

**AN EVALUATION OF FACTORS RESTRICTING MIDDLE MANAGEMENT  
ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES IN A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY,  
FREE STATE**

by

**ANNEMI TALJARD**

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**SUPERVISOR:** Dr GJ Schlebusch

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this research study:

**An evaluation of factors restricting middle management administrative practices in a higher education institution: a case study of the Central University of Technology, Free State**

is my own independent work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

**ANNEMI TALJARD**

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**DATE**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to:

- The Almighty God, who gave me the strength, courage and ability to undertake and complete this study.
  
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- All the participants that gave some of their time and insight – without you, this study would not have been possible at all.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

- My parents, who were always there to inspire me, who has helped me with various projects and problems I could not solve by myself, and whose input and motivation were instrumental in my formative years and who, I am sure, will stand by me to inspire and support me for all my future endeavours. Thank you for always leading me in the right direction, and for teaching me to be an independent thinker.
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## **ABSTRACT**

The existence and survival of an individual and/or organization, such as a Higher Education Institution (HEI), have always depended on the ability of this individual or organization to control the environment in which it exists. This person or organization should overcome certain threats and obstacles that may cross its path by means of simple, pre-constructed plans. The situation must thus be managed in order to ensure the continuation of the person or organization.

In this study the focus is on the functional tasks of the middle management team in an HEI. Middle management is concerned with the near future and is therefore responsible for medium- and short-term planning, organizing functional areas, leading by means of departmental heads, and controlling the management activities of the middle managers' own departments.

This study wants to identify factors in the different functional areas of middle management that could hamper the productivity of this area, and thus the institution as a whole.

A qualitative study, with questionnaires as data capturing tool, was employed. Various factors that may hamper proper functioning were identified in the study. Lack of intra- and inter-departmental communication, staff shortages due to the restructuring process, countless policies and procedures in place (to streamline the execution of duties) hamper more than assist staff members in the execution of their duties. It was found that the staff members seek a sense of security, as this will lead to improved productivity.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Educational institutions, being organizations in their own right, is a widely accepted phenomenon (Van der Westhuizen, 2000:3). Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) have management structures comparable to those of business organisations, and they subsequently experience similar difficulties at various levels of management. It is paramount that all the management functions at the respective management levels work together as an interrelated whole so as to ensure the optimal functioning of the HEI as an organisation. In the current study, the influence of restricting factors on the performance in the functional areas of middle management at an HEI will be investigated.

#### **2 BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Educational management as a field of study and practice was initially developed from management principles applied to industry and commerce. Theory development in the field focused mainly on the application of industrial models to educational settings. Educational management has since evolved from being a new field dependent upon ideas developed in other settings, to an established discipline with its own theories validated by its own empirical findings in the field of education (Bush, 1995:6).

In any organisation, such as an HEI, there are eight functional areas in middle management that need to be organized in order for the organisation to function optimally: the general management function, the marketing function, the financial function, the production or operations management function, the purchasing function, the research and development function, the human resource function, and lastly, the public relations function (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:13).

According to Van der Westhuizen (2002:78) organizations are “formal structures in which people stand in certain relations to one another, in which people’s actions are aimed at achieving common objectives.” It is further stated that one of the most prominent characteristics of an organisation is the formal structure of authority, and that this structure makes it possible to regulate life within the organisation. At the head of this formal structure or hierarchy one finds top management, which according to George and Jones (1999:10), consists of high ranking executives who plan the organisation’s strategy so that it can achieve its goals. George and Jones (1999:541) also state that the first step an organisation should take is to create an organisational hierarchy that reflects the authority assigned to each role or job.

Organisational management is a topic that has been thoroughly researched. In this study, however, the researcher will focus on the interrelationship between organisational management and the management of an HEI. Being organisations, HEI’s experience certain problems in its management functions which adversely affect its functioning. In this study, those problems will be identified and recommendations will be made to improve the functioning of the diverse management functions.

### **3 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

According to Bellingan-Timmer (2004:30), middle management is responsible for the implementation of policies and plans in individual departments in an organisation. These responsibilities include the different functions of the organisation, which are the marketing function, the financial function, the production function, the purchasing function, the human resource function, the public relations function, the management function as well as the research and development function (De J Cronje & Smit, 1999:15-16). It is imperative that all these functions work properly otherwise the organization will not function optimally. HEI’s as organisations are currently subsidized on lower levels by the National Department of Education than before which may restrict the management of the mentioned functional areas.

### 3.1 Research questions:

The above mentioned problems lead the researcher to the formulation of the following research questions:

- Which, if any, restricting factors can be identified in each functional area of middle management?
- Do some of the restricting factors on a particular functional area correspond with restricting factors on other functional areas?
- How do these potential restricting factors influence the functioning of a particular functional area?
- How do these restrictions influence the functioning of the entire HEI?
- Which solutions may minimize the undesirable impact that these restricting factors have on middle management?

## 4 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research is to identify restricting factors and/or problems in the functional areas of middle management in HEI's and to investigate the impact thereof on the functioning of these areas of middle management.

The following objectives should be realized in the study:

- To identify potentially restrictive factors on each of the functional areas in middle management.
- To investigate whether some of the restricting factors on a certain functional area correlate with restricting factors on other functional areas.
- To determine the influence that restricting factors may have on the functioning of specified functional areas.
- To determine the influence that restricting factors may have on the functioning of the HEI as a whole.
- To establish whether solutions can be found which may potentially lessen the impact restricting factors has on middle management.

## 5 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a substantial body of literature available on the topics covered by the fields of human resource management, management, educational management as well as organisational behaviour. According to Brevis *et al* (2007:9) the definition of management is the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the resources of the organisation to predetermined stated organisational goals as productively as possible. George and Jones (1999:10) agree when they allude that management is the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling an organisation's human, financial, material and other resources to increase its effectiveness. It is clear that planning, organizing, leading and controlling are the main managerial functions.

The management function reveals three hierarchical levels: top level management, middle level management (the focus of this study), and finally, lower level management (Bellingan-Timmer, 2004:30). Top management is responsible to the owners of the business for the outcome of their decision making, middle management has a responsibility to top management for the implementation of policy within their respective departments, and lower management, or supervision, reports to middle management on the day to day running of departments.

In this study, however, the focus will be on the functional tasks of the middle management team in an HEI. Middle management is concerned with the near future and is therefore responsible for medium- and short-term planning, the organising of functional areas, leadership by departmental heads, and controlling of management activities in the middle managers' own departments (De J Cronje & Smit, 1999:13). Middle managers additionally have to continually monitor environmental influences that may affect their departments (Brevis *et al*, 2007: 13).

The type of activity managed may also influence the classification of managers. According to Brevis *et al* (2007:14-15) there are eight separate areas of management, or so-called functional areas:

- The general management function which includes monitoring of the management process as a whole;
- The marketing function that entails the marketing of the products and services of the organisation;
- The financial function which includes the acquisition, utilization and control of the money the organisation needs in order to finance its activities and to buy materials and equipment;
- The production or operations management function includes the group of activities concerned with the physical production of products, as well as the monitoring of problems related to the supply of services;
- The purchasing function entails the acquisition of materials and products required for the business to function profitably;
- The research and development function is responsible for developing new products and improving existing products;
- The human resource function entails the appointment, development and maintenance of the human resources in the organisation, and
- The public relations function of an organisation which endeavors to create a favourable, objective image of the organisation and to establish good relations with those involved directly or indirectly.

In each of the abovementioned management functions, problems may arise that make the area difficult to manage. Problems arise whenever managers observe a discrepancy between what has taken place and what they have planned (Brevis *et al* 2007:144). Such problems may lead to certain restrictions on successful management of the functional areas in HEI's.

## **6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **6.1 The design**

The researcher will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in this study. According to Mason (2002:1) the use of qualitative research allows the researcher to learn from participants' perspectives and personal experiences. Qualitative research is naturalistic inquiry, the use of non-interfering data and collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them. Most qualitative research describes and analyses social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:291). Quantitative research presents statistical results represented with numbers, while qualitative research presents facts in a narration with words (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:15).

This study will also employ a case study approach. Ragin (1992:13) explains that a case study may comprise an event such as organizational change, or aspects that may hamper the functionality of an institution. Shaw (1999:135) explains that case studies are flexible and multi-purpose, and that they may be descriptive, exploring and providing portraits of little known entities, which may be persons, situations or institutions.

## **6.2 Data collection**

The instruments to be used in this study include questionnaires as well as semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires, according to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:46), encompass a variety of instruments in which the subject responds to written questions to elicit reactions, beliefs, and attitudes. The researcher chooses or constructs a set of appropriate questions and asks the respondent to answer them.

The questionnaires will consist of both open and closed ended questions. Information will be gathered from middle managers of the various functional areas, as well as staff members in the different departments. This will allow the researcher to identify certain trends as well as possible solutions that may be forthcoming from the data.

The questionnaires will assist the researcher in getting answers without meeting the participants, thus saving a lot of time. The data collected in this way may also be safeguarded for future analysis if needed (Salkind, 2003). The questionnaires are answered anonymously which should elicit more honest responses.

### **6.3 Population and sample**

A population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:164). The population of this study will be the middle managers in the various functional areas of the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT, FS).

A sample is a group of participants selected from the population, or it may simply refer to the group of subjects from which the data is collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:164). Delport, De Vos, Fouchè and Strydom (2005:82) state that a sample is a small representation of the whole, and that the basic considerations in sampling are size and representativeness. The researcher will make use of purposeful sampling, where the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative of the topic at hand (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:171). The sample for this study will be staff members in the middle management section of each of the functional areas at the CUT, FS.

### **6.4 Data analysis**

The obtained information will be analyzed carefully to identify possible patterns and trends that may occur. The aim of research is to “*bring everything together,*” meaning that the collected data must be interpreted to identify common patterns and points (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:164).

## **7 DELIMITATION OF STUDY**

The study will resort under Educational Management and will be restricted to the CUT, FS.

## **8 DEFINITION OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS**

### **8.1 Management**

According to Brevis *et al* (2007:9) the definition of management is the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the resources of the organisation to predetermined stated organisational goals as productively as possible. George and Jones (1999:10) support this statement when they allude that management is the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling an organisation's human, financial, material and other resources to increase its effectiveness. It is clear that planning, organizing, leading and controlling are the main managerial functions.

### **8.2 Middle management**

Middle management is concerned with the near future and is therefore responsible for medium- and short-term planning, the organizing of functional areas, leading by means of departmental heads, and controlling the management activities of the middle managers' own departments (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:13).

Middle management has a responsibility to top management for the implementation of policy within their department. Middle management also has to control the function of the day to day running of departments which implies that lower management reports to middle management in this regard. Middle managers have to continually monitor environmental influences that may affect their own departments (Brevis *et al*, 2007: 13).

### **8.3 Functional areas**

The type of activity managed may also influence the classification of managers. According to Brevis et al (2007:14-15), there are eight different areas of management, or so-called functional areas:

- The general management function, including an monitoring of the management process as a whole;
- The marketing function that entails the marketing of the products and services of the organisation;
- The financial function which includes the acquisition, utilization and control of the money the organisation needs to finance its activities and to buy materials and equipment;
- The production or operations management function includes the group of activities concerned with the physical production of products, as well as the monitoring of problems related to the supply of services;
- The purchasing function entails the acquisition of materials and products required for the business to function profitably;
- The research and development function is responsible for the development of new products and improvement of existing products;
- The human resource function entails the appointment, development and maintenance of the human resources in the organisation, and
- The public relations function of an organisation is to create a favourable, objective image of the organisation and to establish good relations with those involved directly or indirectly.

## **9 PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

### **Chapter 1:**

Introduction to the research, including all definitions of different concepts and ideas, the significance of the study, statement of the problem (in terms of research questions), study delimitations and limitations, as well as the research methodology.

### **Chapter 2:**

Existing research data as well as the relevant literature on management in general and middle management in particular, will be reviewed.

**Chapter 3:**

The research design, data collection techniques, sample of the study as well as the procedures to be followed will be dealt with in this chapter.

**Chapter 4:**

This chapter will report on the data collection and analysis.

**Chapter 5:**

In the final chapter the research findings will be discussed, recommendations will be made and relevant conclusions will be reached.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on organizational management, and it should be kept in mind that the overview below may relate both to business concerns and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

#### **2.2 THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT**

The existence and survival of an individual, and, for that matter, a company or organization, have always depended on the ability of that individual or organization to control the environment in which it exists. That person or organization should overcome certain threats and obstacles that cross its path by following simple, pre-constructed plans. A threatening situation must thus be managed in order to ensure the continuation of the person or organization. The threat may not always be the same; therefore, there should be continuous adaptation to complexity and change (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:3).

The realization that HEIs have been regarded as organizations for a long time is important within the context of this study. According to Van der Westhuizen (2002:79), supported by Flood and Heffernan (2000:128-129), HEIs can be seen as organizations or businesses as they share a number of characteristics, which are as follows:

- both have a particular composition and structure;
- both consist of more than one person with prescribed and differentiated tasks;
- both are constituted to achieve specific aims and objectives;

- both are managed to achieve its objectives;
- both are exposed to external influences;
- both can be characterised by coordinated activities, and
- both are characterised by collective activities.

According to Brevis *et al* (2007:9), the definition of management is the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the resources of the organization to predetermined stated organizational goals as productively as possible. George and Jones (1999:10) support this statement when they allude to the fact that management is the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling an organization's human, financial, material and other resources to increase its effectiveness. It is clear that planning, organising, leading and controlling are the main managerial functions. These functions will be discussed in more detail under 2.3.

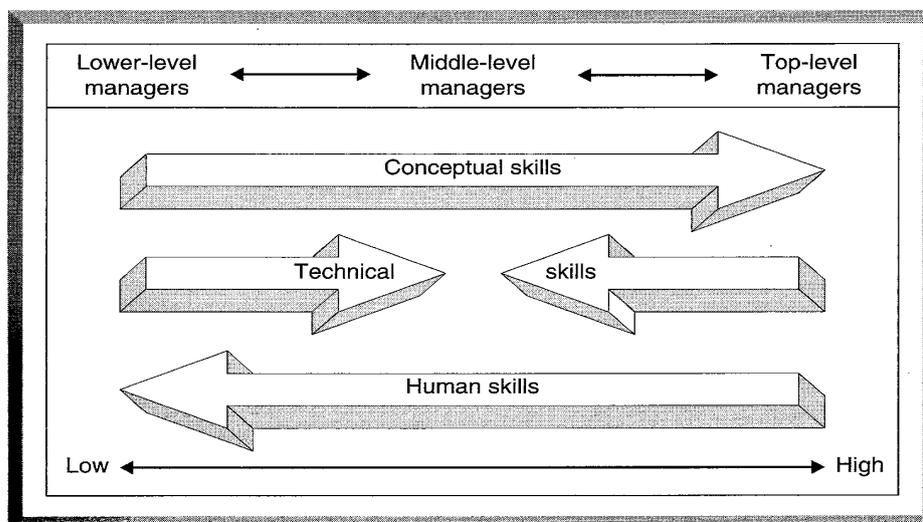
Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:484) state that managers provide information which must be understood, give instructions and commands that should be obeyed and learned, and that they make efforts to persuade and influence, which must be accepted and acted on. It is thus clear that management, and the way that they communicate, is crucial to obtain effective performance. Certo (2003:6) says that the term management can be used to refer to the process that managers follow to accomplish organizational goals, and to the individuals that guide and direct organizations as well as to a career devoted to the task of guiding and directing organizations.

The management function differentiates three main hierarchical levels: top level management, middle level management (this study's focus), and lower level management (Bellingan-Timmer 2004:30). Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:50) assert that top management typically consists of a small cadre of managers who are usually responsible to the owners of the business/organization for the outcome of their decision making. Middle management has a responsibility to the top management for the implementation of policy within their respective departments and lower management, or supervision, is responsible to the middle management for the day to day running of a particular department.

In this study, however, the focus will be on the functional tasks of middle management in an HEI. Middle management is concerned with medium- and short-term planning, the organising of functional areas, leading by means of departmental heads, and controlling the management activities of the middle managers' own departments (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:13). Middle managers also have to continually monitor environmental influences that may affect their own departments (Brevis et al, 2007:13). Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:50) state that middle managers plan, organize, lead and control the activities of other managers, for example first line managers, yet they are subject to the managerial efforts of a superior. Coulter and Robbins (2002:667) further explain that middle managers are the managers between the top level and the first line level of the organization, and that they manage the work of the first line managers. Management skills and roles of the different levels of management are discussed in the next sub-section.

### 2.2.1 Management skills and roles

**Figure 1: Basic management skills**



Source: Bennet and Nieman (2005:86)

It is generally accepted that three main skills are necessary to be an effective manager: conceptual, which includes decision-making and problem solving; technical, which includes administration, and lastly, human skills, which

include communication (Bennet & Nieman 2005:85). These skills are essential for managers to fulfill their managerial roles (management tasks). Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:51) support the just mentioned when they state that managers should have a variety of skills, including technical skills, analytical skills, decision making skills, computer skills, human relation skills, communication skills as well as conceptual skills. These skills are learned and developed, and they are vital to the empowerment of an individual to perform management roles. A few of these skills will be briefly discussed.

#### **2.2.1.1 Conceptual skills**

Conceptual skills refer to the ability to understand abstract ideas in order to make decisions whereby different alternatives are selected to solve problems. De J Cronje and Smit (1999:19) are of the opinion that conceptual skills involve the manager's thinking and planning abilities as well as the manager's ability to think holistically. The individual's ability to understand the organization as a whole and to grasp its interrelationship is emphasized. Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:51) state that conceptual skills encompass the ability to see the big picture, i.e. the complexities of the organization as a whole, as well as how the various parts fit together. They further stress the importance of a thorough knowledge of how each part of the organization is interrelated and contributes to the overall objectives of the organization. Coulter and Robbins (2002:11) state that these are the skills managers should possess in order to allow them to think and conceptualize about abstract and complex situations.

#### **2.2.1.2 Technical skills**

According to Coulter and Robbins (2002:11) technical skills refer to the ability to use methods, processes as well as techniques to perform a task. Successful managers need to use specific knowledge, techniques and resources to be able to perform the task at hand. These skills, according to Blandford (1997:63), comprise the abilities to use specific knowledge, techniques and resources to perform work. They add that these skills are important at especially the lower level management as they should help solve

daily work-related problems and additionally serve as a means of empowering the individual. Baskin, Heiman, Lattimore, Toth and Van Leuven (2004:362) state that these skills refer to the ability to use the knowledge or techniques of a particular discipline to attain objectives. Technical skills allow workers to make use of technological advances, for example the internet and e-mail, in order to optimize opportunities which may arise. They go on to say that an effective manager at a lower level should have sound knowledge of these skills in order to supervise effectively since time spent on technical activities might otherwise have been utilized to make progress up the managerial ladder.

### **2.2.1.3 Human skills**

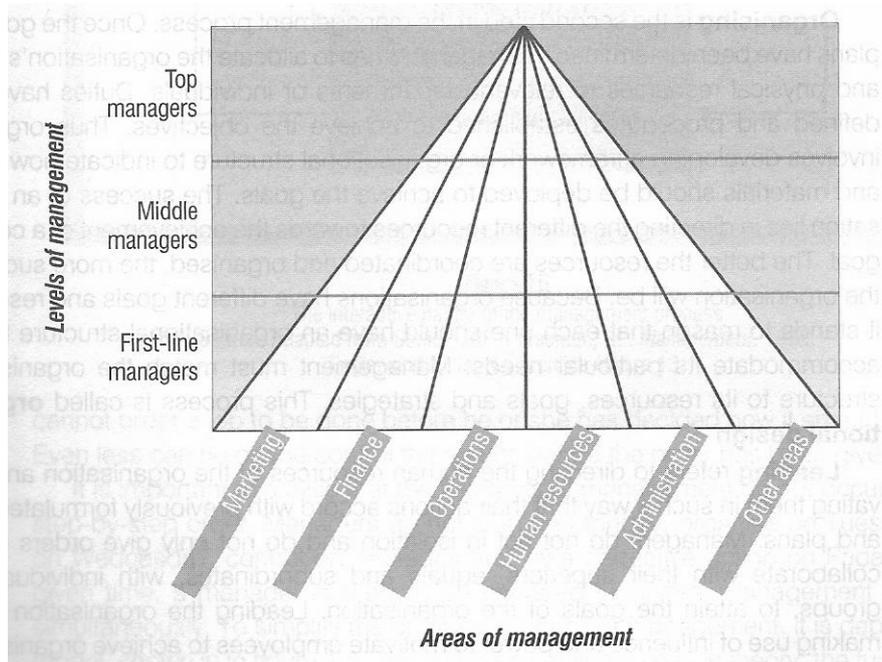
Bisschoff (1997:99) is of the opinion that the very essence of a successful manager is found in sound human skills, which boils down to the abilities to offer good guidance, exemplary leadership as well as effective two-way communication with fellow staff members. Human skills refer to a person's ability to work with people in teams. Communication skills, according to Baskin *et al* (2004:5–6), are essential aiding human skills without which an individual cannot be an effective team member or manager. These authors also state that managers should improve their relationships with other parties in order to manage workforce diversity, change and conflict amongst employees. According to them proper human skills will allow managers at all levels to motivate and evaluate the performance of their employees.

Coulter and Robbins (2002:11) are of the opinion that human skills involve the ability to work well with people – both individually as well as in a group. They further state that the human skill is crucial because managers deal on a daily basis with the very people that perform the work in the organization. According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:51) the human relations skill is essential at every organizational level of management because managers can only accomplish their goals through the efforts of other people. This stresses the importance of the manager's ability to communicate which in turn can be viewed as a reflection of his management abilities.

## 2.2.2 Management levels

The organizational structure of an organization reflects the management levels in an organization. The three main levels of management generally include top managers, middle managers and then first-line managers.

**Figure 2: Areas of management**



Source: (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:13)

An HEI must function within an organizational structure, implying that there must be an understanding and delegation of authority within the organization from a high level of management to a lower level, as is depicted in Figure 1. Campher, Du Preez, Grobler, Looek and Shaba (2003:32) explain that the concept of authority goes hand in hand with responsibility, and consequently persons higher in the hierarchy will have more responsibility than persons lower in the structure. The different levels of management will now be discussed.

### 2.2.2.1 Top managers

Schein (1999:12) identifies three levels of organizational culture that has an influence on the success of the organization, that is artifacts, shared values, and finally shared basic assumptions. The author continues by explaining that the third aspect, namely shared basic assumptions, is important to organizational survival since it is expected that the members of the organization should feel the same about the survival of the organization. It is of critical importance for top or senior management to focus on the third level which is shared basic assumptions. If the basic assumptions of the organization stagnate no progress will be made. However, if senior management look and strive for innovative assumptions the organization will prosper.

De J Cronje and Smit (1999:13) state that top management is the relatively small group of managers who are in control of the company/organization/institution and with whom the final authority and responsibility for the execution of management processes rest. Top managers take responsibility for the overall direction of the institution, including the development of the vision and mission, long term goals, policies, as well as all strategies within the organization. According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:87), these managers are few in number, and their typical titles include CEO (Chief Executive Officer), MD (Managing Director), as well as President or Principal. These managers spend most of their day planning and leading with a long-term and future-orientated focus. Most of their time in their leadership role is spent with key people inside as well as outside their organization.

Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:51) state that top management is responsible for the performance of the entire institution with the co-operation of the middle managers. They go on to say that top-level managers are dependent on the work of all subordinates to follow the vision and accomplish the goals of the organization. Young (2000:2) adds that strategy formation, authority and influence, motivation, management control, conflict management as well as customer and client control are also functions of top management. Top management relies heavily on a group of middle managers, which will now be discussed.

### 2.2.2.2 Middle managers

Middle management will only be discussed briefly in the sub-section below, as all the functional areas resorting under middle management will be described in detail further on in this chapter.

Floyd and Wooldridge (1992:153), supported by Bennet and Nieman (2005:88), state that middle managers receive broad, generic strategies from top managers and translate them into actions for first-level managers to implement. They carry names such as Programme Head, Head of Department, Director, as well as functional titles such as Marketing Manager. Campher *et al* (2003:37) explain that middle management is responsible for specific departments of the organization or institution, and that they are primarily concerned with the implementation of policies, plans and strategies formulated and delegated to them by top management. Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:50) support the above saying that middle management plan, lead, organize and control the activities of other managers.

In large organizations, middle managers must focus on coordinating employee activities, determining which products or services to provide, taking decisions on how to manufacture these products as well deciding how to market these products or services. The type of activity managed may also influence the classification of managers. The division of work according to the type of work done is known as departmentalisation. Functional departmentalisation refers to the grouping of jobs according to the functions they perform within the institution or organization (Coulter & Robbins, 2002:257). According to Brevis *et al* (2007:14-15) and supported by Brink, Jooste, Machado and Strydom (2006:24 – 25), as well as Badenhorst, Hugo and Van Rooyen (2000:4–5), there are eight different areas of management, or so-called functional areas:

- The general management function, which includes the management process as a whole, as well as the activities of people in managerial positions. The people in these positions have to plan, lead, organize, as well as control the business in the first place as a whole, and secondly as individual functions.
- The marketing function that entails the marketing of the products and services of the organization, generating an income for the organization from sales or services (as is the case with an HEI), and which is additionally responsible for the management of the marketing process.
- The financial function which includes the acquisition, utilization and control of the money which the organization needs to finance its activities, such as buying materials and equipment and paying the salaries of its human resources. The main activities of this function are the acquisition as well as application of funds for the profitability, liquidity, solvency as well as continuity of the business.
- The production or operations management function includes the group of activities concerned with the physical production of products, as well as the handling of problems related to the supply of services (in the case of an HEI);
- The purchasing function entails the acquisition of materials and products required for the business to function profitably which means that the materials necessary for the organization to produce goods or services should be bought at the right place, at the right time and at the right price.
- The research and development function is responsible for developing new products and improving old products besides gaining insight and collecting information on new trends and methods available for the production of goods or services,
- The human resource function entails the appointment, development and maintenance of the human resources in the organization implying the acquisition, training, utilization as well as retention of a sufficient number of competent employees,
- The public relations function of an organization endeavors to create a favourable, objective image of the organization and to establish good relations with those involved directly or indirectly, maintaining and

cultivating this image among those whose opinion directly bears upon the achievement of the objectives of the company.

