment is extremely urgent, particularly to increase the number of learners in SET fields. The dangers posed to the knowledge needs of society and the economy by low and declining numbers of research output too needs to be addressed by measures aimed at increasing the numbers of researchers as well as research outputs from higher education institutions.

2.12.2. Efficiency Challenges

Efficiency challenges are often closely tied to quality measures as well as to sound planning measures both at institutional and system levels. For example, appropriate quality mechanisms will have to be put in place to reduce repeater, drop-out and failure rates of students so that institutions can discharge their education and training missions and responsibilities. In addition, planning targets will make it possible for institutions to meet the needs of their learners, the industry and society at large as well as to produce economies of scale through collaboration and rationalisation. Greater complementarity between public and private provision will also be effected through increasing the capacity of public institutions to improve the quality of their provision and remain institutions of choice for learners.

One particular challenge that will require explicit attention by all higher education providers is the development of information and communications technologies since the rapid growth and convergence in functionality of these technologies over the last few years are being harnessed by a growing number of higher education systems and organisations around the world. It is a well known fact that information and communication technology is allowing for exponential increases in the transfer of data through increasingly globalised communication systems and that information and communication technology networks have significantly expanded the potential for organisations to expand their sphere of operations and influence beyond their traditional geographical boundaries. Of significance for information and technology networks are expanding the range of options available to education planners with respect to teaching and learning strategies, design and combinations, and administering and managing education.

It is also diminishing barriers to entry of potential competitors to higher education institutions by reducing the importance of geographical distance as a barrier, the overhead and logistical requirements of running education programmes and research agencies, and by expanding cheap access to information resources. In order to integrate information and communication technology applications successfully into higher education, planners will need to develop a clear vision of how their strengths can be harnessed and their weaknesses overcome.

2.12.3 Equity Challenges

Given the legacy of exclusion in our country, one of the most critical challenges facing the reconfiguration of higher education is the need to respond appropriately to the equity challenges of the country. Issues that have to be addressed in this respect include increasing the race, gender and social class distribution of students in various fields and levels of study, improving the racial and gender representivity of staff and ensuring financial access for poor.

Equity targets will have to be set and monitored for all programmes and for student and staff equity. Such targets should apply across all other effectiveness and efficiency targets.

2.13 Summary of the findings from literature

- Higher education is undergoing drastic change.
- A university is a juristic person.
- The functions of a university are to facilitate the development of personal growth, development of knowledge and to render public service.
- The new national policy on education has been in operation since 1996.
- The Higher Education Act has been governing higher education since 1997.
- The Higher Education Act has established the Council on Higher Education.
- Quality assurance has to be promoted within higher education.
- Employment of university personnel is done according to the prescription of the Higher Education Act.
- A new constitution for the country has been effective since 1996.
- The constitution ensures the right of everyone to basic and further education.
- There is a new qualifications framework in university education.
- Employment equity is in place to implement affirmative action.
- University education is largely funded by the state.
- Student enrolment at historically black institutions is dropping.
- Universities are places of employment and therefore need to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

2.14 Conclusion

In this chapter, much attention was devoted to the changes and dynamics of higher education in South Africa. In particular it is the changes that affect universities that were addressed. The following chapter will focus on a university as an employing organization within the context of the changes and dynamics already discussed.