In each of the above-mentioned management functions problems may arise hampering the management of the area. Problems exist whenever managers have perceived a discrepancy between what has actually taken place and what they have planned to happen (Brevis *et al* 2007:144). Such problems may lead to certain restrictions on the successful management of the functional areas in HEI's.

It is a management task to combine, allocate, coordinate and deploy resources or inputs in such a way that the organization's goals are achieved as productively as possible (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:9).

The different functional areas will be discussed later on in this chapter.

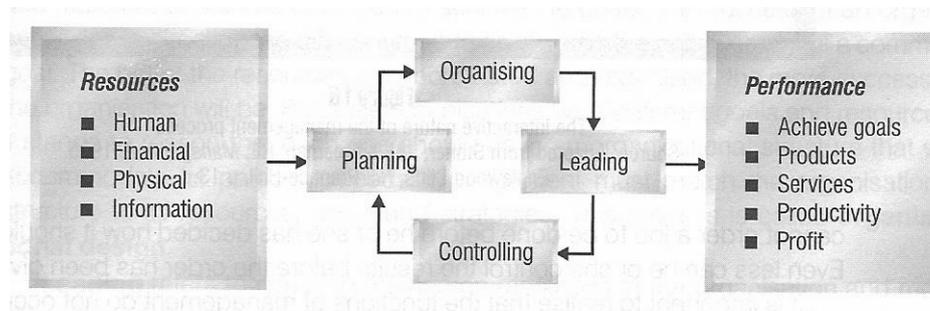
### **2.2.2.3 First-level managers/First-line managers**

First level managers take responsibility for the production of goods and services. Non-managerial employees report to them and they are responsible for the basic processes of production or service provision. A first level manager is typically called a supervisor (Bennet & Nieman 2005:88). Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:50) state that these managers are responsible for the basic work in the organization according to the plans of their superior/s. These managers are in daily contact with their subordinates and they are usually assigned the job because of their fine people's skills. De J Cronje and Smit (1999:13) are of the opinion that the first level managers are responsible for even smaller segments of the organization called subsections. Lower management includes supervisors and foremen.

The first functional area of management to be discussed is the general management function.

## 2.3 GENERAL MANAGEMENT

**Figure 3: The four fundamental management functions constituting the management process**



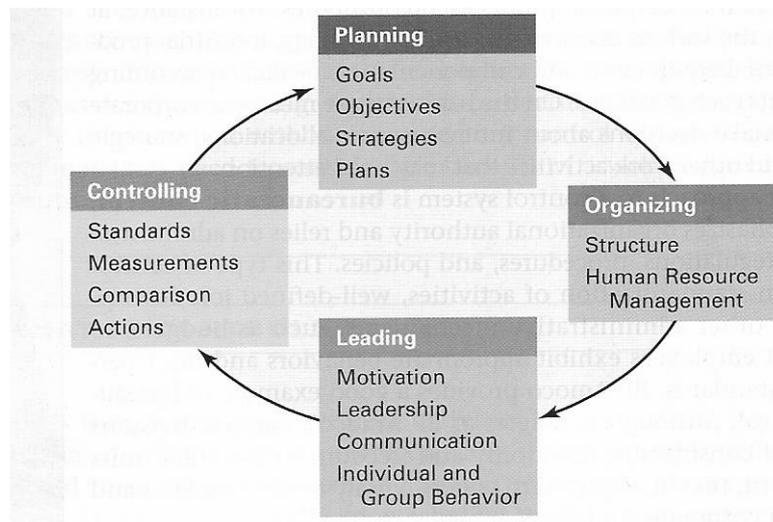
Source: (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:9).

Coulter and Robbins (2002:667) define general management as the process of coordinating work activities to ensure that they are completed effectively and efficiently with and through other people. According to Pettinger (1997:1), the definition of management varies between that of a science, a profession or an art, and its status is to be found somewhere in-between. He goes on to say that managers should have a good grasp on certain quantitative methods as well as financial and statistical data, over and above knowledge of less scientific elements such as motivation.

General management refers to the basic management tasks conducted by all managers, irrespective of their management level, nature of specialization or the specific role that they play in the value chain (Bennet & Nieman 2005:85). The ideal manager should continuously develop his management skills in order to be able to fulfill the main management functions which are the abilities to plan, organize, lead and control. These functions can only be

successful when secondary management tasks, for example motivation, communication and decision making are executed properly.

**Figure 4: The planning-controlling link**



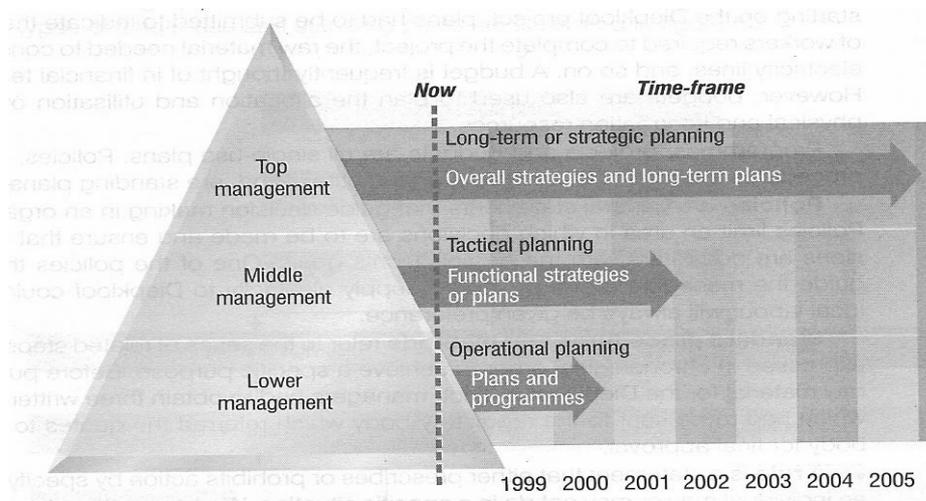
Source: (Coulter & Robbins, 2002:498)

Figure 3 clearly shows how the different aspects of management, that is to say planning, organising, leading and controlling, fit together. The goals of each of these aspects are also shown. Each of the aspects of management (planning, organising, leading and control) will subsequently be discussed below showing their importance within the organization.

### **2.3.1 Planning**

Bratton and Gold (2004:193) agree that planning represents the precise and unified articulation of an organization's strategy which is a result of a rational consideration of the various issues that might affect the performance of the organization in the future, all of which ultimately informs the decision towards the relevant action to be taken.

**Figure 5: The levels and time-frames of plans**



Source: (Badenhorst, Hugo & Van Rooyen 1999:67)

Planning, according to De J Cronje and Smit (1999:11), is the first step in the management process and it involves the organization's mission and goals. Planning further entails the determination of the future position of the organization, as well as the strategies needed to reach that position – hence the activities of an organization cannot be performed at random, but should follow a specific, logical scientific method or plan. Coulter and Robbins (2002:669) postulate that planning is a process focused on the organization's goals which entails an overall strategy for achieving these goals plus the process of developing a comprehensive set of plans to integrate and coordinate organizational work.

Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:55) state that management should be able to cope with and adapt to change and uncertainty, and that proper planning will assist managers in coping with an ever changing environment (such as the higher education landscape). They further explain that if an organization fails

to plan, such an organization will have to rely on defensive reactions instead of planned actions which would compel that management to respond to current pressures instead of focusing on long-term needs that the organization might have.

Bailey, Farmer, Jessop and Jones (1998:41) explain that planning is the fundamental element of management that predetermines what the organization proposes to accomplish as well as how it is to be accomplished. They further state that planning is related to divisional, departmental and individual goals as well as the incorporation of the selection of appropriate strategies and set tactics to obtain specific goals. Certo (2003:124) states that the systematic planning and development of action plans and programmes are necessary to reach set goals. Diverse goals require different types of planning, which is discussed in the following sub-section.

### **2.3.1.1 Types of planning**

The first type of planning to be discussed is **strategic planning**. According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:56) strategic planning is a process that involves a review of market conditions, customer needs, competitive strengths as well as weaknesses, socio-political, legal and economic conditions, technological development, and the availability of resources that lead to specific threats or opportunities that face the organization in an internal and external environment that change rapidly. Strategic planning includes the development of a vision, a mission statement and long term objectives. This is achieved by considering the norms, values, and philosophy of management and employees of the organization, its internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats in the organization's business environment (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:140).

In the strategic process, the top or executive management develops the long term plans, and the middle and first-level managers develop the tactical (medium term) and operational (short term) plans so as to accomplish these objectives. Coulter and Robbins (2002:672) assert that strategic planning applies to the entire organization ensuring that the overall goals are embraced

by all employees of that organization and taking cognizance of where the organization seeks to position itself in terms of its environment.

Fulop, Lilley and Linstead (2004:200-202) define **functional planning** as medium-term planning carried out by middle management in cooperation with top level management, thus enabling the various functional departments to realize their objectives which were derived from long-term goals. These plans, formulated by top management to be executed within an extended time-frame of usually more than five years, focus on the entire organization (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:119).

**Operational plans** have short-term objectives that should be met in less than a year. Middle and first-level managers as a rule develop these operational plans. Examples include equipment maintenance, upgrading of small systems, changing floor plans, and so forth. De J Cronje and Smit (1999:121) define operational planning as the plans that are developed by middle and lower managers which aims at the execution of tactical plans in order to reach operational goals. Coulter and Robbins (2002:668) explain operational planning as plans that specify the details of how the overall goals are to be achieved.

The discussion of *planning* as the first aspect of management is followed below by the next aspect, which is *organising*.

### **2.3.2 Organising**

According to Bateman and Snell (2007:17), organising can be seen as the second step in the management process. Management has to allocate human and physical resources to relevant persons and departments once the goals and objectives have been defined so as to ensure that the objectives will be achieved. McNamara (2008:online) explains organising as a management function that involves the process of determining which tasks are at hand, who should be assigned to which tasks and how the tasks should be grouped. It entails, moreover, who should report to whom as well as where decisions are to be taken. Bennet and Nieman (2005:93) state that organising entails the

structuring of activities by way of employing certain organising concepts to facilitate the attainment of objectives. These organising concepts are:

**Unity of command:** Each employee should report to one boss only to which he is directly responsible. Problems associated with communication, production and motivation can arise if managers are not clear on who takes responsibility for which task. Unity of command clarifies areas of responsibility and makes clear who is responsible to whom (De J Cronje & Smit, 1999:231).

**Chain of command:** The chain of command refers to the clear line of authority that runs from top management to the first level of management, including non-managerial employees of an organization (Rozek, 2005:online).

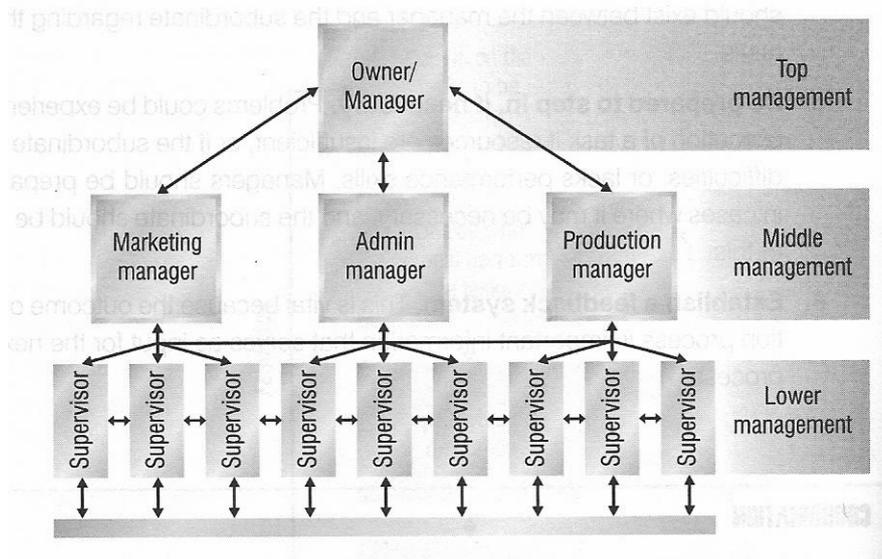
**Span of control:** The number of employees that report to a particular manager is referred to as the span of control. The greater the number of employees reporting to a certain manager, the wider the span of control and *vice versa*. Chocron and Steigerwald (2008:1) continue that the span of control determines the complexity of a manager's task since only a restricted number of people can be effectively managed. Coulter and Robbins (2002:260) state that span of control is important for any organization (also HEIs) as it determines the number of levels and managers an organization has.

**Division of labour:** According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:93), specialization becomes more pronounced as one moves down the organization's hierarchy. Employees have specialized jobs and related functions are grouped together under a specific manager. Hooker (1999:online) explains this concept as the breakdown of jobs into narrow and repetitive tasks.

**Coordination:** Coordination requires conceptual skills in order to understand the more profound relation which exists between employees, teams, departments and the greater organization. All departments and individuals within an organization should work together to accomplish the strategic, tactical and organizational objectives and plans (Fulop *et al* 2004:279-281).

This statement is supported by De J Cronje and Smit (1999:253) who define coordination as the synthesis of separate parts to form a unity. They add that it denotes the integration of objections and tasks at all levels and of all departments and functions so as to enable the organization to work as a whole (Figure 5).

**Figure 6: Relationships within an organization that needs to be coordinated**



Source: (De J Cronje & Smit 1999:254)

**Responsibility and authority:** According to Koortzen and Wrogemann (2003:86) all employees should be given the authority needed to meet their responsibilities and should be held accountable for meeting them, thus necessitating the need to clearly outline each employee's responsibility and authority. Authority and responsibility should go hand in hand – meaning that when a task is assigned to a subordinate, he should be granted full authority to perform the task. Yukl (2001: 3) states that authority refers to the rights that are inherent to a managerial position which empowers a manager to direct employees what to do and expect them comply. Managers coordinate and integrate the work of employees and they in turn accept the obligation to perform the given tasks - a principle known as responsibility.

**Delegation:** Delegation refers to the process of assigning responsibility and authority in order to accomplishing objectives. Responsibility and authority are delegated from top management down to other levels of management. Mbatha, Grobler and Loock (2006:4) state that delegation is the process whereby a manager assigns a portion of his or her total workload to other employees, consequently delegating some authority as well. Pettinger (1997:330) explains delegation as “getting your work done through others”, adding that the delegation of work affords managers the opportunity to concentrate on their primary duties.

**Flexibility:** Organizations function in a fluid environment which means that there will always be exceptions to the rule. Provision should therefore be made for a possible change of plan. According to Von Krosigk (2007:27), flexibility entails the continuous revision of practices, rules, guidelines and policies to allow change with minimum disruption. Flexibility can accommodate change and it views timeous adjustments in objectives or plans not as deviations, but as revised objectives or plans.

Leadership provides the glue for the combination of all the mentioned aspects of organising.

### **2.3.3 Leading/Leadership**

This function refers to the direction of the human resources of the organization motivating them perform their actions in harmony with previously formulated goals. In an organization (such as an HEI) leading means to use influence and power to motivate employees to achieve organizational goals (Crous, 2005:3). Coulter and Robbins (2002:458) explain leadership as a process of influencing a group towards the achievement of goals. Leadership, according to Bennet and Nieman (2005:99), is the process of influencing employees in order to motivate them to perform in such a way that the organizational objectives can be achieved. Secondary management tasks, such as communication and motivation, are performed by effective leaders to influence their diverse employees. Cameron and Whetten (1998:14) state that managers cannot be successful without being good leaders, and good leaders

cannot be successful without being good managers, as these two concepts are inseparable.

According to Anderson, Leithwood, Louis and Wahlstrom (2004:6) different forms of leadership are described in the literature by making use of adjectives such as instructional, participative, democratic, transformational, moral and strategic. These different types of leadership are not going to be discussed in detail as they primarily denote different stylistic or methodological approaches to the accomplishment of the two objectives essential to any organization's effectiveness: helping the organization to plan a set of directions and secondly, influencing employees to move in those directions.

### **2.3.3.1 Leadership factors**

**Motivation:** Motivation is defined by Roberts (2005:14) as a set of processes concerned with the force that energises behaviour and directs it towards attaining some goal. Motivation represents those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed. If it is the role of managers to successfully guide employees toward accomplishing organizational objectives, it is imperative that they understand these psychological processes. Motivation can be explained as an influence that causes and sustains goal-directed behavior. People differ, and a manager needs to know and understand what motivates the employees to ensure that they deliver work of a high standard (De J Cronje & Smit, 1999:306). Blandford (1997:29-31) explains that motivation is the pivotal aspect to the management of staff. The author further states that it is of great significance to middle management to have the knowledge, understanding and experience of providing staff with meaningful work.

Employees may work very hard and be very enthusiastic. However, if their efforts do not contribute to the attainment of the organization's goals the organization might be better off if they were sitting idle. It is therefore paramount that managers and supervisors know what they expect from their employees. Their expectations should be formulated in terms of the goals set for the organization. Identifying the goals for the organization is usually done during strategic planning (Heathfield, 2008:online). Whichever steps are taken

to motivate employees, care should be taken that employees make strong inputs in identifying their goals and that these goals are aligned with the goals of the organization.

**Communication:** Balarin (2006:9) states that communication and management are two concepts which have existed since humans began organising their world more efficiently. Although these concepts have not often been studied as two different aspects of the same process, they are nevertheless inextricably intertwined because man's struggle to organize his world has occurred, undeniably, through the medium of language.

Communication is the core supportive management task to all individuals within an organization because without clear communication, nobody will be clear on what is expected of them. De J Cronje and Smit (1999:331) state that communication forms an integral part of all management functions because without communication, no planning, leading, organising and controlling can take place, consequently making the motivation of subordinates near impossible.

**Groups and teams:** Leaders should display the leadership style appropriate to a particular situation. When dealing with a large group, formal, autocratic leadership is in order seeing that direction needs to be provided. Bennet and Nieman (2005:102) assert that managers tend to be more informal when working with small and intimate groups. Teams and groups require both understanding and management if an effective work environment is to be created. Groups that are both positive and productive and which contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organization, should be created.

Groups are the backbone of an organization taking account of their responsibility for attaining the goals of different departments, and therefore, ultimately, the organization's goals (Pettinger 1997:65). Dealing with a group is a difficult managerial task since individuals tend to behave differently in a group compared to when they act individually.

**Culture and diversity:** Globalisation is a concept that becomes more and more apparent in the workplace daily. According to Lancaster, Mabaso, Meyer and Nenungwi (2004:2) organizations are forced to approach business with an external focus because business partnerships extend across regional, national and continental borders. According to them international standards are becoming the norm. Employers are confronted employees who have dissimilar cultural and ethnical backgrounds.

The complexities of multicultural workforces were usually ignored by management in the past although it should definitely be considered for future success in business. HEIs as organizations employ a variety of staff and equity policies ensure that staff (and students) reflect the diversity of the South African population.

Planning and organising are followed by the next step in the process: control, which means ascertaining whether management's plans had been successfully implemented.

#### **2.3.4 Control**

The controlling function consists of decisions and actions undertaken by managers to ensure that there is a correlation between the actual outcome and the desired results. Dessler (1997:2) states that control is *inter alia* the setting of standards which regulates whether actual performance compares with the set goals. Managers should decide in advance what level of performance they expect, or else they will not have any criteria to judge the outcome by (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1999:58). The aim of control is to ensure that performance and action conform to stated plans to attain the predetermined goals. This function enables management to identify and rectify any deviations from the plans, and to take into consideration any factors which might require them to revise the goals and plans (McNamara, 2008:online).

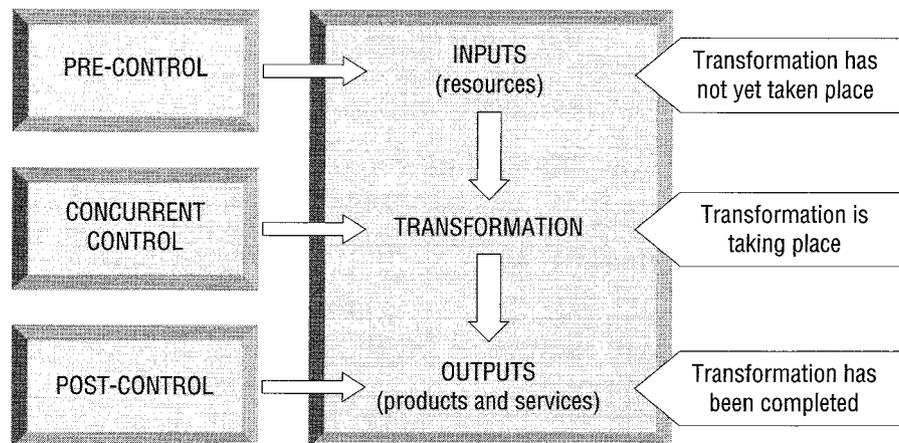
Control has a direct link with the first managerial task, i.e. planning, which allows for effective leadership within the set organizational structure. Control

as a management task further ensures the co-ordination and effective functioning of all the organizational activities so that the formulated organizational objectives are implemented and pursued according to plan.

#### 2.3.4.1 Types of control

Figure 6 below shows three main types of control: pre- or proactive control which focuses on inputs such as human resources, materials, capital, technology and entrepreneurship; concurrent or steering control which highlights the transformation process (which includes the production and service process) and, finally, reactive control, which is the produce or services (Campher *et al*, 2003:18).

**Figure 7: The relationship between control and the transformation process**

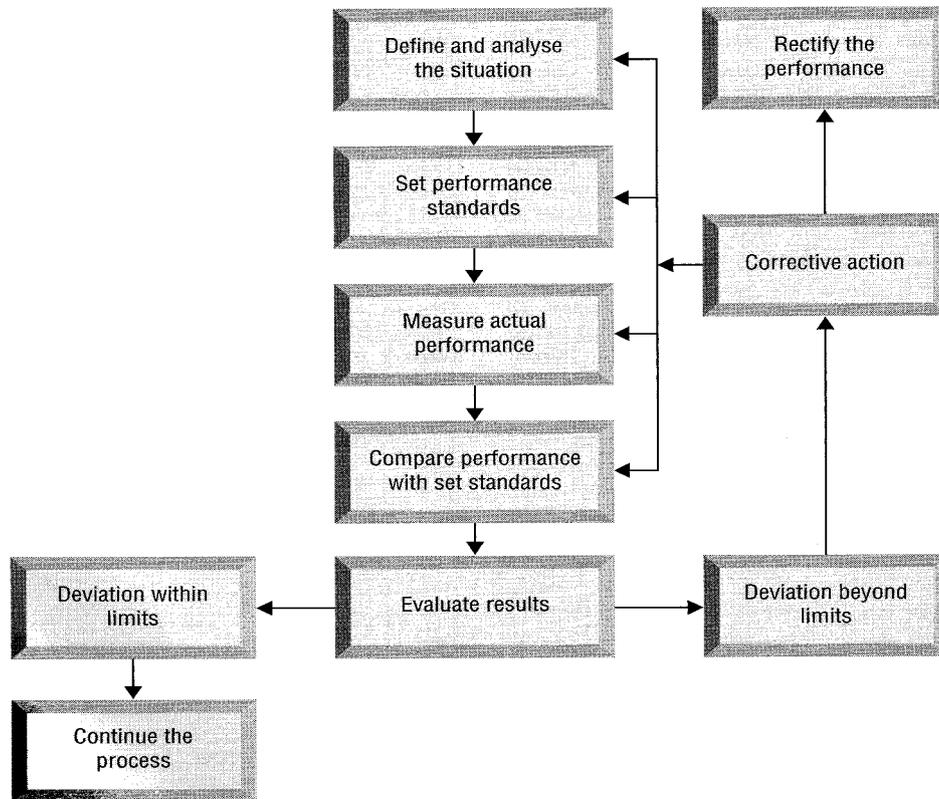


Source: (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:103).

#### 2.3.4.2 The control process

The control process consists of a sequence of steps illustrated below:

**Figure 8: The control process**



Source: (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:104).

The control process illustrated here is crucial to management. First of all, the overall strategy of the business should be identified followed by the identification of a vision and mission (performance standards) which are in congruence with the business strategy. An action plan should be devised which should be put into effect. The performance of the department should then be measured against the set performance standards, after which the results should be evaluated to ascertain whether the action plan should be adjusted in any way. If any deviations are observed, the plan should either be continued if the deviations are within acceptable limits, or re-evaluated and revised in case they go beyond certain set limits (Lancaster *et al*, 2004:3).

### 2.3.4.3 Criteria for effective control

Control must comply with certain criteria in order to be effective. According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:105), some of the criteria involve the following:

- The desired objectives of the organization and the control systems should be linked.
- The control process must be objective in order to eliminate subjectivity.
- When the control measure indicates deviations, suitable corrections should follow.

Ivancevich and Matteson (1999:58) state that control should comply with three basic conditions to be effective. It should have

- standards that reflect the ideal of the outcomes;
- information that indicates deviations between actual and standard results;
- corrective actions for any deviations between actual and standard results.

Badenhorst *et al* (1999:65) further explain that control is the element of management which ensures that the execution of activities goes according to plan and that they remain within set parameters. Without standards there is no way of assessing the actual situation, in which case the entire control process becomes pointless when no measures are available to correct any deviations. De J Cronje and Smit (1999:419) argue that a control system should be designed with the purpose of providing an effective and accurate picture of the situation at hand without concealing any errors and deviations in the data. The deviations and errors should be used to transform the plan into a more functional version.

## **2.4 THE MARKETING FUNCTION**

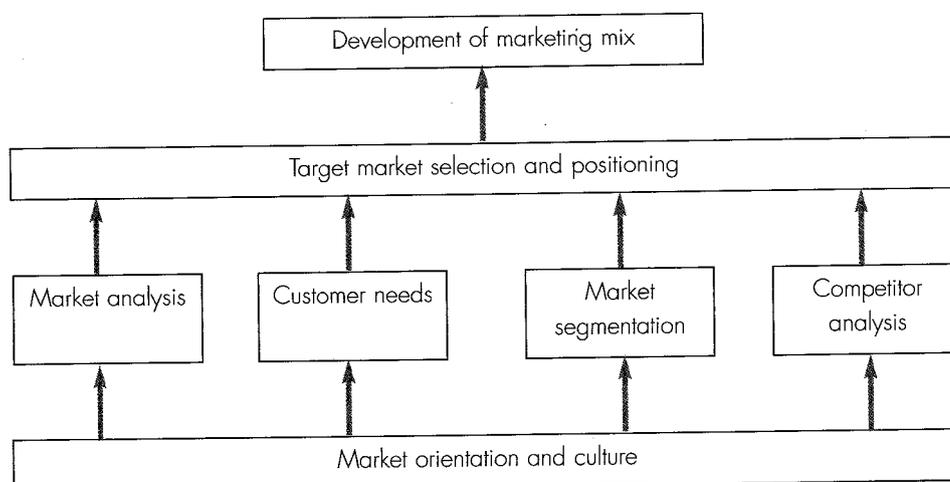
In the following section the marketing function will be discussed.

## 2.4.1 The marketing concept

Brassington and Pettitt (1997:3-5) postulate that marketing covers a wide range of essential business activities which delivers products of choice at affordable prices to consumers when they want it at a location of their choice – concurrently providing them with information that is needed to make informed decisions. These authors continue to say that marketing is a very important management function which needs planning, analysis, resource allocation, control as well as investment in terms of money, skilled personnel and physical resources.

Brink, Jooste, Machado and Strydom (2006:2) state that the main aim of marketing is to facilitate mutually satisfying exchanges between parties, hence a mix of factors including the product, distribution thereof, marketing communication and lastly, pricing. Czinkota, Kotabe and Mercer (1997:2) define marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals. They further state that marketing is driven by the wants and the needs of the client, and that the marketing managers make decisions in congruence with to the needs and the wants of the customers or clients.

**Figure 9: Core analysis for marketing decisions**



Source: (Brink *et al*, 2006:207)

Cant, Jooste and Strydom (2000:4) are of the opinion that marketing has two facets: firstly, it consists of an attitude, philosophy, a perspective, or a management orientation that stresses customer satisfaction, and secondly, it includes a set of activities used to implement this philosophy. According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:159), the marketing concept can be seen as the guiding philosophy of marketing, and it includes five core principles which work together to form the premise on which marketing is built. These principles are discussed below:

#### **2.4.1.1 Customer needs**

Marketing has one main objective: to create and keep profitable customers. In the case of an HEI its main aim would be to find and enroll students for the courses provided by the institution. Cant *et al* (2000:13) state that failing to appreciate the needs of the consumer creates opportunities for competing institutions, which ultimately may adversely affect profits. In order for a business to attract and keep customers it should satisfy their needs better than other businesses. According to Etzel, Stanton, and Walker (1994:168), buying motives can be grouped on three different levels depending on the consumers' awareness thereof as well as their willingness to divulge them. These levels are as follows:

- The conscious need level, where consumers feel comfortable about the needs that they are aware of, for example the brand of a particular product that they prefer.
- The pre-conscious needs level, where consumers are aware of their needs, but will not reveal it to someone else. For example, a consumer might buy a particular product to enhance his self-image.
- Unconscious need level, where consumers cannot explain the underlying subconscious factors motivating their buying action.

According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:159) customer research is needed to stay close to the customer, and to ensure that one knows and understands

the needs of the customer. In the context of an HEI, the programmes that are marketed to the potential customer should address the needs of the customer and secondly, the particular needs of the region or country. Alsbury and Ray (2002:163) argue that consumers have two main reasons for spending their money at a particular organization: first, consumers are interested in a high quality service or product and second, they are interested in the range of products and services offered.

#### **2.4.1.2 Target market focus**

Marketers must focus their attention on a certain segment of the market since all segments cannot be catered for by one business. The focus should be on those segments which have similar needs for their product or service. For instance, an HEI may decide to focus mainly on the school leaver segment to increase its undergraduate programmes. Winer (2000:109) defines the target market as the fragmentation of mass markets into smaller segments which have different buying habits. By doing that, organizations acknowledge the fact that customers differ and that different marketing strategies, such as advertising and product attributes, should be employed to reach these individuals. Cant *et al* (2000:42) says that there are variables in the selection of the target market, the first being its size which means that it can be viewed either as a mass market, a specific market segment, or maybe even a geographical area, whilst the second variable is the characteristics of the target market, divided into age, gender and political views.

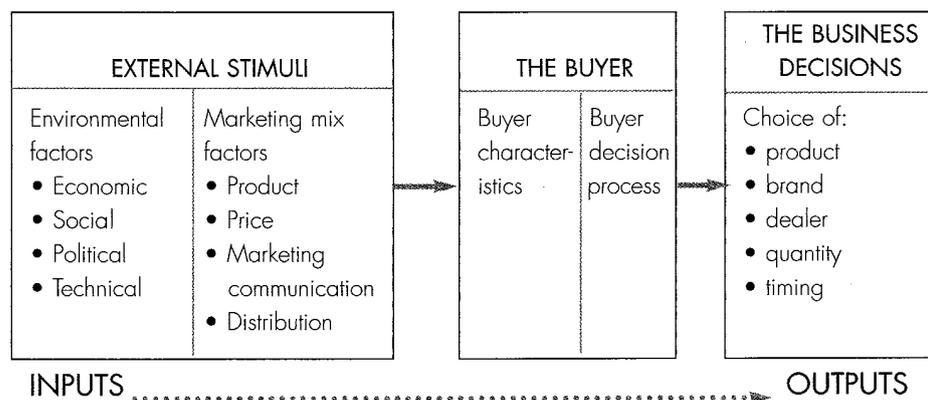
Bennet and Nieman (2005:159) state that a particular focus enables marketers to satisfy the needs of specific market segments. Brink *et al* (2006:1991) hold the opinion that the profitability of an organization, such as an HEI, can be increased through better retention of customers (students) as well as increased loyalty. An organization can be assured of some benefits when a customer is loyal, for example:

- The number of purchases that the customer makes, will increase (i.e. the student may proceed from undergraduate to post-graduate studies);
- The operating costs of the organization will decrease; and

- The customer may refer other individuals to the organization (word of mouth marketing).

The Department responsible for marketing at an HEI will normally focus on marketing the university as a brand, but will also be responsible for internal and external communication with stakeholders in support of the university's endeavours.

**Figure 10: A simple model of buyer behaviour**



Source: (Gilligan & Wilson, 1997:157)

A prospective student may see an advertisement (an external stimulus) of a programme that he/she would like to enroll for at an HEI. The student (the buyer) then thinks about it, and weighs his/her different options (different HEI's) with respect to financing, transport and other factors (the business decision) before making a final choice.

Marketers of organizations, such as HEIs, make use of different techniques to attract their target market: selective attention techniques where colour, repetition as well as size is often used, also selective interpretation techniques which help to ensure that the message they send out cannot be misinterpreted, as well as selective retention techniques, by bargaining that the customer will be able to retrieve relevant information when in contact with the product or while attending a demonstration (Bennet, Grove & Jooste 2000:35–36).

### **2.4.1.3 Integrated marketing**

Integrated marketing is a concept that suggests that all persons in the organization should keep the interest of the client in mind with each and every decision taken. Different departments cannot function independently, as this will influence customer value in a negative sense. This led to the formation of integrative or mixed structures (Fulop *et al* 2004:138-141).

According to Cant *et al* (2000:385) the concept of integrated marketing pertains to the recognition of the value added by a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of disciplines in order to influence customer satisfaction in a positive sense. An HEI should make use of different types of marketing, as it should appeal to both the prospective student as well as the parents of the student, who more than often pay the study fees. The strategy followed should convince both the student and the parent who are essentially different markets, although they are viewed as different entities.

### **2.4.1.4 Profitability**

All businesses and institutions (also HEIs) pursue profitability because without it the venture would fail. Bennet and Nieman (2005:159) state that the marketing function should contribute towards creating and delivering superior value to customers. They also argue that the emphasis should be on long term profitability, not short term profit or increased sales volumes only. Cant *et al* (2000:13) state that the achievement of profitability in a free-market system is of crucial importance, as the maximizing thereof is the primary objective of a profit-seeking enterprise. These authors go on to say that profitability can only be achieved when the needs and wants of the consumers are taken into consideration.

### **2.4.1.5 Social responsibility**

The marketing concept suggests that organizations should contribute to the welfare of societies at large without doing any harm to it, as businesses are regarded as extensions of society which are dependent on society for its survival (Fulop *et al* 2004:302). Kotler and Armstron (1996:26) argue that the ethics and environmental movements will place stringent demands on organizations in times to come, and organizations will be held to account on an increasingly higher level of environmental responsibility in all the marketing and managing activities that they undertake. Social responsibility is a current issue and organizations are under pressure to take responsibility for the impact their activities have on social as well as environmental welfare. Many organizations contribute hugely to charities in an effort to be seen as good corporate citizens. HEIs aim to provide bursaries to deserving, under-privileged students, as well as to generate money to charities through their annual RAG endeavours.

#### **2.4.2 The role of marketing**

Marketing management is intimately involved with forces in the market environment and it should consequently be aware of the potential effect that technological, political, economic, social and demographic changes may have on the organization's profit or sales potential (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:162). Stokes (2002:6) states that marketing is customer orientated, and to fulfil this role, organizations should firstly find out what consumers want, or anticipate their needs. Secondly, the needs of the consumers should be fulfilled (i.e. with the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) of an HEI) and thirdly, the progress towards customer satisfaction should be monitored (via reviews from students on the various programmes offered at an HEI). Finally, consumer satisfaction should be improved.

#### **2.4.3 Customer service**

Adcock (2000:7) holds the opinion that customer care and service should be viewed as a continuous activity, and that numerous activities must take place before the actual registering of a customer/student. These activities should be aimed at creating the right climate for exchange to take place between the

supplier and the customer. Equally important is the post-transactional stage where customer or student satisfaction can be increased or decreased and where relationships for further business are forged.

Cant *et al* (2000:19) suggest that customer opinions are important facets in the marketing of programmes, and they necessitate the immediate handling of complaints. Satisfied customers tend to talk about their experiences, and by doing so, they influence other consumers positively towards the particular organization which solved their problems quickly and effectively. These authors continue by saying that careless and incompetent personnel and incorrect information in brochures are some examples of poor customer service. Stokes (2002:7) continues by stating that satisfied customers recruit new customers, and that it costs more to attract new customers than to retain existing ones. Students tend to associate experiences of student life with certain campuses, and they would encourage or discourage prospective students to go to a particular HEI on grounds of their own experience of it.

## **2.5 THE FINANCIAL FUNCTION**

Effective financial management has taken a prominent position in the educational setup. This came about after the exceptional growth in numbers of students HEI's experienced combined with the current financial climate in the country. HEI's are thus forced to generate more money which also has to be administered. In the following section the financial aspects of organizations, with particular reference to HEI's, will be discussed.

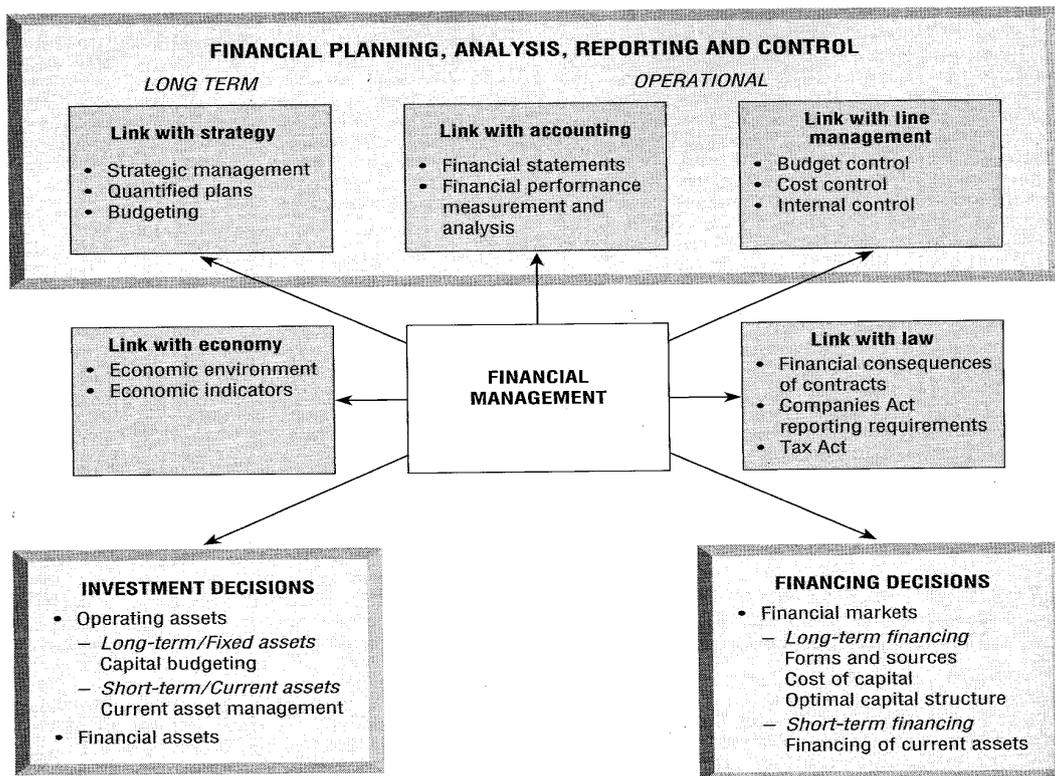
### **2.5.1 Interrelationship of financial management within the organization**

In the figure below the relationship that exists between the financial function and every other aspect of the organization is illustrated. It is, in fact, at the heart of the organization, as no decision can be made without calculating the financial impact it would have on the organization as a whole (Correia, Flynn, Uliana & Wormald, 2007:18).

All decisions taken should be in harmony with the long, middle as well as short term planning, and should take cognisance of budget constraints applicable to the financial timeframe. Decisions should also take heed of the economy as well as the law, as the financial function should operate within set limits and parameters. Decisions should also be taken with regard to the amounts of money to be invested, as the financial status of the organization would in the long run be influenced by it.

Financial decisions are important to any organization, including HEIs, because it bears directly on the organizations ability to cover its expenses.

**Figure 11: Integration of financial management with the rest of the organization**



Source: (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:188)

No organization can function successfully without a financial department. Campher *et al* (2003:2) describe financial management as the ability of an organization to process, analyse and interpret financial data and other financial information in order to function effectively. The financial position of the organization should be reflected and measured in relation to information

available at a given instance. Every functional area in an organization has a financial implication, affecting all the decisions made within that area.

Stevenson (1996:7) states that the financial function operates by exchanging information coupled with expertise in activities such as budgeting, the economic analysis of investment proposals, as well as the provision of funds. Shafer and Meredith (1997:17) explain the financial function as one that obtains as well as conserves funds to operate the organization, in addition to its function to be responsible for the acquisition of resources as well as the cash flow of the organization.

Brigham and Ehrhardt (2002:4) state that all business decisions have financial implications, and that managers in all functional areas should have some financial expertise enabling them to calculate the financial implications of any specialised analysis that they do. According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:187) the financial function links with various parts of the organization, for example the strategy, accounting, line management, economic environment, the law, investment decisions as well as financing decisions.

Brigham and Houston (2004:14–15) stress the responsibilities of the financial staff:

- **Forecasting and planning** – they should interact with people from other departments to plan the future of the organization.
- **Major investments and financial decisions** – financial staff should help to determine the optimal sales growth rate as well as help decide which additional assets must be acquired to help the organization grow and develop.
- **Coordination as well as control** – financial staff should interact with other personnel to ensure that the firm is being operated in the most efficient manner. All decisions made in all departments have financial consequences, and financial staff should take this into account.
- **Dealing with financial markets** – the money and capital markets are dealt with by the financial personnel. Any firm is affected by the way

money is raised on markets, where the securities of the organization are traded and whether investors make or lose money.

- **Risk management** – all organizations face risks, but many of these can be reduced with adequate insurance. The financial staff is responsible for the organization's overall risk management program, including the identification of possible risks as well as the most efficient manner to manage them.

All functional areas in an organization must draft a departmental budget which will be part and parcel of one institutional budget which has to be managed by the financial functional area.

### **2.5.2 Budget planning and control**

Planning is the first step in the management process, and also the most important function of the financial manager. Brigham and Houston (2004:390) are of the opinion that budgeting is the most important function that financial personnel can perform. They state that the budgeting decisions of an organization define its strategic direction, as more money will be channeled to the strategic areas of an organization. According to Bennet and Nieman (2005:189) budgeting is one of the most important planning and control measures which can be expressed in monetary terms, reflecting all the activities of the organization for a delimited period in the future. A budget is important, seeing that it aids the organization in planning certain activities.

Campher *et al* (2003:19-21) explain that there are various approaches to setting a budget:

- **The pragmatic approach** starts with the budget of the current year, which will be updated and modified in accordance with the anticipated change in prices and activities. Separate totals for separate headings for expenditure are added, which should closely match the following years' projected income.

- **The limited plan approach** also focuses on the current financial year, but the management plan is its point of departure and it is based on priorities, limited to the elements that need change.
- **The full-plan approach** is a comprehensive approach that is logical as well as management-orientated. This document is derived from the management plan and requires the justification of all objectives and activities.

Bisschoff (1997: 66-67) lists the range of purposes that the budget may have:

- it assists systematic planning;
- it helps quantifying objectives and identifying priorities;
- it assists with the co-ordination of activities as well as the communication of plans within the organization;
- it enhances the motivation and accountability of middle management;
- it assists the authorization of all expenditure activities within the organization including the control, monitoring and analysis of expenditure;
- and, in the final instance, it aids the evaluation of performance within the organization.

### **2.5.3 Project classifications**

HEI's, resembling other organizations, have certain goals, or projects, that they want to achieve. However, these cannot be achieved without funding. Brigham and Houston (2004:392–393) argue that the analysis of capital expenditure proposals is not a costless operation. They suggest that organizations, including HEIs, should categorize projects, or goals, as follows:

**Replacement: maintenance of business**, which comprises all expenditures towards replacing worn-out, damaged and outdated equipment that is utilized in the production of profitable products.

**Replacement: cost reduction**, which covers all expenses to replace serviceable but obsolete equipment with the aim of lowering the cost of labour, materials and inputs such as electricity.

**Expansion of existing products or markets:** the aim being the increase of production of existing materials as well as the expansion of retail outlets to raise the number of service facilities.

An HEI should always aim to expand its PQM by including new and different fields of study which will widen the choice that prospective students have. An HEI may make a strategic decision (with cost and income implications) to open a satellite campus which will enable students to utilize the institution's services even though they are removed from the main campus.

The next functional area to be discussed is service delivery.

## **2.6 SERVICE DELIVERY**

HEIs do not offer any product for sale like some other organizations do. However, they have the responsibility of delivering services to their clients, the students. The levels of efficiency and effectiveness with respect to delivery of services may vary from department to department, unit to unit, group to group, or team to team (Matshabaphala, 2008:3). The quality of services that are rendered may even differ between individuals serving the same institution. These differences are often blamed on the organizational culture. Organizational culture is rooted in the philosophy of leadership in the organization or in the department.

### **2.6.1 Organizational culture**

It is the nature of human beings to be attracted to people and organizations that care. There is a need to develop and maintain a service delivery culture, through leadership, that will ensure that the needs of clients are taken care of. Principle-centered leadership challenges the service delivery processes by

allowing corrective actions while at the same time influencing work teams through motivation and inspiration.

All personnel are expected to promote and maintain high standards of professional ethics, as clients' needs must be responded to promptly (Mafunisa, 2000:6). Every organization has an existing culture (O'Brien, 2002:374) determined by language, social attitudes and so forth. The existing culture could furthermore either be a positive, hard-working culture or a weak culture of getting by with as little work as possible. Culture is further seen as a specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in an organization. These tend to influence the way people interact within organization as well as with stakeholders outside the organization. Culture is seen as both the character and the personality of the organization (Bell, 2006:122).

Organizational cultures reflect the personalities and beliefs of the organization's management and leadership (Coles, 2006:1). Strong management and leadership tend to result in a strong organizational culture in the delivery of services to the clientele. Common beliefs and values drive employees' behaviour in any organization. Culture is the most profound force in an organization, as it co-determines the success or failure of employees.

### **2.6.2 Corporate culture**

In a corporate culture most of the service delivery activities are executed in the best interests of the clients. This is a culture that is a source of passion, pride and inspiration for individuals, teams and organizations. This type of culture is typically the result of good management and leadership. If the management and leadership are enthusiastic, the enthusiasm seems to be contagious (Kotler & Andreasen, 1996:71).

In a corporate culture attention is paid to both the internal and external clientele. Internal considerations revolve around the teams that need management and leadership in order for them to drive and energize programmes and projects in the respective departments. The external

considerations are mainly about ensuring that clients are receiving quality service from the respective departments. A corporate culture can emerge from anybody, any team, any department or the organization as a whole, as proper service delivery is everyone's challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 1995:6).

### **2.6.3 Ethical conduct**

Ethical conduct and ethics are essentially not the main variables manipulating service delivery (Lues, 2007:228), yet some ethical concepts are likely to impact considerably on service delivery, especially when amplified by other aspects which collectively enhances their effect. Undesirable ethical behaviour in combination with other inadequacies, such as a lack of resources and infrastructure, could become prominent elements in poor service delivery.

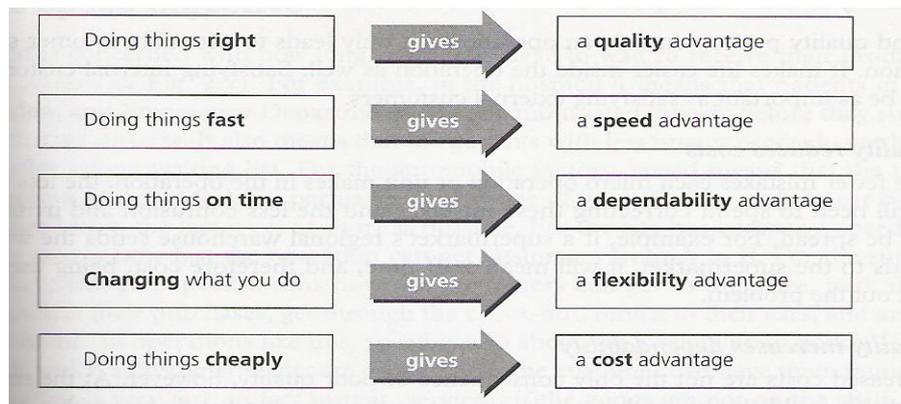
Managers need to set the standard for excellence in service delivery. Furthermore, they should serve as positive role models, setting good examples to others in demonstrating sound values and acting in ways appropriate to their respective roles (King, 2007:104). Such a standard of excellence can also be obtained through proper quality control.

### **2.6.4 Quality control**

Goetsch and Davis (1995:6) state that total quality means doing business that attempts to maximize the competitiveness of an organization by continuously improving the product, service, people, processes as well as the environment. Quality control can be defined, according to Bennet and Nieman (2005:143), as the systematic control of the variables in the manufacturing process which affects the predetermined quality of the product or service offered. The predetermined quality of the product or service must be high so as to optimally satisfy the client's needs.

Melnyk and Denzler (1996: 224–226) suggests that a business should be benchmarked against other businesses in order to identify practices which could improve quality. Shortcomings in the organization’s methods should be identified and rectified. A number of different types of benchmarking exist, for example tactical and functional benchmarking, and the organization should opt for those methods and types of benchmarking which would best suit its customers.

**Figure 12: Five performance objectives contributing to the achievement of business strategy**



Source: (Chambers *et al* 2004:49)

Chambers *et al* (2004:48) identify five performance objectives which contribute to the success of the organization’s competence:

**Do things right** – an aspect which offers a quality advantage which fosters customer satisfaction. This can be achieved by delivering error-free products as well as good service.

**Do things fast** – allowing a speed advantage. Delivering goods as well as services in a short period of time allows the organization to increase the availability of goods and services.

**Do things on time** – creating a dependability advantage. Keep delivery promises made to customers - they will then realize that you are dependable.

**Be able to change what you do** – be adaptable. In an organization, management must be able to cope with changing situations in order to keep customers satisfied. One should be flexible.

**Do things cheaply** – have a cost advantage. Products as well as services should be priced appropriately – competitive, but affordable.

Knod and Schonberger (1997:10) concur with the above when stating that clients energize an organization, and that without clients an organization will not be able to function. For this reason organizations, such as HEIs, should deliver quality services. The driving force behind quality management in an organization is made up of three elements, i.e. quality goods and services, the client, as well as teamwork between the organization and the client, which together are aimed at fulfilling the needs of the client. Stevenson (1999:424) states that poor quality and service will lead to a loss of business, liability, loss in productivity as well as avoidable expenditure on clients to ensure their continued support.

The next function to be discussed is the purchasing function, which concerns itself with the acquisition of goods which sustain the functioning of an HEI.

## **2.7 THE PURCHASING/PROCUREMENT FUNCTION**

Every organization needs certain supplies to function. These supplies range from stationary to equipment, and will vary from department to department.

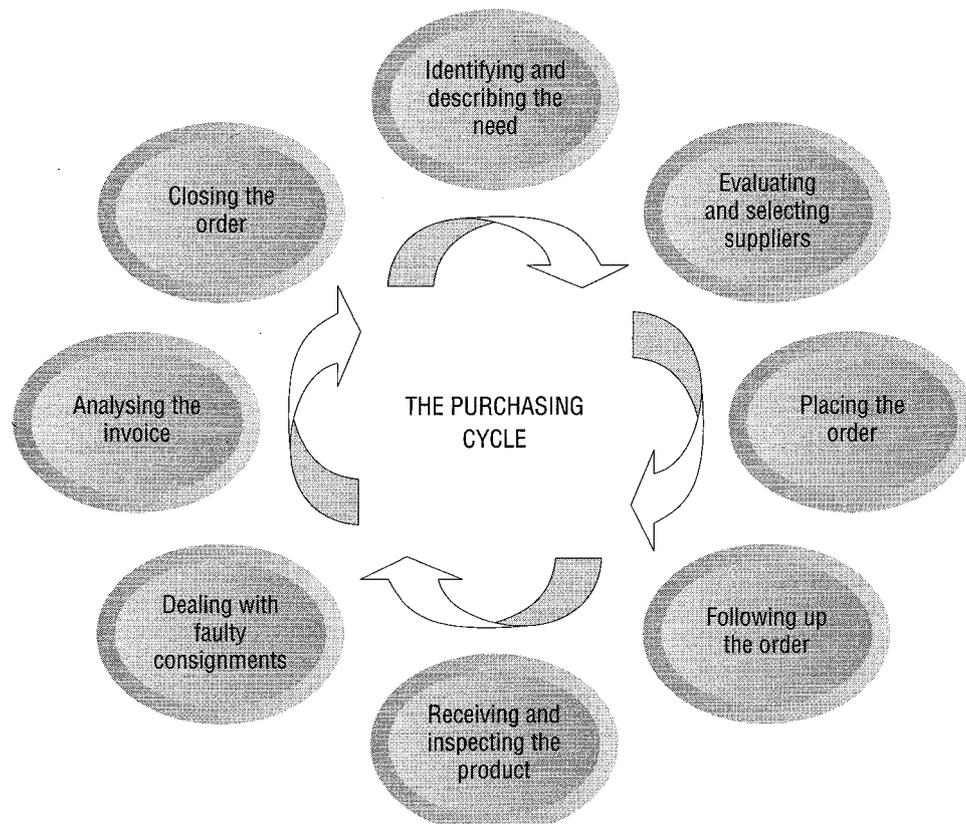
### **2.7.1 Purchasing objectives**

Badenhorst *et al* (2000:5) explain the purchasing function as the management function which deals with the activities that have to be performed in order to ensure that the organization is provided with the right products or that services, delivered by the right supplier at the right time and at the right price.

The purchasing function plays an important strategic role in the organization, especially with regard to cost saving, new product development and quality improvement (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:117). These are aspects equally important to HEIs and other types of enterprises. The processes executed in the purchasing section of the institution depend on good planning, organization and control. As is the case with other functions, the objectives of this function should support the general objectives of the organization.

## 2.7.2 Purchasing cycle

Figure 13: The purchasing cycle



Source: (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:119)

Prior to the acquisition of a product, an organization should follow a few consecutive steps in a process to ensure that no fraud is committed and that the correct products are purchased. This cycle typically consists of a few

steps which will vary from organization to organization. These steps generally focus on the administrative duties that should be executed in a specific order to ensure that the purchasing of goods is successful (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:118-119).

Firstly, the need for a new product is expressed. Research is then done into which product would be best suited to the situation followed by the acquisition of a number of quotes. The merit of each quote is then weighed and a choice is made. An order is then placed and the product inspected on arrival. If the product is found to be inadequate, it would be dealt with within a specific timeframe after which the transaction would be finalized.

Badenhorst-Weiss, Hugo and Van Rooyen (2002:15) assert that the purchasing function also has a great public relations function, as the department's approach can lead to a favorable image of the organization. They continue to say that courteous, ethical and acceptable purchasing practices will ensure the goodwill and respect of outsiders.

Wild (1997:131–134) mentions the following activities associated with the purchasing function:

- Ensuring that there is an uninterrupted flow of products and services to the organization.
- To search for, negotiate and ensure long term relationships with suppliers that are suitable.
- The exact requirements of products and services needed by the organization should be determined.
- The goods and services should be bought at the most competitive price possible.
- The organization's investment in inventory should be kept at a minimum.
- To keep losses as well as damages to the inventory to the minimum.

Badenhorst *et al* (2000:8) add a few more activities to the list when stating that the purchasing function also is also responsible for the salvaging of

materials and the disposal of redundant stock, as well as the researching of purchasing needs to improve efficiency.

The purchasing function refers to a group of similar or related activities that must be carried out in order to achieve the purchasing objectives mentioned earlier (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:119). These include the determination of products and services needed, placing orders, following up, and so forth.

### 2.7.3 Pricing

Price is an important factor that must be considered when purchasing materials or goods. Baily, Farmer, Jessop and Jones (1998:10–11) state that the buying price is the factor most often associated with procurement responsibilities. They continue by saying that this function plays an important role in judging the correct price in any purchase, and that price is the most visible of the various costs incurred when making most acquisitions. Figure 13 illustrates the so-called price/cost iceberg:

**Figure 14: The price/cost iceberg**



Source: (Baily *et al* 1998:11)

Badenhorst-Weiss *et al* (2002:10) state that the organizations' profit can be increased if a relatively small saving is made when purchasing a product, so indicating that an organization can reduce its costs and increase its profits by efficient purchasing. For that reason an organization can save money by

cutting out, for example, the middle man. When an organization saves money its profit increases, thereby making more money available for other ventures.

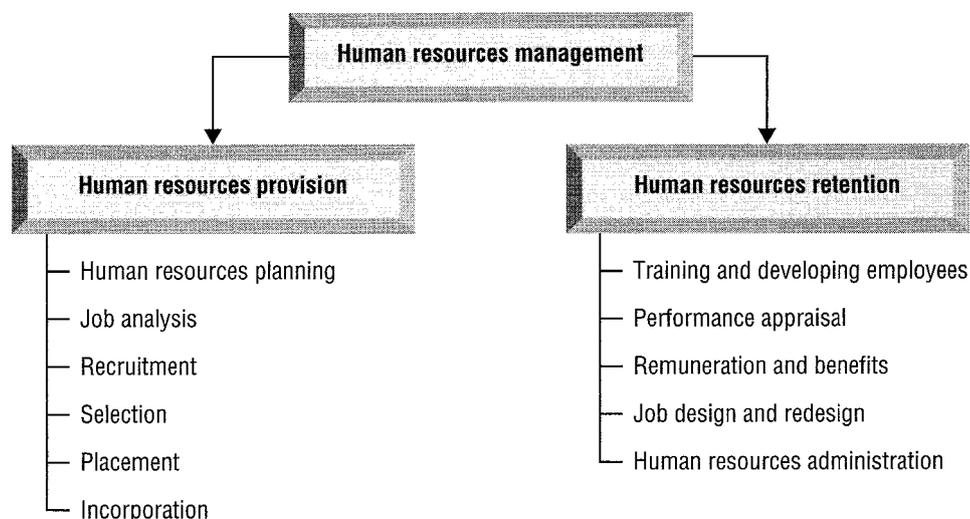
The purchasing or procurement of goods is an element of each functional area, but are administered by the purchasing or procurement functional area.

## 2.8 THE HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTION

### 2.8.1 The task and scope of human resource management

Human resource management specializes in the management of people in the organization. Van Staden (2000:9) explains human resource management (HRM) as a task undertaken by all managerial functions when planning for, recruiting, selecting, developing, utilizing, rewarding as well as maximizing the potential of the human resources (HR) in an organization. HRM is a specialised management task which includes two main areas: human resource provision (getting employees) and human resource retention (keeping employees) (Bennet & Nieman, 2005:243):

**Figure 15: Elements involved in human resource management**



Source: (Bennet & Nieman 2005:244)

Van Schalkwyk (2002:12) is adamant that the working definition of HRM should include three main aspects. In the first place, HRM is a managerial action which is intentional and includes management functions. Secondly, HRM comprises aspects or functions such as recruiting, provision, selection, placement, induction, utilization, remuneration, training, development as well as retention or maintenance, and thirdly, HRM is always directed at the objectives, goals as well as the success of the organization.

According to Andrews (1997:47), the human resource function requires constant and proper planning because the number of personnel cannot be increased or decreased at random. The author continues by saying that provision can be made for changing circumstances through careful planning and consideration. Dessler (1997:2), Ulrich (2001), as well as Bratton and Gold (2004:15) agree that human resource management refers to the practices and policies that are needed to perform the people and personnel functions of management.

A current trend in this department is strategic human resource management, which is defined by Sauer and Voelker (1993:510) as “the linking of HRM with strategic goals and objectives in order to improve business performance and develop organizational cultures that foster innovation and flexibility.” Dessler (1997:22) holds the opinion that strategic HR means the acceptance of the HR function as a strategic partner in the formulation of the organization’s strategies, in addition to the implementation of those strategies through the activities of the HR department. These activities include the recruitment, selection, training as well as the rewarding of the personnel.

De J Cronje and Smit (1999:24) emphasize the role of HRM in organizations like educational facilities by indicating that the importance of people in an organization is underlined by the fact that they are the only living resource in an organization. They further maintain that people are the only creative resource which has the advantage that the organizational system can be designed to adapt to a changing environment. For the purposes of this study,

however, only the human resource planning process, recruitment, selection, and development of personnel will be scrutinized.

## **2.8.2 Human resource provision**

The following sections will address some of the human resource provision aspects.

### **2.8.2.1 Human resource planning process**

As explained previously, planning refers to an effort to anticipate as well as shape the future (Seyfarth, 1996:19). Human resource planning entails the identification of the future desired human resource position of the organization which include the identification and assessment of possible trends that may influence the organization's ability to achieve that state, as well as the development of all activities and strategies that can lead to the realization of that state. Haasbroek, Nel, Poisat, Schultz, Sono and Werner (2008:215) state that this type of planning is at the operational level where the concern is detailed forecasts of employee supply and demand. An organization must be able to attract a sufficient number of job candidates who have abilities, qualifications as well as aptitudes valuable to the organization. According to Gerber *et al* (1998:79) and supported by Haasbroek *et al* (2008:220-222), five steps of human resource planning may be distinguished:

- An inventory of the present human resources in the organization is drawn;
- Based on the existing resources, an estimate of the supply of resources already available in the organization is made;
- A forecast of the resources in demand are made;
- The difference between the demand and available supply is determined; and
- The discrepancy between the demand for and availability of human resources is corrected.

Once human resource planning has been completed, proper recruitment of candidates can be embarked upon.

### **2.8.2.2 Recruitment**

The effectiveness of organizations (also HEIs) depends on the effectiveness of their employees. Carrel, Elbert, Grobler, Hatfield and Wörnich (2005:11) agree that an organization without high-power employees is destined to have a mediocre performance. The recruitment of personnel depends on numerous factors, such as an analysis of the labour market, long term planning as well as interviewing and testing. Various methods are used to recruit potential employees, for example advertisements in national and regional newspapers, training programmes for designated groups (grow your own timber), internships and monitoring programmes, career exhibitions and so forth. Van Staden (2000:54) states that advertisements in newspapers, on the radio and television, referrals, as well as recruitment by example are methods most often used by organizations to recruit prospective employees.

According to Education Facilitators (1999:32) a job advertisement should contain information regarding the organization, the job description, the type of individual required, the benefits, the location as well as the action to be taken. Kleynhans (2006:26) states that the organization's recruitment policy must reflect diversity issues and provide adequate guidelines for the recruiter.

### **2.8.2.3 Selection**

According to De Nisi and Griffin (2005:219) the selection decision should focus on competency-related issues if the selection process is to contribute to the success of the organization. Robbins (2000:475) emphasizes the close relationship that exists between human resource planning, recruitment and selection when indicating that the objective of effective selection is to match an individual's characteristics with the requirements of the job. According to Carrel *et al* (2005:174), selection is the process of selecting from a group of applicants the individual best suited to the position. They further state that the

recruitment and selection processes both resort in the HR department as it is more cost effective. Van Staden (2000:64-66) identifies six steps in the selection process:

- The identification of the general and specific criteria that apply to the post;
- The gathering of information about the recruited candidates;
- The application of a number of selection techniques;
- The appraisal of information on candidates and the assessment of applicants;
- The making of a selection decision; and
- Offering a position to the selected candidate.

Corbridge and Pilbean (1998:101) state that the prediction of job performance based on a selection process is a challenging task that should not be underestimated, since the methods used to evaluate a candidate, such as testing and interviews, are not very accurate. Bernardin (2003:111) comments that a multiple-hurdle process which would include the application, a reference and background check, various forms of standardized testing, as well as a type of interview is the typical chronology of events for selection, especially if external hiring is taking place. Internal transfers and promotions into positions are normally done without such formality.

### **2.8.3 Human resource retention**

Some aspects of human resource retention are discussed in the section hereunder.

#### **2.8.3.1 Human resource appraisal**

Accel-Team (2008: no page) cite three reasons why it is essential for an organization, such as an HEI, to constantly evaluate the performance of its employees:

- to improve organizational performance by improving the performance of the individual contributor (In this regard, the following questions should

be asked more or less annually - what has been done to advance the performance of a person last year? and What can be done to advance his or her performance in the year to come?);

- to identify potential, i.e. to recognize existing talent and to use that to fill vacancies higher in the organization or to transfer individuals into jobs where their abilities or developing skills can be put to better use;
- to provide a fair method of linking payment to performance.

Direct managers and supervisors (middle management), and not HR personnel, should carry out evaluations (De Clercq, 2008:11). The HR role is usually that of:

- advising top management of the principles and objectives of an evaluation system and designing it for particular organizations and environments;
- developing systems appropriately in consultation with managers, supervisors and staff representatives and furthermore securing the involvement and cooperation of appraisers and those to be appraised;
- assistance in the setting of objective standards of evaluation/assessment;
- publicizing the purposes of the exercise and explaining to staff how the system will be implemented;
- organising and establishing the necessary training of managers and supervisors who will carry out the actual evaluations/appraisals. In this regard, the training in principles and procedures should be complemented by training in human relations skills. (A lack of confidence in their own ability to handle instances of poor performance is the main weakness of assessors.);
- monitoring the scheme - ensuring that it does not fall into disuse, following up on training/job exchange and reminding managers of their responsibilities.

When appraisal becomes routine it greatly aids the development of talent, serves as warning to inefficient or lacklustre staff members, and can even be an effective form of motivation.

### **2.8.3.2 Training and Development**

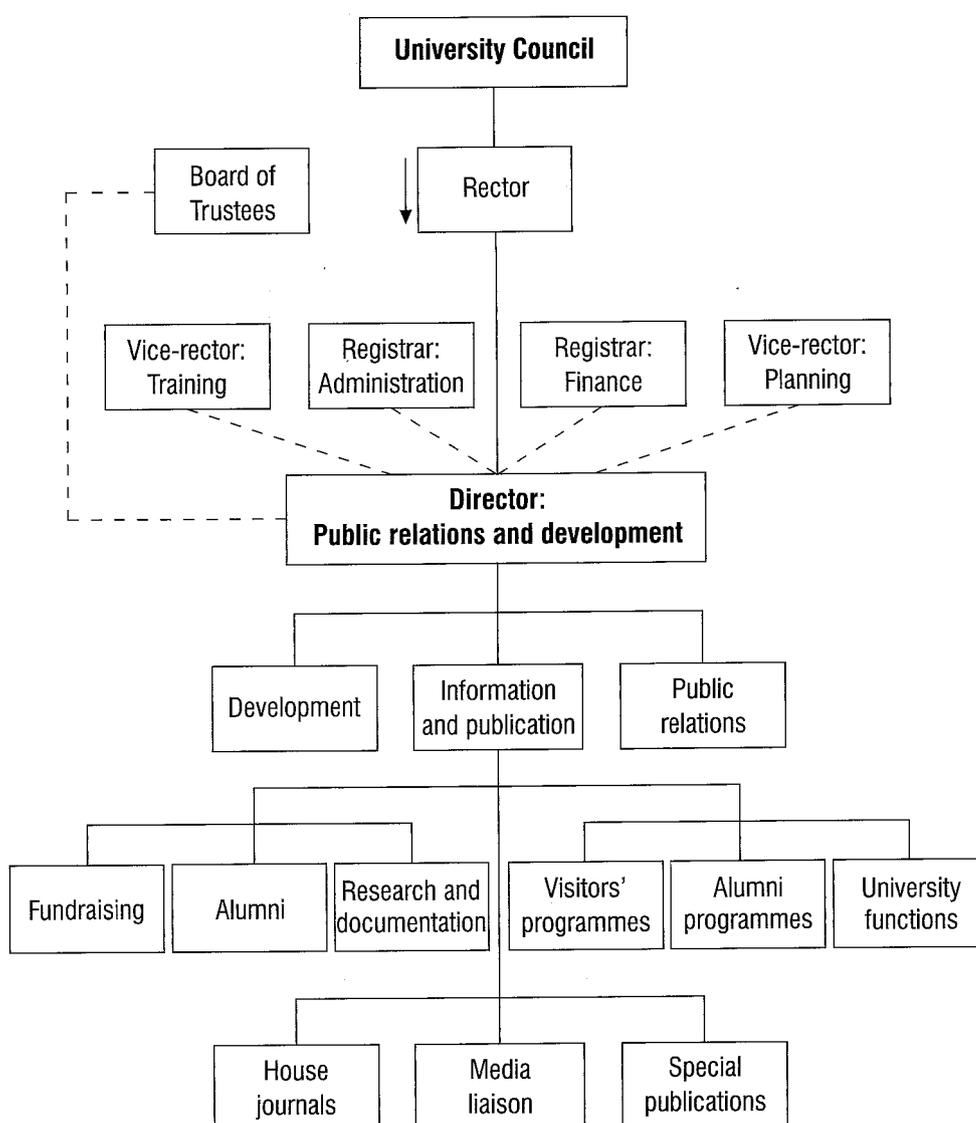
Training and development is the process of teaching new employees the basic skills they need to perform their jobs competently (Dessler, 1997:248). Competence, according to Bellis (2000:60), can be seen as “a skill or cluster of skills carried out within an indicated range or context to specific standards.” Carrel *et al* (2005:314) state that training and development (T&D) is seen as key to the employer’s strategic, business and operational goals. The main purposes of T&D are the improvement of performance, the updating of employee’s skills, the avoidance of managerial obsolescence, the solving of managerial problems, the orientation of new employees, the preparation for promotion and managerial succession, as well as the satisfying of personal growth needs. Lancaster *et al* (2006:16) state that training entails the transfer of specific skills to an employee so as to empower him to perform a specific task, thus making training task-orientated in the sense that it is concerned with skills acquisition and work performance.

It is also important to an HEI to have a good relationship with the public since a positive image attracts new students. Any organization therefore requires a public relations function to nurture that positive image.

## **2.9 THE PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTION**

Public relations may sometimes be viewed as a continuation of the marketing function. Some organizations, including HEIs, often combine these functions in one functional area which they name Advancement and Marketing or Marketing and Communication. For the purpose of this study, the public relations function is discussed separately.

**Figure 16: A typical Public Relations function at a Higher Education Institution**



Source: (Cant & Van Rensburg 2003:60)

Public relations is a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understandings between an organization and its various publics – internally as well as externally (PRISA, 2000:6). Baskin *et al* (2004:5) views public relations as a leadership and management function which helps achieving organizational objectives, defines philosophy and facilitates organizational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to foster positive relationships and to create a balance between organizational goals and societal expectations. Public relations officers (practitioners) develop, execute and evaluate organizational programs which promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization's constituent parts and publics.

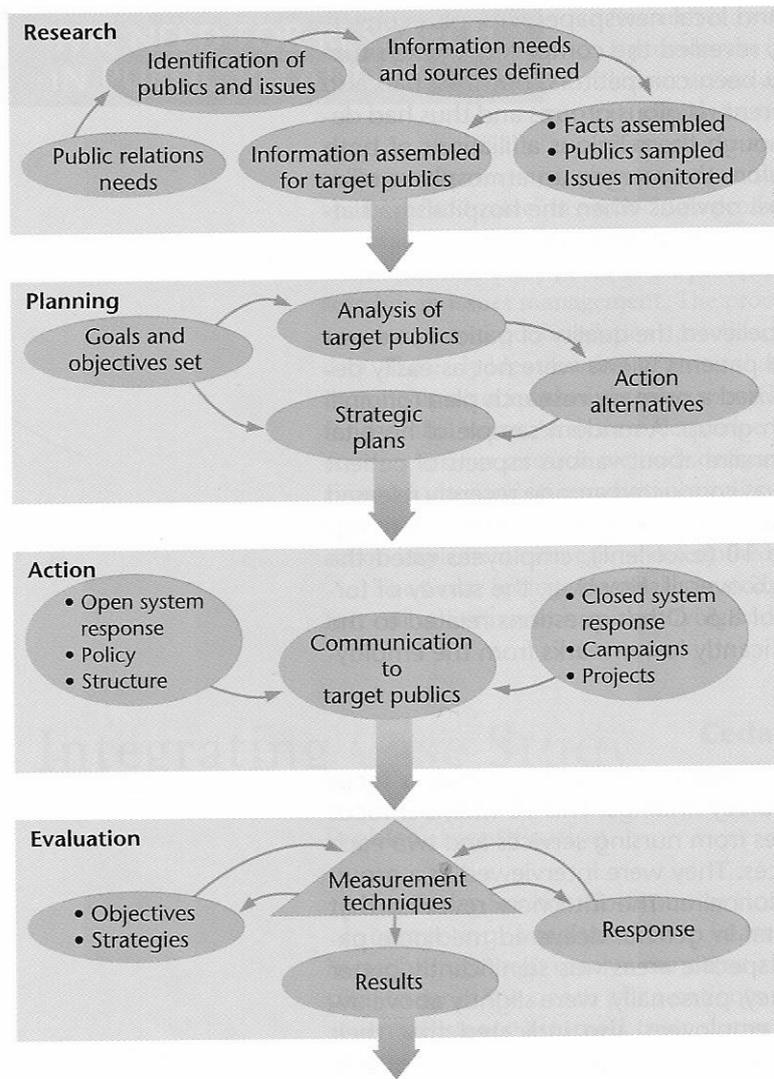
According to Mersham, Skinner and Von Essen (2004:4), public relations should be a practice that is simultaneously an art and a social science of analyzing trends and predicting their outcomes, counseling organizations' leaders, as well as implementing planned programmes of action which will both serve the organization as well as public interest. Cant and Van Rensburg (2004:62) hold that even though this management function goes under a variety of names, for instance corporate communications, external relations, etc., public relations seems to be the most appropriate term since it encompasses all the communication activities normally associated with organizations.

Public relations promote the institution's image among the public. The actions taken by the organization are aimed at creating a harmonious relationship between the organization and its different target publics, and between the organization and its environment. In order for an organization to be noticed by its own as well as other environments, it should be promoted. Cross (1998:80) as well as Koekemoer (1998:2) state that the promotional mix consists of six elements which are advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, direct marketing as well as sponsorship.

Mersham, Skinner and Von Essen (2004:5) have identified the following characteristics of public relations:

- It is dynamic: the process continuously changes and makes adjustments in order to maintain old, existing relationships and to build new ones.
- It is analytical: it is a process of determining and analyzing a situation and the factors influencing it, followed by the subsequent evaluation of the effect of any remedial or other action.
- It is planned: specific goals are set and certain priorities are determined beforehand in accordance with the problem or situation analysis, and this should be done within the time and budget constraints.
- It implies action: it involves the execution of planned strategies as well as the implementation of alternative strategies in order to cope with the ever changing needs and demands of the public. In its purest form, public relations should be proactive, not reactive.
- It requires evaluation: performance should be evaluated in terms of the achievement of the preset goals.
- It demands adjustment: public relations should be flexible as goals and demands may need to be altered.

**Figure 17: Functions of the Public Relations practitioner.**



Source: Baskin *et al* (2004:94).

Figure 16 clearly illustrates that public relations, like all other functional areas, require a lot of planning, action as well as evaluation. Research is also an integral part of the public relations officer's duties because he needs to be informed about what appeals to his target. For the purposes of this study, research will not be isolated as a separate functional area, but it would be treated as an integral part of the public relations area as found within an HEI.

Mersham *et al* (2004:10-12) agree that the public relations officer (PRO) may be involved in a range of assignments and functions. These functions are listed by Baskin *et al* (2004:5-17) as well as Cant and Van Rensburg (2003:47–49), and they include the following:

**Research** - research involves the gathering of information about issues such as trends, public opinions, the political climate and consumer concerns.

**Programming and counseling/Planning and advertising** – this function determines the needs, priorities, goals, publics, objectives as well as categories. It points to the collaboration with the management of an organization or the clients in a problem solving process.

**Media relations and placement** – this function involves contact with the media, be it television and/or newspapers. It also includes the booking or placement of any advertisements in any media product.

**Organising** - the PRO handles a variety of functions, ranging from the organization of conventions, exhibitions and fundraising events.

**Writing** - the PRO should be adept at writing press releases, newsletters, correspondence, reports, advertisements, as well as any other information that should be channeled to other organizations or members of the media.

**Editing** – this is another important function of the PRO as he/she should be able to edit any information which leaves the organization, be it an advertisement, a newsletter or any other form of writing.

**Production** – this is a very challenging as well as multi-faceted aspect of PR. It involves the creation of communications by making use of technologies such as multimedia knowledge and skills, including photography, art and so forth, in order to manufacture booklets, draft reports and design advertisements.

**Speaking** – the PRO may address meetings personally or delegate the task. Programmes can be planned in response to public and problem situations in reaction to the information gathering process. The communication segment of the PR function is both persuasive as well as purposive.

**Training** – Executives and other executive representatives should be trained and coached to prepare them for presentations and other public appearances.

**Management** – this is a very important duty with regard to budget issues, personnel matters as well as action programmes. Chambers *et al* (2001:48) state that when tasks are executed within budget constraints it subsequently enables the organization to provide an appropriately priced service, and still return a profit.

Public relations therefore form an integral part of the effective functioning of an HEI. Good relations with partners both within and outside the HEI are key to success.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

The literature overview clearly reveals that organizations are made up of many individual parts that should ultimately work in harmony towards the success of the organization. Management at various levels is an indispensable part of any organization because without it the organization would be doomed to failure. Moreover, all functional areas within the organisation should be interrelated so as to ensure the smooth running of all operations and decisions within the organization.

The aim of this study is to investigate the administrative aspects within the different functional areas of an HEI to ascertain whether certain aspects can be improved.

The next chapter will address the research methodology employed in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to investigate factors which can potentially limit the administrative functions of the various functional areas of middle management in a Higher Education Institution. Literature relevant to the functional areas of middle management was reviewed in chapter two with the objective of gaining a better understanding and insight of the management function as well as the

various functional areas. The research methodology employed in this study will be discussed in this chapter.

## **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research, according to the Oxford Dictionary (1998:884), is the “careful search or inquiry after, for or into or an endeavor to find information.” Research, according to Vermeulen (1998:19), is a systematic endeavour which seeks to provide answers to questions, a dynamic process that builds on previous research and opens opportunities for new research.

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:36) state that the research methodology of a study can be described as the philosophical framework which guides the research activity and also serves as the tradition or paradigm in which the research problem is framed. It furthermore guides the selection of the research participants as well as the subsequent data-gathering and the selection of data analysis techniques. The research methodology encapsulates people’s general orientation to life, their sense of being and even the way they view knowledge. These considerations ultimately inform the choice of source or method of inquiry in a study.

For the purpose of this study a qualitative approach is used. Best and Kahn (2003:241) define this approach as an attitude-free gathering of information whereby participants provide information from their own perspectives. Instruments used to uncover information can include informal, semi-structured or structured interviews, observations, diaries and/or questionnaires. For the purpose of this study, open-ended questionnaires were used. The questionnaires are described in more detail under 3.4.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative research**

In order to clarify the concept, the thoughts a number of writers have on qualitative research are discussed in the following sub-section.

Newman (1997:14) argues that a quantitative research approach differs from a qualitative research approach. In a qualitative approach the construction of reality is situationally constrained and focuses on interactive processes, whilst a quantitative approach is independent of the context and measures objective facts with attention to variables. Vermeulen (1998:10) says that a quantitative approach relies on numerical data which are highly formalized and explicitly controlled, while a qualitative approach is not strictly formalized and adopts a more philosophical mode of operation. Qualitative research is rooted in the belief that reality is socially constructed and it aims at uncovering what lies beneath the surface of the phenomenon that is investigated, all the while seeking to understand certain perceptions of the stakeholders involved. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is often embedded in positivism which holds that reality is objective and observable.

Welman and Kruger (2001:178) put forward the idea that qualitative methodologies are best applied in the description of small groups wherein authentic experiences are studied. Woods (1999:2) concurs when stating that qualitative research is concerned with real life experiences, everyday occurrences in the normal day to day and moment to moment course of events. The author continues furthermore to explain that the qualitative approach seeks the meaning that participants attach to their behaviour as well as their interpretation and perspectives on certain situations. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) further maintain that qualitative research seeks a more intimate acquaintance with the different feelings, motivations and individual qualities of people, and that the chief aim of this method is to uncover situations in the way that they are experienced and understood by participants.

White (2005:81) adds that qualitative research is more concerned with the understanding of social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants. This happens when the researcher becomes a research tool him/herself by participating in the daily activities of those involved in the research. The data obtained is rich and powerful as it allows for a fuller understanding of the object under investigation within its social, historical and temporal context (Best & Kahn, 2003:243).

Schumacher and McMillan (1997:391) say in addition that qualitative research is a naturalistic enquiry which utilizes non-interfering data as well as collection strategies to uncover the natural flow of events, in addition to processes and the interpretation thereof by the participants in the study. Woods (1999:2) adds that writing (narrative, argument and persuasion) is particularly important in qualitative research whereas a quantitative research approach relies more on technical and statistical instruments.

Qualitative inquiry is further described by Wilson (1997:109) as an approach that uses data collecting strategies that are non-manipulative to uncover the natural flow of events and processes. De Vos (2001:240) agrees that the qualitative approach has a multi-perspective on social interaction which aims to describe, make sense of as well as to interpret (or reconstruct) this interaction in terms of the value and meaning that the participant attaches to it.

McLauglin and Mertens (2004:96) point out that qualitative research primarily makes use of data inductively. Inductive reasoning allows the researcher to explore and discover information with an emergent research design, rather than testing deductions from theories in a predetermined design as is the case with quantitative research.

### **3.2.2 Advantages of qualitative research**

As this study seeks to gather opinions, beliefs and views of the participants, the qualitative approach was chosen. According to Rainwater (2007: no page) this approach has certain advantages which benefit this study:

- the use of open-ended questions provides participants with the opportunity to respond in their own words rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as quantitative methods do;
- open-ended questions have the ability to elicit responses that are:

- meaningful and culturally significant to the participant
- unanticipated by the researcher
- rich and explanatory in nature
- an opportunity exists for more in-depth analysis;
- data can be collected on every segment of the sample.

There are, however, also certain disadvantages that the researcher should take into consideration when employing a qualitative approach.

### **3.2.3 Disadvantages of qualitative research**

Henning *et al* (2004:102) mentions the following disadvantages of qualitative research:

- it may lead to superficial and naively realistic findings because it captures what is presumed to be the real world (as seen through the eyes of the research participants) in a straight-forward, direct and often formulaic way;
- the data is not interrogated The assumption is that the researcher arrives at a set of valid findings through stringent application of the method of coding and categorization;
- it often lacks objectivity, due in particular to the human interaction inherent to the interview situation (Kvale, 1996:64).

From the above it is evident that information rich data needs to be captured from participants. Information rich data therefore needs to be objectively analyzed to ensure that the information gleaned from the participants are reflected correctly.

As this study employs a case study, the next sub-section provides more detailed information on this method.

### **3.2.4 Case studies**

Case studies, according to Breakwell, Fife-Schaw and Hammond (2000:60), can be defined as “retrospectively written reports of observations or opinions made by individuals, which may raise questions that can initiate research.” According to Simon (1987:61-62) “a case study is a metaphor that appealed to those who were looking for a way of integrating the comprehensive data requirements that emerged from various critical reviews of the evaluation tradition.” Saslow (1982:12) explains that case studies are narrative descriptions of an individual or organization’s history, symptoms, behaviour, and response to treatment.

Different disciplines also have different interpretations of what a case study is. According to Burton (2000:217) case studies can be seen as a detailed examination of an event or events which the researcher believes to exhibit the operation of some identified theoretical principal. The author continues by explaining that, from an organizational point of view, case studies can be seen as “empirical enquiries that investigate a contemporary phenomenon in context, and when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear, multiple sources of evidence is used” (adapted from Yin, 1994). Ragin (1992:13) explains that a case study can also comprise an event such as organizational change, or even aspects that may hamper the functionality of an institution.

Shaw (1999:135) states that case studies are flexible and multi-purpose, and that they may be descriptive, exploring and providing portraits of little known entities, which may be persons, situations or institutions. The author continues by stating that case studies may also be selective, consequently pursuing more richly detailed accounts of different processes at work also showing how these processes influence one another. Case studies may also be designed to produce a kind of experimental isolation of selected social factors within an authentic life context.

Stake (1993:133) states that a case is something to be studied, such as a student, a classroom, a committee or an organization. The author adds that the case to be studied probably has problems or relationships, and the report of the case is likely to have a theme, but that the case is a unique entity. Yin

(1989:14) comments that case studies allow investigations which may accommodate holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, international relations, managerial processes, neighbourhood change, including events such as the maturation and change of organizations.

Schostak and Schostak (2008:239) explain that case studies are important, because by performing them the “dynamics of the synchronic and diachronic can be elaborated, covering and describing the in-depth interactions of the dramatis personae, mapping the multi-dimensional spaces of their intentional networks, their beliefs, interests, values, practices as well as events that take place, which influence themselves as well as the environment surrounding them.”

The case study undertaken in this study links to certain areas described the authors above, but more pertinently to what Ragin (1992:13) calls an event, such as organizational change, as well as factors that may hamper the functionality of an institution.

### **3.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Sarantakos (1998:313) explains that data analysis can be viewed as the process which involves the selection and focus of data as well as the discarding of irrelevant data. Research means that the collected data is analyzed and interpreted by the researcher with the purpose of bringing structure as well as order to the available information.

In view of the fact that this study makes use of qualitative research analysis, it will be discussed next.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative analysis**

Cresswell (1998:15) defines qualitative research analysis as an inquiry process of understanding, based on methodological traditions of inquiry that exposes a human or a social problem. In the study process the researcher

builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of participants and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Qualitative analysis, according to Neuman (1997:439), requires more effort from the individual researcher than quantitative research, as the researcher needs to read and re-read as well as interpret the information supplied to him/her by the participants. From this information, the researcher needs to make comparisons using logic as well as judgment. Phillips (2000:56) supports this statement when stating that the information which the researcher collects from the participants, includes their present as well past experiences and presents a detailed representation of their social realities.

Themes emerge from the information obtained, which helps the researcher to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon at hand. In this study the researcher will analyse the data and use the themes that emerge from their responses to report the findings of this study.

Bassey (1999:67) holds the opinion that the research questions drive the research and that it should therefore be formulated in such a way that an immediate agenda for the research is set. The agenda would regulate the collection of data, permit the start of the analysis of the data as well as establish the boundaries of space and time within which it would operate. MacMillan and Schumacher (1997:401–404) stress that content analysis must be employed to analyse the collected research data. This process involves the identification, coding (the process whereby data are divided up by a classification system), as well as the categorization of the primary pattern in the recorded data.

It is imperative for the researcher to arrive at relevant conclusions. For that reason, it is important for the researcher to focus on the characteristics of the research instrument. The latter will be discussed in the next part of the study.

### **3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

Thomas (1998:133) argues that reliability and validity are important attributes of a research instrument. McLaughlin and Mertens (2004:107) state that validity, as well as reliability, is key to maintaining appropriate standards in research. They continue by saying that research is a scientific method of inquiry, and that information should be carefully assessed by testing for validity as well as reliability.

### **3.4.1 Reliability**

Gray (2004:172) believes that reliability is a central concept associated with measurement, and that it essentially means consistency. Consistency, in this instance, means that the scores obtained by an instrument can be confirmed by using alternative data sources. The obtained data can also be interpreted by other researchers to establish whether they reach the same conclusion as the primary researcher.

McLaughlin and Mertens (2004:107) explain validity as the stability of observed changes over time within a positivist paradigm. They continue by stating that reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, meaning the extent to which the results remain similar when variants of the same instruments are used to collect data on different occasions. An indicator or measure can be considered to be reliable when it consistently provides the same results every time a certain phenomenon is measured.

Neuman (1997:138) explains that reliability means that information provided by certain indicators does not change as a result of the characteristics of the indicators, the research instruments or the measurement device used in the study. This explanation is very significant as it minimizes errors made in the study. Reliability is sometimes seen as solely quantifiable which limits its use to quantitative studies only.

### **3.4.2 Validity**

Seale (1998:134) views validity as the degree to which findings of a research study presents a true and accurate picture of what is claimed or described in

the research. Neuman (1997:141) explains validity as the appropriateness of a statement including its importance in determining which research information is valid, thus implying that no matter which type of questionnaire or research instrument is used, it should measure what it set out to measure. The author continues to explain that measurement validity refers to how well the conceptual as well as operational definitions match.

According to Williams (1999:3) three types of validity can be distinguished: internal validity, construct validity as well as external validity. These will be discussed in the following section. The author further explains how validity can be compromised in each case.

The first of the three - internal validity - pertains to the conduct of the study itself. The author explains that when the procedures and execution of the questionnaire influences the results, the internal validity of the study is compromised. He further warns that the internal validity is strengthened by a moderator (promoter) who should provide appropriate guidance without introducing his/her own opinion or suppress the researcher's free expression. He identifies threats to internal validity in cases where participants do not heed ground rules, criticize the contributions made by others or even in cases where inappropriate topics are applied.

The second validity type - construct validity – has to do with the adequacy of measure. Williams (1999:3) reminds the reader that the “measures”, presented as comments and interactions by the researchers and participants, should be free from any artificial influences seeping in from the environment or the moderator.

Finally, external validity bears on the ability to generalize the results from the sample to the population. External validity is not a characteristic of qualitative research and will therefore not be entertained in this study.

To ensure the validity of qualitative data analysis, the following steps are applied:

- Validation by the participants themselves

It is recommended that the findings of the research be validated by the participants themselves, as qualitative studies strive to present data from the perspectives of the participants (Kruger, 1997:145). Participants can be involved in a discussion of the findings of the study so that the researcher may get consensus on the meaning of the gathered information (audit trail).

- Validation by the researcher

Findings can be compared with existing literature. This method enables the researcher to determine to which degree the findings of his study corresponds with the current trend found in the literature (Palm-Forster, 2000:147 and Kruger, 1997:145).

Welman and Kruger (3001:135) are of the opinion that validity refers to the appropriateness of a statement and moreover, that it is important to determine whether data is valid and are used for its intended purposes. Construct validity refers to the instrument used to measure the variable at hand, controlling that it measures what it is supposed to. These authors continue by saying that the instrument that is used in the study should remain constant over the duration of the study.

### **3.4.3 Role of the researcher**

Subjectivity is one of the main concerns that is frequently criticized with qualitative research. Criticism is leveled at role of the researcher in the data collecting process, for the data collected seems to be susceptible to bias due to the subjective interpretation thereof (Adler & Adler, 1998:88).

White (2005:203) states that Guba's model of trustworthiness mentions the truth value of data. This truth value establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings. A qualitative study is seen as credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretations of the experiences of

the participants that other people who also share that experience, would immediately recognize the descriptions.

### **3.5 DATA CAPTURING INSTRUMENTS**

A questionnaire is a document that is distributed to participants either by post or by hand. These questionnaires can then be posted back after completion or can be completed by participants in the presence of the researcher (Soer, 1997:107-108).

Brynard and Hanekom (1997:39) mention that questionnaires offer an effective way of soliciting views from participants because participants have the opportunity to think about answers to questions appearing in the questionnaire. The questionnaire is generally regarded as one of the best available instrument for obtaining information from a widely spread source (Milne, 1999: no page). According to Anderson (1998:207) the questionnaire has become one of the most useful means of collecting research information because it permits the collection of reliable and valid data which is relatively simple as well as economical. It can also be completed in a short space of time.

According to Gay and Airasian (2003:280) questionnaires are instruments which attempt to obtain comparable data from all members partaking in the sample given that the same questions have to be answered by all participants. A researcher constructs a set of relevant questions and requests the participant to respond to them (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:46). White (2005:130) explains that the aim of an open-ended questionnaire is to determine how people feel about certain issues, or, alternatively, to establish the effect that troubling issues have on the behaviour of people.

It has many advantages over other tools of gathering information. The advantages of questionnaires are focused on next.

#### **3.5.1 Advantages of the open-ended questionnaire**

Anderson (1998:116) and White (2005:131) list the following advantages of the open-ended questionnaire:

- the questionnaire allows the participants to supply answers which they view as appropriate;
- the researcher is able to obtain a good idea of the nature of reality;
- the phenomenon is easily understood as questions allow for more creativity and self-expression;
- the focus is on participants' perceptions and experiences;
- it focuses on the occurrences of events, products or outcomes;
- ordinary events in natural settings portray real life in the research process.

Making use of questionnaires also have some disadvantages that must be borne in mind.

### **3.5.2 Disadvantages of the open-ended questionnaire**

The following are disadvantages of questionnaires in general, and open-ended questionnaires in particular:

- it has a poor rate of return, the opportunities for asking questions for clarification purposes are limited and the chance for personal interaction is limited;
- concerns about the response rate and patterns of responses;
- it is not easy to control the honesty of responses with follow-up interviews.
- it may lead to the collection of worthless and/or irrelevant information;
- open-ended questions normally require more time to complete.

The next section pays attention to the effective use of questionnaires.

### **3.5.3 Effective use of questionnaires**

Johnson (1996:38) considers the following points as essential to the effective use of a questionnaire:

- the format of the questionnaire, as well as the procedure for compiling it, has to be user friendly and non-threatening;
- the questionnaire should be clear and comprehensible;
- the questionnaire should reach the hands of the appropriate participants;
- it should motivate the participants to complete and return the questionnaire; and
- the researcher should make effective administration arrangements for the return of questionnaires.

The instructions provided to participants with regard to the completion of the questionnaire are very important and are discussed next.

#### **3.5.4 Instructions for the completion of the questionnaire**

Instructions on a questionnaire should be kept as concise as possible. White (2005:137) views the following instructions as indispensable:

- privacy and anonymity should be assured and maintained;
- participants must be made aware of the importance of their responses and must be urged to be honest;
- the purpose of the questionnaire must be made clear to participants;
- participants are to be thanked in advance for their participation and cooperation.

### **3.6 POPULATION AND RESEARCH SAMPLE**

The population and sample are discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### **3.7.1 Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:161) together with Mouton (1998:134) define population as a group of elements or cases - be it individuals, objects or

events - that conform to specific criteria. Gray (2004:82), as well as Gay and Airasian (2003:102), describe the population as a group of elements which interests the researcher, and to which the results of the study will be generalized. As this is a qualitative study, there will be no generalization of results. Gorard (2001:10) defines the population as the group that you use for your research study.

The population of this study is all middle managers in the functional areas of the Central University of Technology, Free State.

### **3.7.2 Sample**

According to Mertens (1998:253) sampling refers to the method used to select a given number of participants from a population to participate in the study. To Vermeulen (1998:50) sampling means taking a portion of the available population and considering it to be a representation of the population. The whole group that is available is known as the population, but the portion selected for use is known as a sample.

Neuman (1997:203) explains sampling as the process of systematically selecting participants to be included in a research project. The researcher identifies a set of participants, i.e. a sample, which is more manageable and cost effective to work with if weighed against the engagement of the entire pool of available cases in the research. The author continues to explain that sampling, if properly executed, allows the researcher to measure variables on the smaller set of identified cases, thereby deepening the understanding of the researched phenomenon rather than merely making generalized findings. The key concept in sampling is representativeness. The sample from which conclusions are drawn must be representative of the population the research is dealing with.

Corbetta (2003:210) explains that sampling is the procedure employed to pick out a specific set of units from the population, thus a limited number of cases chosen according to specific criteria. Welman and Kruger (2001:46) state that non-probability sampling is convenient and economic when the selected

sample is small. This method was used as the participants were selected at the researchers' discretion. Purposeful sampling was used for this study in an attempt to obtain information-rich responses from a relatively small sample. Welman and Kruger (2001:47) state that when purposeful sampling is employed, information-rich data is captured, because only well-informed persons with knowledge and insight into the problem are used to answer questions.

MacMillan and Schumacher (1997:17) describe purposeful sampling as the selection of information-rich cases for an in-depth study which is helpful when one wants to gain insight into something peculiar to a particular group, thus doing away with the need to generalize the findings to all available cases. In purposeful sampling the researcher selects particular elements from the population that is representative or informative about the topic of interest.

The qualitative approach (using open-ended questionnaires) was used because the researcher wanted to:

- record and understand the problems that individuals in different departments experience, and
- generate detailed data of the management levels that were studied and subsequently also provide a contextual understanding of the problems that they face.

As the population for this study relates to a specific management group (middle-managers), the decision for this study was to use the total population as the sample. The rationale was to ensure a proper sample size was available to validate the study. The sample for this study was 85 people in the middle-management section. Completed questionnaires were received from 63 respondents (74%).

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter initially identified the research methodology and elaborated on possible advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research. Data analysis

was discussed and an explanation was provided on how to validate qualitative studies. The data capturing instrument was put forward and clarified after which the population and sample for this study were identified and explained. In the following chapter the collected data will be interpreted and discussed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **REPORTING ON DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is mainly aimed at the identification of potentially restricting factors in the various functional areas in a Higher Education Institution. This study sought to identify these problems and tried to ascertain whether a correlation exists between the problems that the various functional areas experience. In

addition, it attempted to identify a probable trend throughout the different functional areas within the institution.

Questionnaires were sent via e-mail to respondents within the institution who hold positions at middle management post level. Respondents were given adequate time to respond to the questionnaires and were allowed to return the completed questionnaires via e-mail, or by posting or faxing it. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the response rate was 74%.

## **4.2 REPORTING OF DATA**

In this section the data collected from the questionnaires are reported on. Each question was analysed to try and identify trends emerging from each functional area. The trends identified in each functional area were then correlated to determine whether a specific trend(s) occurred in a particular functional area, or perhaps across functional areas within the institution. Views, attitudes, feelings and perceptions of respondents regarding their functional area, were captured.

The reporting of data is done in accordance with the sequence of the questions on the open-ended questionnaire. Next the data was discussed per functional area for each question. Verbatim quotes to support the data are provided throughout the reporting stage. This is in line with qualitative reporting where data is reported in narrative form, and not statistically. Correspondent with qualitative reporting percentages are omitted and substituted with phrases such as “all the respondents”, “most of the respondents”, “some respondents” and “a few respondents”. Some quoted responses may contain grammar or syntax errors, but these were not corrected to ensure the authenticity of the quotes.

### **Question 1:**

**How does your department support innovative thinking, creativity and new ideas from staff?**

- **General Management function:**

Most respondents were of the opinion that even though they appreciate innovative thinking, creativity and new ideas which may improve service delivery as well as the standard of service rendered to current and future students, these ideas are not always supported by their department. One respondent stated that creativity and new ideas are *“stifled and filed away – as things at this HEI tend to be forced to stay the same.”*

The opinion of many respondents were that they *“would love to see some of these ideas put into action,”* but that the processes, procedures and policies which govern the HEI make it near impossible to implement new ideas.

One respondent was of the opinion that creativity is stifled due to the fact that people are generally resistant to change, which abounds during the current restructuring process, and that their managers do not want to implement new ideas as it will lead to even more change. The respondent continued to say that *“I trust that after the restructuring process of middle management, support for innovation and forward thinking at this institution will be encouraged as well as be expected from all the staff members.”*

- **Public Relations function:**

The respondents believe that creativity and innovation are features that are supported by the senior staff and that adequate opportunities exist for them to relay their opinions and ideas to the relevant managers.

One response was *“In our department we are always allowed to come with new ideas and we get team support from the rest of the members.”* Another respondent stated that the senior staff members are very

supportive of their ideas, and that they will establish the merit of each proposal before making decisions about it.

Another view was that although everyone supports innovative thinking and would support ideas from staff members, staff does not really propose ideas on a regular basis – they tend to follow the existing paths.

- **Financial Management function:**

Most respondents believe that innovative thinking and ideas are supported and welcomed, but one said “...we are unfortunately restricted by a large number of policies and procedures, and we cannot implement good ideas, thus everything gets lost. Only the most feasible ideas get implemented, and then, only at rare occasions.”

Another response was “the hierarchy of reporting lines, signatures, permission and so forth influences the outcome of valid ideas negatively, often discouraging staff members, and letting them feel unimportant. It seems that no one is trusted with responsibility for their management skills.”

It is clear that innovation and creativity is welcomed and appreciated, without being implemented. A single respondent stated that his/her input is not valued, and that “only the HOD’s plans get implemented.”

- **Marketing function:**

All the respondents agreed that they have regular opportunities to introduce new ideas and that these ideas and innovations are considered by the department. A respondent claimed that innovation and creativity are core to the success of the department and that the department cannot function optimally without them. According to the same respondent they have to ensure that the institution has an approach that “sells the product..”.

Another response was that staff are encouraged to think creatively *“through many innovative thinking and planning sessions as well as numerous in-training workshops and conferences that we have to attend on an ongoing basis.”* Some respondents stated that they attend regular brain-storming sessions to ensure that they all participate in new projects, and that their ideas are entertained at these sessions.

The marketing department also has a monthly newsletter which highlights achievements and the performance of the staff members, which also contributes to a feeling of accomplishment and pride among the staff members. Achievements of staff are also placed on the campus website and published in the bi-annual external journal.

- **Purchasing function:**

The majority of respondents felt that adequate opportunities are created for the staff to introduce new ideas and projects and that *“innovative thinking is encouraged by the department.”* These respondents further stated that the staff members of the purchasing department tend to work together as a group which helps them to support each other’s ideas, projects and innovations.

Another opinion expressed was that they are allowed to be creative and use innovative ideas at individual level, but as a department they are hampered by the internal processes of the HEI which pin down and discourage new ideas and innovations. This respondent continued by saying that innovation is also hampered by the shortage of specialised staff to implement the ideas.

A respondent also alluded to the fact that the purchasing department would rather focus on the job at hand than on the development and promotion of new ideas that could be helpful to the HEI.

- **Research and Development function:**

The respondents stated that there is not an abundance of innovative thinking in their department, but that the senior staff members have an open door policy which allows them *“...to approach them with new ideas when they feel the need.”*

They continued by explaining that the managers would support new ideas if they are believed to be relevant, and that they would continue to *“implement ideas if they are supported by the rest of the team, and when they are within his/her area of authority.”*

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents were generally in agreement that even though innovative thinking is encouraged and believed to be important to the functioning of the department, new ideas are not fully embraced because the department as a unit is resistant to adjustment and change.

One respondent explained that *“some in the department embraces innovative approaches, and would like to implement new ideas, whilst others are critical and not keen to change.”*

Another opinion expressed was that the department can not function without involving staff in planning and accepting their creative contributions, furthermore that the staff is normally willing to find their own solutions for challenges in their immediate environments, but that change in the department as a whole is not embraced.

Some respondents mentioned that they have *“regular meetings whereby new ideas are recruited from staff, and we are sent to workshops and ask for our opinions, but our views are seldom openly used.”*

- **Human Resource function:**

All the respondents concurred that creativity and new ideas are very important to their senior members, and that their abilities and inputs are acknowledged and appreciated. A respondent stated that *“this department fully supports innovative thinking as well as new ideas from staff members.”*

After concluding a process, meetings are held to discuss the process, develop new processes and to streamline old processes. *“Inputs and ideas from staff members that can better the functioning of the department are heavily relied upon and are always important.”* Another respondent confirmed that their views and opinions are frequently called for and discussed during meetings.

If a new idea is raised by a staff member it is normally discussed, and if it can contribute positively to the functioning of the department, it would be implemented. Many respondents agreed that *“new ideas and proposals are implemented regularly as a result of innovation and creativity.”*

## **Question 2:**

**Would you consider the staff in your department as multi-skilled and capable to handle many different work assignments? Explain.**

- **General Management function:**

The opinion most frequently expressed was that staff in general management are able to multi-task. One respondent stated that the staff in

this department are obliged to be multi-skilled, *“because the nature of this department expect employees to be able to write reports, deal with the media, handle budgets, liaise with sponsors, recruit new students, work with current students, sort out possible problems, and so forth, so yes, we are capable of handling many different tasks.”*

Another respondent stated that *“being multi-skilled should be a prerequisite for this, and for that matter, a position in any department, as this office is a coordinating office where all of the activity of the campus takes place, and therefore multi-tasking is necessary to perform duties effectively as well as efficiently.”* Most of the respondents stated that they are members of various committees in addition to their main duties, so as to ensure that they *“stay on top of things at the campus.”*

A single respondent stated that only some persons in the department are capable of multi-tasking – *“the rest are probably capable as well, but they are too lazy to do anything more than the bare minimum. It is too much effort to do anything extra, but, as I said, they are probably capable.”*

- **Public Relations function:**

All respondents concurred that the staff in the public relations department are multi-skilled and able to handle a multitude of different assignments. One respondent stated that staff in their department should be able to adapt to their environment in order to complete the various aspects of their tasks successfully, such as community projects. The respondent continued by stating that training and development of staff members in this department are essential and take a position of *“... very, very high priority in this section.”*

- **Financial Management function:**

All the respondents replied that the staff in the financial department are multi-skilled and can function at different levels of responsibility. A respondent was of the opinion *“that the staff in my department are all*

*highly skilled and very qualified, and can effectively take over the duties of other staff members during holiday times or when someone is on leave. I trust my staff and have the fullest confidence in them and their capabilities.”*

Some respondents were of the opinion that there are “*various processes pertaining procurement that need to be understood, which by its very nature expect us to be multi-skilled.*” The linking these processes to existing policies make confident decision making essential.

The main problem identified by a few respondents is that although the staff seems multi-skilled and very capable, deadlines are not often met which create stressful situations within the department.

- **Marketing function:**

All respondents stated that they are multi-skilled and capable of handling a diverse spectrum of tasks. A response was that “*one should simply look at the different programs ran by us, as well as the variety of services offered to realize that all of the staff are involved in the different programs, often fulfilling different functions during each project.*”

Another respondent stated that their multi-tasking skills should be evident from “*their excellent language skills in both English and Afrikaans, and that our subdivision of media and communications are doing a fantastic job. Attention to detail is important, and all of us help one another as far as we possibly can.*”

Each component within the department has a particular field of expertise and is consequently capable of handling different tasks as a unit. Another response was that “*we are multi-skilled due to a large number of years’ experience in our work.*”

- **Purchasing function:**

Most of the respondents felt that the purchasing department is understaffed forcing them to be multi-skilled. They continued to say that most staff members are well trained for the jobs that they are supposed to do, but that unsuitable staff from other departments are assigned to them alleviate the staff-shortage problem. The inefficiency of these staff members pressurizes existing staff members and increases their workload, forcing them to be multi-skilled in order to carry the workload of these “assigned” staff members, in addition to their normal workload. These “assigned” staff members are often not even computer literate and do not have basic administrative skills.

Some respondents stated that colleagues in the purchasing department *“tend to operate very one dimensional in relation to their specific functions, and are not interested in expanding their knowledge or helping in other tasks than the ones set out in their job descriptions.”*

- **Research and Development function:**

Most of the staff members in this department were in accord that most of their fellow staff members are multi-skilled and are capable of handling different tasks simultaneously. A respondent stated that *“I think that all of us have the ability to multi task, but sometimes some of the tasks are beyond our scopes.”*

These respondents agreed that their department is multi-skilled because they have to handle a variety of situations due to their being *“isolated from the rest of the campus.”*

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

Most of the respondents felt that the staff members in their department are not multi-skilled because *“... there is a serious skills gap, due to a lack of qualifications, causing the rest of us to do the work of other people.”*

Some respondents believed that certain co-workers are not multi skilled saying that *“some staff members have little experience, and the end result is that our workload is doubled by their inefficiency to work effectively,”* while an additional response was that *“many of our co-workers are not accustomed to being intellectually challenged, and I doubt whether they would ever be able to rise to the occasion. Most of the employees suffer from tunnel vision, and they never venture of the beaten track. Multi-skilled is a foreign concept which they would not implement, as it might open new worlds with new challenges for them.”*

Some of the respondents felt that several staff members are highly skilled at performing certain tasks, but that they cannot multi-task and that they are set in their ways. They are *“not interested in adapting or changing.”*

▪ **Human Resource function:**

All the respondents were very positive with regard to their ability of being multi-skilled. The respondents all replied that being multi-skilled is indispensable to being successful in the Human Resource department, as *“we are often busy with different tasks at the same time, and if we cannot do these tasks simultaneously, we would not be able to complete our tasks properly. We must be computer skilled, have good communication skills and we have to be able to handle a multitude of administrative skills as well.”*

Another respondent indicated that the entire department functions very well since staff members are able to *“execute their own duties as well as other duties successfully, and this helps us to complete our work.”* A respondent added that they all received valuable training and development in various fields which enable them to be very efficient.

**Question 3:**

**Comment on opportunities you have to provide feedback (quarterly/yearly) regarding the improvement of the service delivery of your department.**

- **General management function:**

The respondents were of the opinion that there is no formal opportunity to provide feedback on the improvement of service delivery.

A respondent explained that they receive feedback directly when clients complained about poor service delivery. The respondent continued by explaining *“that there are no formal structures in place such as a performance management system whereby assessments (quarterly/yearly) are given (or punished.)”*

Some respondents commented that they do, however, submit a report to the supervisors if they feel that there are aspects in their department that can be improved. A performance management system is also presently under discussion at various forums of the institution and should be implemented soon.

- **Public Relations function:**

The respondents felt that they have adequate opportunities to air their views and to give their *“opinions and concerns to the people who matter.”*

According to the respondents they have regular meetings as well as workshops during which they can air their views. They also submit a quarterly report which provides for comments. Their comments are then consolidated in a broader report which reflects all issues of concern.

A respondent noted that *“we have a team building workshop close to the end of the final quarter of the year, during which we have the opportunity to give opinions and ideas of how we can improve the department. Each*

*individual gets the opportunity to make an input, which we then discuss as a group.”*

- **Financial Management function:**

Most respondents agreed that the quarterly senate report provides them with the only opportunity to give feedback. They also stated that no other channels are available to them thus limiting them to verbal reports on the improvement of service delivery. These respondents attended a course on the improvement of service delivery and commented that they endeavour to improve the service delivery in their department.

One respondent stated that he/she drafts a report concerning factors such as *“personnel and general perceptions”* on a monthly basis which is forwarded to his/her superiors, but that nothing ever comes of it.

- **Marketing function:**

The majority of the respondents commented that they have regular discussions - monthly - regarding their performance and service delivery. They also have to compile a quarterly report which is sent to various committees.

One respondent noted that they also *“evaluate the feedback received from clients on a regular basis, and we try to improve our service accordingly. We sometimes also make use of questionnaires that we send out to some people where we try to determine their needs as apposed to what we think they need. This helps us to adjust our way of thinking and doing.”*

Other respondents explained that they have opportunities to provide feedback in regular senate reports which are discussed at operational in-house meetings.

A single respondent stated that there are no opportunities for feedback.

- **Purchasing function:**

All the respondents reported that there are adequate meetings and opportunities for them to air their views and opinions, normally on a quarterly basis. They stated that they have internal meetings twice a quarter during which they get the chance to give general feedback regarding issues such as service delivery. They added that they receive a report that is discussed with the line manager.

The majority of the respondents said that the main obstacle is that they provide feedback, but to no avail as the many issues that they raise at such meetings are not addressed. They generally felt *“that it is a mad rush without any purpose, and this is due to a lack of specialized staff. It does not help to raise an issue, because nothing will be done about it.”*

- **Research and Development function:**

The respondents agree that opportunities for feedback exist, but that no formal structures exist for doing so.

One opinion was that *“this is an ongoing exercise which has no formal structure, but it is carried out on an ad hoc basis when the need arises.”* Another: *“we communicate to our superior via email or memorandum when we have a problem, but these are the only ways that we converse about possible problems.”*

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents concurred that they have regular opportunities to provide feedback. Most mentioned formal channels like quarterly reports, but mentioned that they have other opportunities as well, depending on the situation.

A respondent explained that they make use of *“departmental questionnaires to ascertain client satisfaction; the institution itself also does regular surveys to gain insight into the level of satisfaction that is experienced by the clients. Our department forms a prominent part of that survey.”*

Another respondent replied that the managers and supervisors study the quarterly reports to assist them in identifying staff who need training and/or additional resources, and that they make an effort try to assist every staff member towards making a success. Another stated that they try to give feedback on every activity that takes place, and that their feedback is used to compile quarterly reports.

One response was that they have regular meetings during which potentially problematic issues are discussed.

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The respondents agreed that no formal guidelines for providing feedback exist, meaning to say that there are no set structures in place to assist them in this regard. In the words of one respondent: *“...there are no feedback, and we do not really have any opportunity to air our voices. No one is really interested in the department, as long as you do your work and stay out of trouble.”*

Another opinion was that they do quarterly reporting but that their inputs are habitually ignored, even if it could potentially improve the service delivery of the department. To this effect one respondent claimed that *“I have sent a report to senior personnel regarding an issue that we had to handle in our department. I feel that the report contained information showing how good the standard of our work is, and it also showed how good our service delivery is, but I do not think that the management saw it in that way. They only saw aspects that they believed were negative, even if it wasn't.”*

Another added that *“line managers sometimes consider information that we send to them via memorandum, but the contents thereof is seldom considered as important.”*

#### **Question 4:**

**To which extent are you consulted regarding new technology available (computer software, printers, etc.) and introduction thereof in your department to assist in the execution of your duties?**

- **General management function:**

The majority of respondents stated that they are *“widely consulted”* when new technology, usually new software which will enable them to perform their duties more efficiently, is introduced into the department. They added that the supervisors frequently prompted them about new software that would ease their burden. One respondent explained that they *“decide upon new technology in consultation with the supervisor. We then arrange for the acquisition of the necessary items.”*

Very few respondents commented that they are never consulted, and that they *“find out about new technology during chats in the passages.”*

- **Public Relations function:**

All respondents agreed that they are never consulted on any new technological advancements or equipment that is introduced. Comments such as *“never,”* and *“nobody consults us”* were made, and one stated that they might be informed *“by chance.”*

A respondent stated that they are afforded the opportunity to attend information sessions regarding the operation of the equipment, but not during the *“what do you need to do your job better – phase.”*

- **Financial Management function:**

The general feelings of respondents may be summarized with *“not very often”*, and *“never at all, decisions are made for us”*, and *“I have never been consulted before.”* New technology is only discussed on occasions when new software is introduced, and then it is more a case of *“this is what we bought; let’s explain how it works”* rather than *“what do you need?”*

Some respondents stated that during sessions conducted by the Centre for Organisational Development they are merely informed – rather than consulted - about the technology that they are going to receive.

- **Marketing function:**

All respondents were in agreement that they are never informed or consulted when new technology is acquired for the department. A respondent said that even though new equipment amounts to a substantial portion of the annual budget of the department, staff members have no opportunity to make any inputs regarding their needs in this regard

Some respondents felt that they would appreciate information in this regard, as they are convinced that they would be able to make valuable inputs.

- **Purchasing function:**

The majority of the respondents stated that they are not consulted when new technology is introduced. When they need new equipment they request it, do research on the item and budget for it, however, they are not consulted when new items are introduced by their superiors. They added

that they *“try to implement technology as much as possible, as it could make their work easier”*.

- **Research and Development function:**

The respondents in this department agree that they are not consulted concerning the technology and equipment that is introduced in their department.

A respondent related that should anyone learn of new equipment that could ease their daily tasks, it would first be discussed amongst departmental members and then proposed to the supervisor. If the latter deemed the proposal worthwhile, the equipment might be acquired for the department. This process is informal as no formal structures exist which allow them to make an input. The respondents feel that their inputs would benefit all.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

All the respondents were of the opinion that they are consulted before new technology is implemented, and that they have the opportunity to motivate their needs prior to the budget being drawn up each year. They also explained that *“our needs are taken in consideration as far as possible when equipment is acquired”*. Although they are not asked regularly what they need, they do receive assistance from the relevant department as well as from their own department whenever they need it.

One member responded that *“staff should, for the sake of professionalism, take the responsibility to identify areas where technological assistance is needed, or when they feel that there is a need for a certain piece of equipment”*. This individual added that the department will assist them as far as possible in the acquisition of the needed equipment.

- **Human Resource function:**

These respondents concur that, although they receive updated technology and software on a regular basis, they are never consulted regarding their needs.

One agitated response was: *"...it took me ten years to convince the department that I need a fax machine to enable me to perform my duties effectively. Ten years. At least now I have it, but it took me years and years of begging and suffering to get the job done via another route."*

### **Question 5:**

**Comment on the relevance and availability of training and development with regard to the usage of office equipment (such as computers, copiers, scanners, etc.).**

- **General management function:**

Most respondents agree that there is adequate opportunity for training and that the Centre for Organisational Development in the Human Resource (HR) department *"frequently informs us of training sessions that we can attend if we want to"*. They further continued that training and development of their skills are *"encouraged in our department"*.

Only one respondent stated that there are no opportunities for training and development, and that he/she *"is never encouraged by management to undergo any training"*.

- **Public Relations function:**

The broad consensus was that there are regular training sessions, but none that would equip staff to cope with new technology and office equipment.

A respondent declared that *“there are normally some information sessions regarding the functioning of the equipment, but that this is also not formal training, so we mostly have to rely on our own logic to figure things out”*.

▪ **Financial Management function:**

Most respondents expressed the view that there is limited training for the usage of new equipment, and that *“you have to rely on yourself to cope with new machines, or figure it out by reading a manual.”* They added that if such training was offered, they were not aware of it, and that they would anyway not be able to attend training sessions due to their heavy workload and the deadlines they have to meet.

A few respondents stated that no training is offered in this regard which creates problems such as *“paper-jams in printers and copiers, which lead to a decrease in productivity, as the rest of the staff cannot use the equipment.”*

One respondent even organizes training for the staff members if it is deemed necessary, to ensure that everyone can benefit from new technology.

▪ **Marketing function:**

Most of the respondents were in accordance that there are regular courses presented by the Centre for Organisational Development in software usage and equipment usage, *“but that it is scheduled in time slots that are impossible to attend due to the fact that it normally falls within our work hours. It would be nice if they could move the times that they have it, as some of us will attend it.”*

The respondents also made clear that their department does not organize training and that they consequently have to attend courses at their own discretion, or *“figure the thing out on your own time.”*

- **Purchasing function:**

The respondents all stated that adequate training opportunities are made available, but that the staff do not attend them.

Some respondents mentioned that the majority of the staff in the purchasing department are technologically highly competent and don't need to attend the workshops, but that those individuals who need the training are not interested in attending them.

- **Research and Development function:**

The overall impression of staff is that training and development opportunities are available, but that these sessions only pay attention to certain computer software programs and not the operation of hardware such as copiers, etc. The respondents also stated that opportunities for training are "*far and few in between,*" and that they are seldom able to attend due to the time-slots during which these sessions are presented. This was confirmed by one respondent which added that they have to rely on their own ingenuity to adapt to new systems and equipment.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

Most members of this department feel that they receive adequate training in the use of new technology and equipment which gives them confidence in using the new additions.

One responded that it is not always possible to send the entire department on a training course, but that they try to send at least one staff member who can then afterwards assist other staff members when using the new equipment. Another response was that they train staff, if at all possible, before implementing new equipment and software in order to lower the levels of tension and frustration people often experience when they are confronted with new, unfamiliar equipment.

A respondent expressed regret that many staff members do not apply their existing knowledge to the usage of office equipment which causes unwarranted situations where equipment becomes dysfunctional and staff have to get along without it.

A single respondent was of the opinion that no training is available.

- **Human Resource function:**

The common belief among the staff members is that there are regular training sessions available pertaining to the ITS system and other computer software systems and programs, but that they have to attend the sessions which are scheduled at very difficult times on their own initiative.

One respondent stated that *“luckily there is a computer person on campus, so if you really have a problem, you can contact him and hope that he is available to help you, or else you are stuck.”*

Some respondents agreed that there is no training in the use and implementation of equipment such as copiers and scanners in the department, and that they are left to *“figure it out, or break it while trying....”*

**Question 6:**

**In your opinion, to which extent does the training and development received by staff go beyond job-specific skills to also include social skills, as well as broader knowledge of the institution?**

- **General management function:**

The majority of the respondents stated that training extends beyond job specific skills: *“Training and development in this department do go beyond job-specific skills and can include any training in any (motivated) skill required in the workplace, be it social or any other skills. We are encouraged to go for training and development sessions.”*

Another added that *“the training that we receive, is relevant, as it exposes an incumbent to the latest innovation and technology. The Centre for Organisational Development informs us regularly of all the courses that we can attend to better a number of skills.”*

Only one respondent stated that the training received by staff does not broaden their horizons.

▪ **Public Relations function:**

The respondents concurred that there are adequate training opportunities and workshops available. These sessions provide them with comprehensive information broad enough to assist them even beyond the borders of their everyday duties.

One respondent exclaimed that *“we are very fortunate to be part of an Institution of Higher Learning because staff members are frequently invited to attend workshops with topics that go beyond only our daily duties. It mostly depends solely on the individual whether the training will be attended or not.”*

Another said that they also budget on a yearly basis for additional consultants which could assist them with team building and skills development such as social skills, as this *“extra expense will make or service so much better, while also improving the skills of our staff members.”*

▪ **Financial Management function:**

The respondents agreed that although most of the courses and workshops that they attend focus primarily on job specific skills, the opportunity to develop other skills such as interpersonal skills and cultural diversity, are readily available. However, their workload prevent them from utilizing these opportunities.

They explained that skills development courses of all kinds are offered by the Organisational Development Centre and that there are many opportunities to attend, but that they are unable to attend due to time constraints. A comment was also made that the availability of these opportunities are not the same for all departments, as some *“receive more training opportunities than others.”*

Most of the respondents also commented that they would appreciate more regular attendance of these workshops because they believe that *“being multi-skilled could only benefit the institution as a whole.”*

- **Marketing function:**

The respondents expressed the opinion that adequate training sessions which are mainly organized by the Human Resource department, are available to them. They also stated that these training sessions are mainly related to job specific skills rather than to the development of skills that can be used outside that area.

One respondent explained that *“opportunities for sessions that go beyond job skills are very limited, although they do exist. The training sessions that we attend, focuses mainly on our daily duties.”*

A further opinion stated that *“this institution lacks enormously in the area of creating events for personnel to engage in each other in a meaningful way on a level which is not academic work related, but would allow us to develop social skills by interacting with one another.”*

A different view was: *“ample opportunities to attend functional and managerial training, but limited training for social and other skills.”*

- **Purchasing function:**

Most of the participants stated that the training does not include broader skills training. The respondents continued by saying that most of the individuals within the department are job driven and do not care about the institution as a whole, and that they only attend the training sessions which would enable them to improve on their job performance.

A small number of the respondents stated that numerous opportunities for development are offered by the Human Resources department and that they support them. Some of them organize a few personal development events every year which are supported by some individuals.

A single respondent expressed his disinterest and said that he would not attend any workshops.

- **Research and Development function:**

The response below summarized most respondents' views: *“the institution offers opportunities for training that develops individuals in many spheres. It is, however, up to the individual to attend the various workshops and seminars that is offered both on campus and at other centres in the country. Some staff members, in all departments, not only ours, are willing to go and they want to enrich themselves, but they experience problems such as time constraints due to the nature of their duties, or managers that refuse to let them have time of to develop themselves.”*

Some of the respondents explained that they are by and large allowed to attend sessions which may directly influence their job performance and that their managers are reluctant to let them attend *“broader training sessions.”* They are, however, of the opinion that opportunities for broader development are available.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents agree that adequate opportunities to attend courses and workshops that will develop them in a broader sense are presented, but that they are not always able to attend these workshops due to time constraints.

Another participant stated that *“the majority of the staff members do not make use of these opportunities, although they are frequently available. I am of the opinion that these workshops should be made compulsory to attend, as it would simplify and streamline our daily activities if everyone understood each other better.”*

It was added by a respondent that *“we as a group identify problems within the department, and we consult the HR department to address our specific needs, and they then custom-make workshop-sessions to address our specific needs.”*

- **Human Resource function:**

The majority of the respondents sense that the training and development sessions that they receive, include social and other non-work related skills: *“the current training and development workshops that are facilitated by the institution embraces life-long principles and all training sessions are started with a five minute presentation of the values of the institution, as this will allow staff to internalize them.”*

Another respondent stated that *“I have attended a number of courses and workshops over the past few years, which included management skills, first aid as well as fire fighting! I strongly feel that all the courses/training that I received included a lot of social and other skills, and that I as a person benefit, not only my job.”*

A single respondent was of the opinion that the training do not contribute to any skills other that work related ones.

**Question 7:**

**Comment on the manner in which authority is delegated within the various levels in your department.**

▪ **General management function:**

Most of the respondents experienced that authority is only delegated when the responsible person becomes unavailable due to the attendance of meetings, leave of absence and so forth. The respondent elaborated that a task is then *“only delegated to a person with enough experience and expertise on the matter to ensure that there will not be any problems”*.

The respondents mentioned that they are normally only responsible for the execution of their own duties. A respondent explained that when work is delegated *“the process is not consistent. Different staff and supervisors are informed differently – some are asked if they want to do the task, while others are told in an autocratic fashion that they will do the task.”*

Another respondent felt that, due to the staff shortage and restructuring process, delegation is also *“dependent on the management style of the supervisor that the department have at that time.”*

▪ **Public Relations function:**

The respondents concurred that tasks are delegated according to rank, for instance, one would only receive a task to execute from one’s superior and not from a person ranking higher, so as to eliminate potential problems which may arise when inexperienced staff members receive daunting tasks to complete.

Accountability is also important because an individual remains responsible for the outcome of a delegated task, even if it is performed by someone else. One respondent felt that delegation can be frustrating because, due to staff shortages, it may happen that a sole employee serves under a few managers and subsequently receive a number of delegated tasks to complete, often without having the necessary background information. This leads to confusion and subsequently poorer service delivery.

Another respondent stated that *“the delegation of tasks in this department is a necessity. Due to a shortage of staff, we have to delegate, otherwise we will never get all the work done. Responsibility as well as accountability is stressed, so one must be sure that you delegate to someone competent to complete the task.”*

▪ **Financial Management function:**

The majority agreed that authority in their department is not delegated due to the fact that they are responsible for finances - a division where tasks are specialized.

A respondent explained that even though minor responsibilities are sometimes delegated, accountability is not, and that in such instances supervision is stretched. Another respondent said that they are only assigned someone else's duties when the latter goes on leave, and then the replacement person is closely monitored. They also stated that accountability cannot be delegated so one must be wary to delegate tasks. They added that all decisions in that regard must be approved by the supervisor of the department.

One participant said that *“Delegation amounts are ludicrous, and the decision authority is very slim. It seems that no one is trusted, and that every decision has to be approved by various committees, creating an environment where the minimum authority is delegated to other staff members.”*

- **Marketing function:**

In general the respondents felt that authority is delegated to different staff members when the situation demands it, and then only to responsible persons with *“adequate experience and knowledge, who knows what to do.”*

A respondent indicated that *“a task can get delegated to you, and the relevant supervisor may delegate the responsibility of that task, but the supervisor is still accountable for the managerial as well as financial responsibilities of the task.”*

The fact that the department is understaffed complicates the delegation process as *“delegation powers are hampered by uncertainty, making it difficult to dish out a task to someone if you do not really know the person.”*

According to one respondent delegation in their department is seldom necessary due to the reality that their tasks are very specialized. He added that delegation is done fairly and that the person who delegated the task, stays accountable.

- **Purchasing function:**

Most respondents agreed that they would perform duties dished out by their superiors. Some respondents also stated that authority is delegated to individuals who are able to do the job, and not randomly.

A nagging problem is the stress that persons in senior positions have to endure because the numerous vacancies in the department complicate the delegation process considerably.

- **Research and Development function:**

The participants concurred that authority is delegated fairly by a more senior person to one which has enough and relevant experience and qualifications to handle the task at hand.

A respondent stated that the person which delegated the tasks most often controls the execution thereof, implying regular check ups and feedback, because he remains accountable. This respondent further commented that full feedback and reporting is mandatory on completion of the task. Another stated that the staff members in this department work cohesively as they are a small staff. Delegation, according to this person, is done fairly.

Authority is delegated to the individual next in line when the situation arises and most of the staff know what is expected of them. The responded continued to say that the staff would carry out their duties in compliance with their position profiles. The respondent further explained that potential problems are discussed with other members of the team and that they would consult a more senior person if the problem persists.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents explained that duties are delegated according to the post level and job description of a person, and that *“accountability and responsibility differ from one designation to another.”*

A respondent added that the head of department remains accountable, but that the individual staff member would be responsible for the decision making in that particular position. He added that work is only delegated to staff members who are responsible and experienced enough to handle the project.

- **Human Resource function:**

The participants agreed that authority is delegated in agreement with the line structure of the department and that tasks are handed down to the

person “*next in line, not randomly.*” They further confirmed that they can discuss problems with their supervisors, but that their inputs are usually negated - even if they present them in their “*delegated state.*”

A respondent said that “*authority is not for us, the workers. All the authority lies with the management. If work is to be done, you are a supervisor. If decisions have to be made, you are a nobody. We do manage our specific functions independently, but we do not receive any recognition for this.*”

### **Question 8:**

**Provide your opinion regarding the extent to which language barriers may influence the administrative practices in your department – and when interacting with other departments.**

- **General management function:**

All the respondents were in accordance that language is not a barrier in their department since the language used is “*the universal business language, namely English.*” One respondent stated that he/she is unhappy because there is no opportunity to “*use African languages.*”

Another respondent stated that “*language barriers are uses as a comfort zone for some lazy staff members – they frequently use it as an excuse for misinterpretations of orders as well as for work not done, although they understand and use the language very well when it suits them.*”

- **Public Relations function:**

The respondents stated that language does not present a problem as English, a language that is used and understood by all, is the medium of communication. They also stated that they adhere to the official language policy and that it solved a few problems.

A respondent commented that confusion sometimes arise because some words have similar meanings which amounts to *“double meanings to some duties that we have to perform.”*

Another respondent explained that language barriers used to be a problem but not anymore, because *“they said that we do not have to worry, just write, grammar and spelling does not count. We should not stress about it.”*

- **Financial Management function:**

The members of the financial department generally felt that there is no language barrier *per se*. They stated that English, a language all in the department are fluent in, is used for communication purposes and for the writing of policies and procedures are written.

Poor communication skills, especially listening skills, were mentioned a the reason behind many misinterpretations which often lead to mistakes which could easily have been avoided.

Also mentioned were *“serious limitations due to uninformed student assistants used at the reception, which creates confusion if they cannot help the people that way that they should, reflecting negatively on our department.”*

- **Marketing function:**

The respondents did not see language as a barrier in this department, as *“English is the official language of this institution, and all staff is expected to linguistically literate and in our department, everybody is. We subsequently do not experience any problems in this regard.”*

A respondent was of the opinion that there is no clear language policy at the institution and that they regard the use of English and Afrikaans as the norm, making use of either or both languages as the situation demands. The person elaborated that during social events or when invitations are sent out, they use Afrikaans, English as well as SeSotho in order to cater for the needs of all involved.

Another stated that English is most often used because most members are comfortable using it and it is understood by all.

- **Purchasing function:**

The respondents all agreed that language *per se* does not pose a problem as the language used in the department is English which is spoken by the majority of persons.

The respondents noted that most staff in the department are not “*administratively minded,*” meaning that they are not very language proficient causing a lot of misunderstandings regarding departmental issues.

The respondents said in addition that some staff members do not care much about using English as the language medium in the department. They would frequently revert to their mother tongues which are not understood by all staff members, leading to confusion and frustration. These staff members are not interested in the improvement of their English proficiency, even if it would enhance their work performance.

- **Research and Development function:**

The general opinion of the respondents was that language only presents a barrier when departmental members deviate from the language policy which prescribes the use of English.

Some respondents also felt that some staff members that they have to deal with, were appointed regardless of their language ability which has *“adverse effects on our productivity, because these persons cannot communicate effectively and sometimes misunderstands certain aspects, and they ten do not do their jobs properly, which often must be redone by other staff members, and we do not always have time to do the work of others who are supposed to be capable.”*

▪ **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents explained that there is no genuine problem with language barriers as English is the language of communication at the institution. They stressed that one has to be fluent to be successful.

Some respondents thought that certain staff members are not fluent enough in the language and that they present difficulties to the supervisor who has to give orders. They *“have to be spoon-fed when we hand out instructions, and you have to check frequently whether they interpreted you correctly. This can take up a lot of unnecessary time, and when you address the issue, you are ‘insensitive’ to their barriers. Most of us are second language speakers, but we want to better ourselves and do not see the acquisition of a language as a problem, so why can’t they do something about the problem? My thoughts are that they would not have an excuse to blame their mistakes on anymore...”*

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The respondents did not perceive a language barrier because they mainly use of English at work. A respondent explained that they sometimes use SeSotho or Afrikaans when it would not cause difficulties to anyone.

Another opinion was that they are fortunate to have staff members able to converse in languages other than English seeing that it improves the service delivery of the department – they can assist people in their own language.

A respondent identified the problem that *“some staff members are not fluent in the English language”* which may cause misunderstandings and consequently place pressure on the rest of the department.

### **Question 9:**

**Comment on the relevance of the training and development that you receive in relation to your duties.**

- **General management function:**

The majority of the respondents agreed that their training and development corresponds with their duties and that *“it enhances our skills and keeps us abreast the latest developments in our field of work.”*

Some respondents stated that they have learned a lot through experience at the HEI, and that their daily tasks have *“bettered my general skills, and, combined with the training that we received, improved my overall skills in the execution of my daily duties.”* The respondents were eager to attend workshops because it would increase their performance.

A single respondent stated that there are no training opportunities available.

- **Public Relations function:**

The respondents had the reservation that even though adequate training and development opportunities exist, the training available is not really

relevant to their field. They are consequently not developed in the areas needed by them to better themselves in their work.

They stated that the training and development sessions are normally aimed at other departments and that they feel as if *“we have to help ourselves to get some info and development.”* One responded that they are restricted in the number of workshops and seminars that they are allowed to attend, and that these sessions are presented when they are unable to attend due to their work hours and duties.

Another respondent felt that you cannot be developed if you are allowed to attend only one workshop per year.

- **Financial Management function:**

The respondents commented that adequate opportunities for training and development exist and that the value of these training sessions, which are generally organized by the Centre for Organisational Development, varies.

Some respondents felt that the training was irrelevant and that they had to rely on themselves as well as their senior staff members to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to perform their tasks.

A respondent mentioned that *“time is a problem, and we cannot always attend these sessions. The training and development is left to each department to obtain, as it is deemed necessary. These sessions are usually not directly related to our tasks, but to the department in general.”*

- **Marketing function:**

Most of the respondents concurred that enough training and development sessions relevant to their daily duties exist. A respondent stated that *“the*

*training that we receive and the workshops that we attend are all relevant and fit for the purpose.”*

One said that most staff are professional and registered with external bodies, and that they must attend a specified number of courses and workshops to satisfy the requirements of these bodies.

Summarized in the words of one respondent: *“there are ample opportunities for us to attend relevant workshops that are full of work related information. These opportunities are there for all staff members, and we are encouraged to attend both internal as well as external workshops and seminars to broaden our scope of thinking and to benchmark with other HEI’s, on a national as well as on an international level.”*

▪ **Purchasing function:**

The respondents stated that training opportunities are available but that they usually cannot attend it due to time constraints. They also stated that the training is too broad, and not job specific. They also perceived a lack of management training which poses problems to persons in managerial positions.

A respondent also mentioned that it would be gratifying to implement the training that they received, but the information unfortunately fall by the wayside in the rush to complete their daily duties.

▪ **Research and Development function:**

The participants viewed their training and development in a positive light and they regard information gleaned at these courses as invaluable to them in the execution of their daily duties. The words of one respondent were *“training is a key factor in this department, for my work as well as for personal development. The most important factor, however, is that*

*improves my performance and allows me to execute my daily duties much better.”*

It was furthermore stated that *“I have been privileged to attend a number of conferences, workshops and so forth which have given me some insight into some aspects of my job. These courses were presented by world experts, and were very insightful.”*

The main concern expressed was time constraints, as some courses are offered during slots which make it impossible for them to attend.

▪ **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents agreed that the training and development available to them are relevant to their duties and it helps them to execute their daily duties more effectively.

A respondent explained that there *“are ample opportunities to develop my skills, and that I just have to attend the workshops that are held on a very regular basis. The department also sends us on frequent sessions.”*

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The majority of the respondents stated that the training and development that they receive are valuable, and that *“the training is good, because it develops you as a person as well as betters your ability to perform your duties.”* One stated that *“98% relevancy has always been achieved in all the training and development that I have received so far,”* and that the training is *“excellent!”*

A response was that they would dearly like to attend more training sessions, but that these often *“clash with other important, work related dates, which makes it impossible for us to attend them.”*

**Question 10:**

## To which extent do policies streamline or hamper you in the execution of your duties?

- **General management function:**

Nearly all respondents felt that the policies and processes do not hamper them in the execution of their daily duties, but that the implementation of the policies are long-winded and thus time consuming.

The policies also change, or *“are withdrawn, or moratoriums are placed on them, and they are not necessarily replaced by other policies, some policies are a lot of fluff, but others are most applicable and very necessary.”*

One respondent stated that *“although the policies are necessary, they frustrate me in the execution of some duties, as they change frequently, and to find and use the correct policies, are sometimes very time consuming.”*

Another respondent felt that the policies restrict innovation and creativity, but admitted that *“they can be beneficial if the problem is clear-cut and routine.”*

- **Public Relations function:**

All respondents agreed the policies hinder them in their duties as it causes delays in the processes that should take place, which *“is an embarrassment when you deal with your clients directly and the red tape that is surrounding a seemingly easy and straight forward task forces you to admit that you cannot help them even if you know what the outcome of the situation will be.”* This view is supported by a respondent who said that *“some policies guides you in the execution of your duties, but mostly it is a huge embarrassment in the eyes of the public, with whom we deal regularly.”*

Another view on this was that the policies and procedures make it difficult for them to complete tasks within a reasonable time, making them look incompetent. A respondent explained that his/her solution to the policy problem is the use of one's common sense, thereby *"bypassing the never-ending policies, and thus saving time."* The respondent continued that the policies change so often making it near impossible for staff members to keep up. It also leads to confusion.

This response summarizes the general feeling of the respondents: *"we have so many policies, I do not think that anyone knows all of them. I hope that I do not get in trouble for completing this questionnaire, maybe some policy somewhere will either encourage or discourage what I am doing now. To be honest – I do not have time to go and look for a policy that is probably being changed as I write. I would rather stick to my professional code of ethics than rely on policies."*

- **Financial Management function:**

All the respondents were adamant that the policies only hamper their work, and that it slows down the processes. They believe that *"many of the policies are not user friendly, and it is very difficult to understand what is expected, and one does not want to go to someone else to explain what is going on the whole time. Many policies or their updated versions are not available on the intranet, and the approval of policies is a very time consuming process."*

Another thought that *"the policies are written to encourage decision making through various committees, and this process does not flow freely, and it is very time consuming. The flow of procurement is inhibited, and the process is hampered. Sometime fixed price terms are exceeded and the lengthy process must start over."*

- **Marketing function:**

The respondents were in agreement that the institution has too many policies of which many are pointless, and that the policies mainly hamper them in the execution of their duties.

One respondent pointed out that *“this institution is over regulated by policies and procedures. This hampers creativity and the willingness of staff members to sometimes risk new things. I believe that you should have some policies in place for critical issues, but trust in your managers and consensus on a decision should also play an important role.”*

Another stated that *“policies and procedures are a major stumbling block, especially in the execution of our functional responsibilities. It is as if we have managers, but the institution does not trust their management and decision making skills. They are not even allowed to use funds that were budgeted for projects without a huge process involved.”*

Another added that the institution is run as a *“bureaucratic, semi-state department,”* and that *“requisitions that takes an hour to be signed in the corporate environment, where things are run to be time efficient, takes weeks at this institution due to the fact that it needs to go through many different, many not relevant and outdated processes.”* The respondent continued to say that this state of affairs tarnishes the institution’s image.

Another respondent said that they understand the need for policies, but that they need to be streamlined in order to benefit staff members rather than impede their performance.

- **Purchasing function:**

All the respondents replied that there are too many policies and that they hinder them in the execution of their duties. They stated that most of the

policies are outdated and not relevant anymore, but that they are still obliged to follow them.

They also stated that certain policies and procedures have been outstanding for more than a year, and that some processes had been halted as a result. Moreover, nobody can do their jobs properly without these policies, but no one seems to care much.

Another issue highlighted was that some of the policies create a lot of stress, especially in situations where emergency work must be carried out. Under these circumstances all policies must be adhered to without exception, even if the situation meanwhile deteriorates. The respondents felt that policies must be wavered under certain circumstances, and that staff should be trusted in their judgments when such situations arise. The respondents all felt that policies hamper them in the execution of their duties, especially in situations where tenders should be obtained.

▪ **Research and Development function:**

All the respondents felt that policies hamper them in the execution of their duties. Most of them give credit to the merit of the policies and they agree that policies are a necessity, but there are too many unnecessary procedures that should be followed.

*One respondent claimed that "Policies have hampered and frustrated the execution of my duties, and although I am aware of the necessity of policies, this institution is bogged down by red tape and bureaucracy. Decisions cannot be taken quickly and the approval of any initiative, if beyond the authority of the department, takes a very long time, and a lot of initiatives are lost because of this."*

*Another opinion was that "policies can streamline your work, but this is not the case at this institution. Poor management blocks the way."*

▪ **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

Most of the respondents felt that the policies are *“too restrictive”* and that it *“hampers the execution of duties. There is too much red tape involved, even when executing a simple action.”*

Some respondents explained the need for the policies and pointed out that some are in order, but added that the *“procedures tied up within a policy are too much, and it wastes a lot of time.”* The respondents were of the opinion that the policies should be revised and shortened so as to *“assist rather than frustrate them.”*

A small number of respondents were of the opinion that the policies streamline their work without any negative effects.

▪ **Human Resource function:**

Comments made by the respondents included statements such as *“ridiculous!”* and *“time consuming”*, as well as *“a total waste of time.”*

One statement was: *“there are more than four hundred different policies in the Human Resources department alone and you have to make a point to check whether the policy that you are using to get a job done, does not transgress somewhere else with another policy. Sometimes it takes longer to look up the relevant policy than to execute the actual task. This frustrates me and my colleagues, and no middle manager can make any crucial decisions.”*

Some respondents claimed the policies protect them and actually streamline their work and that they *“watch your back in case of possible legal action,”* but they all agree that there are too many and that it is time consuming to observe all of them.

**Question 11:**

**How would you describe the effectiveness of the communication in your department – vertical (supervisor) and horizontal (colleagues)?**

- **General management function:**

The broad consensus was that communication in this department is very good, both vertical and horizontal, and that *“good communication is stretched, and we have frequent meetings to make sure that everybody is aware of any issues that might arise.”* Some respondents felt that although communication functions well, vertical communication can be improved – *“vertical communication is very one-sided in some cases, feedback is sometimes not received.”*

The respondents were satisfied with the communication in their department. One stated that *“nobody I know has ever complained – we are very lucky in this regard.”*

A respondent also expressed the view that communication is a very important issue in the general management department, and that good communication skills are encouraged.

- **Public Relations function:**

All the respondents were of the opinion that horizontal and vertical communication in their department function very well, but the latter can be improved.

They stated that gossip and hearsay flourish and that it is sometimes difficult to form your own opinion based on the real facts.

Some respondents said that regular meetings and memorandums would improve communication, both horizontal as well as vertical.

- **Financial Management function:**

The opinions of the respondents varied considerably. Most of the respondents felt that the level of communication, vertical as well as horizontal, is order, but that there is room for improvement.

Some respondents were very satisfied with communication and attributed it to an *“open door policy where we can discuss problems,”* whereas the minority was of the opinion that communication in this department is non-existent, and that they need to have more meetings.

The general opinion, though, was that there is a problem with vertical communication, and that the horizontal communication is functional, but that there is plenty of room for improvement.

- **Marketing function:**

The respondents agreed that both vertical and horizontal communication function very well due to factors such as an open door policy in the department. The open door policy allows them to discuss problem situations as well as ideas, the intranet enables them to send messages quickly and effectively to a number of persons, and finally, frequent meetings provides a forum for them to air their opinions and discuss issues that may bother them.

A respondent also explained that *“we have quarterly discussions with each personnel member regarding his/her functioning within the department as well as any training needs that the person may need. We use this information to create an environment conducive for working, and we want to ensure that our employees are involved in the different processes and discussions within the department.”*

- **Purchasing function:**

The majority of respondents commented that the horizontal communication is good, but that it can improve. The respondents felt that during their fortnightly staff meetings miscommunications amount to the loss of valuable information and messages and subsequent wrong execution of tasks.

One view was that they should function more as a unit and help each other to complete their tasks, without complaining.

All the respondents concurred that vertical communication needs some attention as some messages sent to superiors get lost or are not taken seriously, leading to mixed messages and confusion. There is no clear line of vertical communication.

▪ **Research and Development function:**

Most of the respondents agreed that communication in this department, both vertically as well as horizontally, function very well. When the line manager is out of town, regular meetings are held to keep them up to date with the occurrences that influence them. All felt that even though communication in this department is generally good, there is room for improvement.

▪ **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The respondents view communication in their department as very good, both vertically as well as on the horizontal level.

Some respondents explained that *“we make use of memo’s and meetings on a regular basis to ensure that everyone is informed of all the decisions taken, and of all the things that happen within our department,”* while another believed that *“we make use of e-mails to keep each other informed, and we have regular discussions among ourselves, on an informal as well as formal basis, in the form of meetings.”*

They were in agreement that there are no communication barriers in the department and that they all work together as a team, because it is *“important to know what is going on in your department.”*

- **Human Resource function:**

The majority of the respondents stated that the communication in their department functions very well, both vertically as well as horizontally.

Some respondents expressed the opinion that horizontal communication can be difficult, as *“the role clarification of some individuals is unclear, due to the fact that the staff turnover is so big in some cases. We do not know where a message should go.”*

Another response was that they mainly communicate via e-mail because it is vital to have proof of all communication. A manager responded that they try to have weekly meetings during which the activities of the department are discussed. These meetings provide staff members with the opportunity to participate and to be informed about their tasks for the week.

### **Question 12:**

**Would you say that your daily duties are in line with your position profile? Motivate.**

- **General management function:**

The participants concurred the majority of their tasks are in line with their position profiles and that they do not experience any problems in this regard.

A respondent stated his/her willingness to volunteer for additional tasks beyond his/her profile to ensure that he/she can learn new skills. The respondent also stated that *“taking on extra duties is something I only undertake when time allows it.”*

One respondent stated that sometimes situations arise where decisions have to be taken in areas beyond *“my knowledge and experience, and, although these decisions can have disastrous consequences, nobody seems to mind that I am put in control thereof. My supervisor is still accountable, but it makes me uneasy.”*

- **Public Relations function:**

Most respondents were of the opinion that their position profiles correspond with their duties, but that they experience some difficulties. The opinions of the respondents vary from *“yes, definitely”*, to *“no, and it will probably never be in line.”*

Some respondents felt that their primary duties are covered by their position profile, but that they have to perform *“additional tasks due to the freezing of posts – staff shortages forces us perform duties that we sometimes have no knowledge of.”*

Other respondents claimed that the duties they have to perform do not correspond with their position profiles, but that it would be no use complaining about it.

- **Financial Management function:**

The majority of the respondents were *“doing what we are supposed to be doing, and that their duties and activities are structured in line with their position profiles”*, and they agree that their duties match their position profiles.

However, some felt that the duties that they are executing are not in their profiles, and that *“a lot of responsibilities is given to me that does not fit my position profile.”*

Some respondents also explained that *“our physical duty hours are way out of line with our contract duties”*.

- **Marketing function:**

The respondents were in accord that most of their duties are within the scope of their position profiles.

A respondent also stated that the restructuring process causes understaffing which forces them to perform duties not covered by their profile so as to ensure that the department runs smoothly and effectively.

Another respondent explained that it *“is difficult to condense ones’ duties onto a piece of paper, but yes, mostly our duties are in line, butt sometimes we have to take on extra duties as well. This depends on the situation at hand, mostly due to the staff situation – we do not have enough manpower to ensure that you only do your assigned workload.”*

- **Purchasing function:**

Only a few respondents said that their workload is in accordance with their position profiles, and they stated that they would discuss any deviations with their supervisor if they deem it necessary.

The majority of the respondents stated that the duties that they are performing are not within the limits of their position profiles as a result of staff shortages, for example. They stated that when someone leaves the university they have to absorb the extra workload without being granted extension of deadlines or additional remuneration. They continued that due to restructuring, new staff might not be appointed, leading to the additional tasks becoming theirs permanently, without their position profiles being revised or extra remuneration being offered.

One respondent stated that he/she feels like a PA (personal assistant).

- **Research and Development function:**

The majority of the respondents were of the opinion that their daily duties are in agreement with their position profiles.

Some respondents stated that they do more than what is expected of them. The general feeling was that this is caused by the restructuring process, and that they are understaffed. They thus have to take on additional duties to ensure the smooth running of the department as a whole.

One participant explained that: *“most of the duties that I perform are within my position profile, but there are many duties I execute and decisions that I make that are beyond my profile. I am sometimes also allowed to explore initiatives that can contribute to the functioning of this department.”*

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

All respondents commented that *“our tasks are more or less in line with our position profiles.”*

The majority of the respondents stated that they are understaffed and stressed because the duties of the *“absent staff are thrown in our direction”*. One complained that *“I have a lot of unnecessary pressure on me, and some of the extra tasks that I have to deal with, requires a lot of responsibility. I wish that some of these tasks can be shifted to other responsible individuals, as I am not the only responsible person in the department, but I got all the difficult tasks.”*

The respondents agreed that their *“tasks fit the position profiles of their jobs – as well as the profiles of all the frozen posts...”*

- **Human Resource function:**

All the respondents were in accordance that the duties that they perform are not in line with their position profiles, and that they have an extra workload due to the shortage of staff in the department.

One respondent stated that he/she does a lot of extra work, *“simply to get the job done..”*. Another felt that they do not really want to do all the extra work because it gets in the way of the performing of their actual allocated duties, but that *“it will affect service provision adversely if we do not complete these duties, and that will reflect negatively on our department.”*

### **Question 13:**

**Does your department stress close supervision as well as accountability? Explain.**

- **General management function:**

The respondents stated that they do not report to their supervisor daily but that they remain accountable for the decisions that they make.

A respondent explained that *“no decisions are made in isolation, if it is an important decision which affects the entire department, meetings are held and the best course of action is decided on.”*

Another respondent stated that each of them has specific responsibilities, even if close supervision is not stretched, and that they know exactly which decisions they are allowed to make, adding that they would be held accountable for situations that were created by their decision making. The respondent continued by saying that there is a *“high level of communication in the department, and decisions are often left to the discretion of the person responsible for the task”*.

One respondent stated that his/her work is checked daily and that problems that arise are dealt with immediately.

- **Public Relations function:**

The respondents concurred that accountability is stressed, although close supervision is not the norm.

A respondent stated that: *“Record is kept of our actions, to ensure that track is kept of our mistakes and to ensure that it will not happen again. This procedure enables us to perform better, and reminds us that we are supervised.”*

Another respondent stated that it is expected of them to submit regular reports on the duties that they executed, while another explained that they are all professionals with a professional code of conduct which emphasizes accountability of all decisions and actions taken.

- **Financial Management function:**

All the respondents made clear that they are held accountable for each and every decision that they take, even though their work is not checked on a daily basis and they are not supervised closely. This state of affairs contrasts with the view that *“the department stresses control of people and their decisions above everything else.”*

Individuals in the department are held responsible for the work that they do, together with their supervisor.

- **Marketing function:**

The respondents stated that *“nobody looks over our shoulders, but we have to report to someone.”* They continued to say that every person knows what is expected of him and they try to adhere to the guidelines. The respondents report to their supervisors and although every task is not

in fact supervised, they are still accountable for all decisions taken. A respondent stated that *“I rather ask a superior about something when I am not sure, as I am accountable for a wrong choice.”*

Another opinion was that *“we consult one another when we are unsure of a decision. We encourage this approach, because we all learn from it.”*

- **Purchasing function:**

All the respondents stated that accountability is stressed due to the nature of their work. They also stated that they generally *“do their own thing”* within the framework set by their supervisors. However, sometimes they don't even have a supervisor due to restructuring and major staff shortages: *“Without proper means of supervision, how can somebody be held accountable for their actions?”*

All the respondents stressed the fact that they are understaffed.

- **Research and Development function:**

The respondent by and large agreed that close supervision is not stressed, and that they follow the work ethic of trust amongst staff members.

A respondent stated that *“this department does not stress close supervision, just the opposite. We are encouraged to take the initiative when problems arise, and are assured that the line manager will support us in addressing the problem. We are, however, accountable for the actions we take and decisions that we make.”*

Another respondent emphasized this statement, and also stressed that they are held accountable for all the actions that they take.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The participants were of the opinion that there is an ethos of mutual trust in their department and that close supervision is not stressed.

A respondent explained that *“close supervision is a terrible management style, and that the prospects of a healthy work environment can be ruined if you run after subordinates and pep over their shoulders the entire time.”* Another stated that they allow for some flexibility in their department as long as the job gets done. Accountability is regarded as very important, and every person is accountable for their decisions.

A respondent asserted that they are all professionals who understand their duties. They have regular meetings during which they give feedback on their choices and decisions. Staff members are all held accountable for their actions.

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The respondents explained that accountability as well as close supervision are stressed in this department owing to *“the sensitive nature of the work.”*

According to a respondent their work is often double checked and even checked again, since mistakes with salaries, bonuses and other sensitive aspects such as the availability of leave, sick leave, and so forth can be very costly.

They continued to emphasize that they work with very confidential information and that they are held accountable for mistakes made as well as for any *“leaked information.”*

**Question 14:**

**Comment on the management style used in your department and state how this style may influence the productivity of the department.**

- **General management function:**

All the respondents agreed that the management style followed in this department is a democratic, open door style. One respondent explained that the management style is *“positive and collaborative, and that it ensures that the department is run as a unit where the different members involved in the department know exactly what is going on.”*

Another respondent elaborated by saying that *“an open door policy is maintained, and friendly, helpful assistance is given where needed. This has worked in our department, as mutual trust between staff members exists.”*

Some respondents were of the opinion that respect is the key ingredient to the success of the department – *“our department has a democratic management style where we are all treated as peers, therefore every input that we make, is treated with respect. There is, because of this, a sense of ownership in whatever is done, since each person has been given a chance to be part thereof.”*

This view was supported by other respondents as well, who further explained that they experience a sense of openness and trust in this department. This leads to mutual guidance and respect.

- **Public Relations function:**

Most of the respondents felt that the dominating management style is democratic, and that they are all consulted when certain decisions are taken.

The opinion of one of the respondents was that *“there are meetings held with us on a regular basis, and we sometimes get the opportunity to make an input, depending on the nature of the situation,”* while another respondent explains that *“work is discussed and planned properly, with us*

*being able to give inputs here and there. We are also given regular feedback on decisions that were taken.”*

Respondents were mostly convinced that the methods employed in their department are conducive for productivity and it was clear that they felt very impressed about the way in which the department is managed .

One respondent was of the opinion that everyone in the department has certain rules to follow, while the supervisor does as he or she pleases. When certain decisions are queried, the answer is *“because that is what the people wants”*, regardless of the rules and regulations. This tends to have a negative influence on the productivity of the department.

- **Financial Management function:**

The dominating management style, according to the respondents, is crisis-management, which *“places some stress on the staff.”*

Respondents felt that this management style is not beneficial for the productivity of the department. Permission has to be asked constantly to perform even small tasks, slowing down processes yet more.

One opinion of a respondent was that the *“crisis management style is the main management style of this department. There is in some cases no advance planning, and the deadlines are not met. This is mostly due to the fact that we are understaffed.”*

- **Marketing function:**

The general opinion of the respondents was that an open door management policy is followed, allowing for *“the enhancement of the work turnover, as well as urgent issues that gets handled faster and more effectively.”* Some respondents felt that a participative management approach, also known as a consensus approach is followed.

One respondent stated that *“this is the only approach which is effective with professional people, and everyone is happy due to the democratic nature of this approach.”* She continued that the approach is sometimes adapted to a more direct/authoritarian style in cases of conflict or other work ethical issues, but that *“this only enhances the productivity and willingness of the staff to assist and be more creative.”*

This view was shared by a number of respondents.

- **Purchasing function:**

All the respondents felt that there are no specific management style to be identified and they *“do not have any guidance and back-up, and we do our own thing as we see fit.”*

Respondents stated that they are expected to merely execute their given duties and that they are all accountable and responsible for their actions according to their position profiles.

One respondent was of the opinion that although an open door policy is followed, there are opportunities to discuss issues that might have risen from the daily work situation.

- **Research and Development function:**

The respondents were of the opinion that *“the management style is very informal and supportive and that the managers are always looking for means to grow and support the initiatives of the staff. The staff also always receives recognition for their hard work, and is thanked for a job well done.”*

Another opinion is that the management style is *“laissez-faire when there is no crisis, and autocratic as soon as a problem arises.”*

One respondent indicated that a liberal management style based on trust is followed and that, as a result, all employees work together in harmony.

▪ **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

The general opinion was that the current management style shows a strong tendency toward autocracy and staff members seldom get the opportunity to give their inputs.

One respondent explained that *“decisions are often made without consulting us, the management team, and sometimes even without consulting the staff that is directly involved in the decisions. This creates feelings of distrust, frustration, confusion and in the end a lack of dedication and focus. This style is counter productive and staff now normally waits until they are directly asked to perform a task, instead of being pro-active, creative and supportive.”*

Some respondents felt that the management style is *“kind of democratic, since they do, at times, get the opportunity to give inputs. This, however very seldom happens. One respondent stated that he/she is “discouraged and frustrated.”*

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The respondents all stated that a relaxed, democratic and participative management style is followed in their department, and this influences their productivity in a positive way.

As a respondent explained: *“My supervisors trust me and my judgment enough to allow me to go on and do my work a way that suits me, and with which I am comfortable. I am still accountable for my decisions, and I still have to report to my senior, but they do not breathe down my neck the whole day. This encourages me to be a better worker, and I like to proof to them that they are not making a mistake.”*

Another respondent was of the opinion that this management style allows them to be comfortable working together, as they do not feel threatened by one another. They felt that they were at liberty to approach their managers with a problem whenever they feel the need to.

**Question 15:**

**To what extent, according to you, are problem areas resolved within a reasonable time frame?**

▪ **General management function:**

Respondents were all of opinion that problem areas are resolved as soon as possible. There is no problem with a time frame.

One respondent explained that *“problems are solved as speedily as possible, although every problem will depend on its own merit, which naturally dictates whether the timeframe given is sufficient for it to be satisfactorily addressed.”*

Another respondent mentioned that that they do not really experience problems in their department, as they do proper planning which ensures that *“things run smoothly.”*

▪ **Public Relations function:**

Respondents indicated that most of their problems are resolved within a reasonable time frame, except problems related to the Human Resources and Facilities Management functions. This is due the many processes and policies that have to be adhered to.

One respondent explained that although they hold meetings on a regular basis to discuss problems, some of the actions dealing with those problems take too long.

A few respondents felt that some problems persist, since people who are supposed to take action are too afraid to 'get into trouble'. Some incidents are treated *"as if it never happened, it is just ignored, or the process is stretched out on purpose, until the issue is not an issue anymore."*

- **Financial Management function:**

The general opinion of the respondents was that problems seldom occur, and if they do, it is resolved without delay. A few, though, felt that it is no use to complain, as no efforts are made to resolve the problem at hand. Opinions such as *"too slow,"* and *"not soon enough"* as well as *"not at all"* and *"problem areas are not really solved"* were found.

According to one respondent, *"if the unthinkable happens and a problem is taken further, it takes a very long time to resolve the issue which, by then, is not really a problem any more, so the process was wasted in any case."*

A single respondent was of the opinion that problems are resolved during a *"reasonable, but slow"* time frame.

- **Marketing function:**

The vast majority of respondents were of the opinion that problem areas get solved in a very short time frame due to excellent cooperation. The general consensus was that they usually join efforts to solve certain problems – an approach that speeds up the matter.

One respondent explained that *"problem areas are resolved according to set time frames according to project management principles, and the involved parties are allowed to consult with each other on a regular basis, and are committed to the set time frame, allowing us to solve the problem quickly."*

A single respondent felt that his/her problems are never resolved.

- **Purchasing function:**

All the respondents indicated that small problems are resolved quickly, and they feel at liberty to approach their supervisor and sort out potential problems. They agreed that bigger problems take longer to solve.

One respondent stated that there is a lot of room for improvement when solving bigger problems, due to *“a lack of specialized staff as well as lengthy processes that the staff has to conform to, such as outdated systems as well as policies that hamper processes.”*

- **Research and Development function:**

The general opinion was that *“serious problems tend to get resolved in a very short time frame, while smaller, more insignificant problems tend to take longer to be resolved..”*

In support of the opinion above, one respondent stated, that *“the time-frame depends on the priority of the problem. Matters of urgency which might have an influence on the productivity of the department such as funding will be addressed immediately. Some less important issues are often left to either sort themselves out or to become big issues, which have to be resolved.”*

- **Production/Operations function:**

The majority of the respondents indicated that the main problems are addressed and often resolved or given a *“temporary quick-fix”*, but nothing constructive is done about other problems that they experience or complain about.

One respondent explained that *“some measures are taken from time to time to minimize the problem, but nothing is done to eliminate it permanently. Some of these issues we have been battling with now for the past eight years.”*

A further opinion was that departmental issues are resolved quickly, but problems that need to be solved by committees outside the departments *“almost never get resolved.”*

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The general opinion was that problems are resolved within a reasonable time frame, ranging from one day to a week. On rare occasions it takes longer, for instance when it is a complex problem that cannot be handled by the department itself.

One respondent explained that *“we solve our problems quickly, as we have open lines of communication and we are open and truthful – we call a spade a spade. If there is a disagreement, we sit around a table and we discuss and debate the issue immediately, so it is solved as quickly as possible.”*

Another respondent stated that problems are usually discussed with supervisors, and efforts are made to resolve these.

**Question 16:**

**What would you consider to be the areas that present the most problems within your department? You may write more than one (if applicable).**

- **General management function:**

The main concern was that, despite the fact that communication is generally good within the department, vertical communication could be improved.

Another problem identified was that, because they follow a “*work-together*” management style, some requests given by senior staff members are not always taken seriously enough.

- **Public Relations function:**

A main concern in this department was that students, especially the Student Representative Council, seem to have too much power and they do not perform their duties properly. They order members of the department around as if “*they own the place, meanwhile, they are supposed to help us, which they do not do, and in many cases they just waste our time and resources*”. Another respondent said that “*the SRC generally fail to do their job, but loves telling you how to do yours...*,” and yet another “*the students, especially the SRC, are spoiled, and they have too much power. They are getting descriptive and full of demands.*”

A further concern was that of understaffing, leading to overworked staff and the negligence of certain key duties. Mistrust and clique-forming among staff members are also a problem, as this affects the way in which the manager treats certain individuals.

- **Financial Management function:**

Most of the respondents felt that the main problems in the financial department are attributed to poor communication - “*communication in this department is almost non-existent*” - , which lead to misunderstandings

and *“mixed messages,”* as well as poor people skills, and *“very bad time management, and poor (no) planning, which leads to crisis management and a higher level of stress to all the members involved in this department on a constant basis.”*

Some respondents were of the opinion that the tender processes, as well as asset management, are some of the biggest problems in the department. The processes involved in these are very lengthy and sometimes hinder the timeous execution of duties.

- **Marketing function:**

Respondents viewed the restructuring process as well as the uncertainty it brings as the most threatening problem.

One response was that *“the permanence of certain posts due to affirmative action is a problem, as some of us do not know whether we will have work for much longer. Some staff already applied for jobs at other HEI’s, which makes it difficult to know who is on your team, and with whom they are going to be replaced, that is, if they are replaced.”*

Another response was that they are short of staff, resulting in an increased workload. One of the opinions expressed was that there is a lot of uncertainty regarding the future in the light of the current restructuring, and that it is *“difficult to keep people motivated in the light of some rigid structure of the institution. How can you motivate someone if you don’t even know that your job is safe?”*

Some respondents felt that there should be a better performance management system in place, since the current one is not effective enough.

- **Purchasing function:**

All respondents agreed that communication internally as well as with other departments hamper the functioning of the department. They further indicated that there is a lack of specialized and educated staff. This slows down the work, as the remaining staff members have to carry a heavier workload. Some staff in administrative positions has no administrative background, nor any experience, and they cannot perform their functions adequately.

Apparently no personal assistant is available, and the work supposed to be done by such a person is divided amongst the existing, already overworked staff members. Other factors mentioned were a lack of goals – they do not know what they strive towards, and there is no sensible reporting about the functioning of the department.

One respondent explained that *“cultural differences lead to different perceptions about how things are done, and these situations are dealt with utmost care, as to prevent any sensitive ‘racial issues’.”*

▪ **Research and Development function:**

The main concern was that communication in the department could be improved, but this was not regarded as a big issue. In particular, horizontal communication has to be worked on.

The shortage of staff members was another problem which was addressed. Respondents indicated that some of them carry too heavy a workload, and this keeps them from performing their duties properly.

▪ **Production/Operations function:**

The respondents felt that there are many problems facing their department, the main concerns being the fact that they are understaffed, and the uncertainty that goes with it, the *“lack of knowing what the future of our department is”*, as well as the lack of discipline within the department,

as staff sometimes *“do as they please, without respect to senior staff members.”*

Some respondents also claimed that there are physical problems, such as the maintenance of their buildings and facilities that is not on par, as well as factors such as emotional frustrations caused by the lack of consultation during the decision making process within the department.

▪ **Human Resource function:**

The majority of the respondents felt that they are under tremendous stress, as they are understaffed. One stated that it is difficult to take leave, *“as staff does not want temps in this department, due to the confidential nature of the information that we work with”*.

Some respondents stated that communication should be addressed, as they sometimes *“communicate past one another.”* They also felt that persons in other departments ignore the deadlines and notices they set to make their work easier. This necessarily results in work that has to be redone and updated more frequently than needed.

**Question 17:**

**Suggest possible solutions (in short) to address the problems you mentioned in the previous question.**

▪ **General management function:**

The respondents would like to receive more feedback on meetings that are held, and senior staff should stress the importance of decisions taken. This, according to the respondents, will ensure that tasks given are executed faster and with the necessary urgency.

▪ **Public Relations function:**

Suggestions made by the respondents include statements such as the following: *“The institution should realize that they are giving too much power to children who are not even qualified yet. They are getting away with too much, and the institution should not be run by them, but by individuals who have the experience as well as the qualifications to do so,”* and *“more discipline should be brought into the system – the students should not be able to make and break as they please, they should have rules to which they must adhere to, and they should stop covering for them.”*

To solve the other problems mentioned, respondents suggested the appointment of more staff and shortening the policies and procedures when appointing them, as well as making them more *“user-friendly”*.

▪ **Financial Management function:**

Suggestions made by respondents were that *“the management style as well as the approach toward the staff should be changed – realize that you are working with intelligent human beings, and that people need to be treated with dignity and respect,”* and *“realize that different opinions need to be encouraged to produce the best possible result for the department”,* and that a *“feeling of belonging should be created for the staff members – remember birthdays, sickness, show general interest in one another”*.

Other respondents felt that the department should plan in advance, as poor planning leads to constant crisis management and missed deadlines.

There should be systematic planning to which they can adhere to on a monthly basis.

Some respondents preferred software to be updated regularly and *“lengthy tender processes should be made shorter, and that not so many committees should be involved.”*

Respondents also felt that there should be more staff appointed in the asset management division.

▪ **Marketing function:**

The general response was that permanent appointments should be made as soon as possible, as this would allow the staff members to structure their activities accordingly. An opinion was also expressed that there should be a so-called horizon clause for affirmative action. This would allow staff members to plan their futures accordingly, and it would also ease some of the stress that they are experiencing.

Another respondent stated that there should be a formal investigation into the functions and responsibilities of some staff members. There should also be *“a proper organizational structure which should be filled with staff that can do the job. The vacancies must be filled so that we can be allowed to continue with our actual functions.”*

A different opinion was that *“restructuring should always be done in the shortest period of time, and with cognizance of the human factor. It is not to be a cold and clinical process only. The institution should empower managers to be able to award top performing personnel and should not have a rigid structure in place only for handling by external bodies.”*

Some respondents commented that there should be a better performance appraisal system in place, as this may also motivate persons during difficult times.

- **Purchasing function:**

Respondents wanted more opportunities to voice their opinions, and meetings should be held during which problems are discussed. Employees should be forced to report on all tasks completed, and there should be “*openness*” when discussing problems. More time should be allocated to meetings as well as discussions.

Some respondents explained that existing staff should know exactly what their goals are, as well as how these should be achieved.

Another issue that they felt strongly about is the fact that only well qualified staff should be appointed, as this will automatically “*lessen the burden and bring down the stress levels*” of the existing staff members.

- **Research and Development function:**

A possible solution to the communication issue is that “*we can have more internal meetings and more regular memorandums, which will remind us about important things.*”

Another opinion is that temporary staff should be appointed in permanent positions, as this will allow the functional area to do realistic and consistent work allocations.

A further opinion was that work ethics should be addressed during performance appraisals as to remind staff members about their priorities.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

Respondents were of the opinion that the management of the department should involve them in the decision making process, as they are expected to execute those decisions. They also felt that they should be informed of

actions to be taken by their department. All in all they needed a more democratic management style.

Respondents further indicated that the institution as a whole should give them an idea *“of what is going on, because the uncertainty is unbearable”*. A respondent explained that *“we need to know what the senior management is thinking, how they argue, and what we, as a department, have to do to help them achieve their set goals and aims. We are kept in the dark.”*

Some respondents were also of the opinion that additional staff members should be appointed in a permanent capacity. One respondent stated that there should be disciplinary action taken against undisciplined staff members, since they are causing the work environment as a whole to be experienced in a negative way by all.

▪ **Human Resource function:**

Respondents were of the opinion that staff shortages should be addressed and that the lines of communication be revised, as *“some colleagues send around post-its with messages, while others use word of mouth, and others make use of the e-mail facility.”*

They also felt that people should adhere to the deadlines they set. This will reduce the stress under which they are working.

**Question 18:**

**Comment on the possible negative influence(s) that other departments may have on the service delivery of your department (those that your department link with).**

- **General management function:**

The main concern of the respondents is the time management abilities of other departments. One respondent stated that *“the other departments wait until the deadline before they ask us for something, and then all requests from them are marked ‘urgent,’ which causes us to run around and panic.”*

Respondents also identified problems such as questionable decisions made by other departments. These decisions have to be sorted out by them (general management) and this can cause problems in the department, even in cases where they are not responsible for the decisions made.

An example of this can be found in the following reaction of a respondent: *“Matters to be dealt with in a certain matter is not done according to the specifications, and this is not communicated with us, causing us to make mistakes that are technically not our fault, but due to bad decisions and poor communication from other departments.”*

- **Public Relations function:**

In general other departments are normally viewed as supportive and understanding; but they tend not to see the importance of the requests made by the public relations department. Actions taken by other departments further tend to be slow and tedious.

Some of the respondents felt that, since they support other departments, those departments may just as well support their endeavours in turn – something that occurs seldom, if ever.

A further response was that there are delays in the feedback that they receive from other departments, which then appears as if they can not do their work. This, in turn, *“gives the idea to the students that we cannot*

*help them, which can lead to mass action and negative publicity, and the finger is then pointed to us, even if we are not the culprits.”*

- **Financial Management function:**

Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the only problem they experience is poor communication among themselves as well as with other departments, and that this sometimes leads to problems.

One respondent indicated that the planning division of the HEI responsible for the restructuring process negatively influences the productivity of all the departments in the HEI, as most staff members are temporary and gets reassigned repeatedly. New temporary staff also has to be trained frequently.

The time taken to inform the department which positions can be filled with permanent staff members should be shortened, as this will allow the department to appoint permanent staff members faster. They could then be trained sooner, thereby helping to decrease the workload of the existing members and reducing the overall level of stress in the department.

- **Marketing function:**

The main concerns of the marketing department were that they are not always supported by other departments and that certain role models that need to encourage students and staff alike, have a very low morale. This leads to departments not cooperating effectively.

Respondents were of the opinion that their main problem is experienced with the Human Resource department, since this department does not offer adequate human resources and support to do their (marketing function) work effectively.

They also felt that, due to the restructuring process, the management structure as a whole is not conducive to the productivity levels of this department and of the institution as a whole.

A different response was that they are not always informed of the activities of other departments, which could lead to the misinterpretation of information.

- **Purchasing function:**

The majority of the respondents concurred that the channel of communication between the departments are not open enough, and that, although there are effective communication channels to use, certain departments *“follow their own heads”*. This leads to a situation where *“certain messages get lost along the way, creating confusion”*.

The main concern was that the financial department does not process orders quickly enough, leading to *“frustration in our as well as other departments, because they might need something urgently, and blame us if the process is too slow – even if the hiccup is not with us.”*

Some respondents felt that certain procurement processes are too lengthy for the task at hand.

One respondent stated that *“sometimes the paperwork takes longer than the processing and purchasing of the entire order”*. He further commented that this leads to a considerable amount of tension and frustration within the department.

- **Research and Development function:**

Some respondents explained that they are dependent on other departments for services such as funding, and the time it takes to approve payment of certain projects delays the execution of these tasks. They felt

that there are too many policies - every decision must go through quite a number of committees to be approved, however small the decision to be made.

- **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

Respondents indicated that both the financial and the human resources departments have the biggest influence on their service delivery. They feel that *“orders are being placed by us, but we never receive the goods in time, leading to frustration.”*

Another respondent stated that *“we have to send paperwork over to HR over and over again – it is as if it gets lost along the way. We have to redo the same work over and over again.”*

Some respondents alluded to the fact that there are delays in the responses from other departments to requests made. These delays impact on their functioning in a negative way, as it hampers their productivity.

- **Human Resource function:**

The main concerns this department have with other departments are the ignoring of deadlines and important notices. The human resources personnel felt that the other departments are first to complain about a matter, but they *“ignore the fact that they were responsible for the holdup due to their own lack of discipline.”*

They also wanted other departments to take more care with the information that they send though – they have to check the accuracy thereof.

**Question 19:**

**Provide suggestions on how you would positively address the comments made in the previous question.**

▪ **General management function:**

The respondents felt that there should be more meetings in all departments during which certain aspects should be explained again. Staff members should also get frequent memorandums containing information related to their tasks.

Some respondents stated that that there should be more training and development sessions to develop the decision making as well as communication skills among the employees of all departments.

▪ **Public Relations function:**

Respondents were of the opinion that meetings should be held on a more regular basis, and that other departments should be informed of all decisions taken. There should further be an agreement as to the time frame of actions taken so that no faulty information is given through to people.

Some respondents added that there was a need for more discipline as far as students were concerned. Students are causing unnecessary problems and this should not be allowed.

▪ **Financial Management function:**

The majority of respondents commented that all the departments should function independently and there should be specific guidelines on how and when they should deal with one another. The processes and procedures followed should also be shorter. They also preferred monthly meetings to

be held with all staff members to inform them of any changes of processes and related matters. Similar meetings should be held with supervisors on a fortnightly basis. More frequent meetings will improve communication which, in turn, will eliminate misunderstandings. They also pointed out that this will build interpersonal relationships, benefiting the functioning of the department as a whole.

A respondent further alluded to the fact that *“proper consulting processes with sufficient information to all stakeholders involved will minimize problem areas such as post availability for the appointment of permanent staff members.”*

- **Marketing function:**

Respondents offered solutions which included the institution implementing professional consultation practices according to the labour law, and the clear stipulation of permanent appointments. Appointments should also be based on merit and not on other factors. They referred to the so-called horizon clause that could guide employees in terms of their appointments. According to them, this would relieve some of the tension and stress experienced in the department and the institution as a whole.

Other opinions included that a formal work-study investigation should be concluded to determine the various tasks and responsibilities of staff members. New appointments should be made according to the actual needs of the department, and not the needs as perceived by management.

One respondent added that communication between the various departments should be better aligned, as this will allow the marketing division to function at an optimum level.

- **Purchasing function:**

Respondents felt that all communication channels should be revised and relevant steps should be taken to communicate these to all the

departments. Any problems experienced at any stage of the process could be communicated to the relevant person. Care should be taken that the problem is rectified before it gets out of hand.

One respondent was of the opinion that all staff should be made aware of time consuming processes and how they work, so as to ensure that no step is left out, *“ensuring that the process uses the minimum amount of time.”*

▪ **Research and Development function:**

Some of the respondents pointed out that the restructuring process might resolve many different management problems. They also wanted the process to be fast tracked so that the uncertainty surrounding it can be cleared.

Other respondents felt that the process of going through various committees to get permission and approval for certain decisions should be shortened, as this will ensure smooth functioning and efficient completion of projects.

▪ **Production/Operations (Services) function:**

Respondents were of the opinion that important documents should be hand-delivered and signed for at reception. They pointed out that e-mailing documents would have been an ideal solution, but the signature issue makes that option impossible.

One respondent mentioned that policies have to be more streamlined; those departments who do not stick to time frames should be given specific time limits. Measures should then be implemented to ensure that they keep to the time limits as stated.

▪ **Human Resource function:**

Respondents were of the opinion that staff members of all departments should “*work with one another, not against one another*”. One opinion was that the communication structures should be similar in all departments, as this will ensure that information is received by a larger number of persons.

They also preferred designated persons in each department to be held responsible for the correctness of the information that is disseminated, as this will have a positive influence on the functioning of the human resources department.

Final recommendations are forthcoming in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter concludes the study and also indicates recommendations regarding the findings on the administrative practices in the different functional

areas of an HEI. The discussion around the literature study was concluded in Chapter two. Chapter three outlined the research design and method of data collection and Chapter four presented the findings of the empirical phase of the study. The first section of this chapter outlines the conclusions drawn from the literature review.

## **5.2 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE LITERATURE**

5.2.1 Educational institutions, including Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), share valuable characteristics with profit-making organizations. HEI's are thus seen as organizations (cf. 2.2).

5.2.2 Change is of the essence for any organization, as it should adapt to a changing environment to ensure the survival of the organization (cf. 2.2).

5.2.3 The management of an organization includes the planning, organizing, leading and control of the various available resources, both human and non-human (cf. 2.2).

5.2.4 Factors such as effective management skills as well as horizontal and vertical communication between the staff members are crucial to the success of any organization (cf. 2.2).

5.2.5 The management structure of organizations consists of three main structures – the top level - normally the CEO's and executive decision makers, the middle management level, who implements the policies decided upon by the top management and who also supervises the dealings of the final line of management, and finally the lower level management (cf. 2.2).

5.2.6 It is believed that three main skills are necessary to be an effective manager: conceptual skills, which include decision-making and problem solving; technical skills, which include the administration, and lastly the human skills, which include communication (cf. 2.2.1).

- 5.2.7 The concept of authority goes hand in hand with responsibility, and persons higher up in the hierarchy of management will have more responsibility and be held accountable for actions, rather than persons lower in the structure (cf. 2.2.2).
- 5.2.8 Strategy formation, authority and influence, motivation, management control, conflict management as well as customer and client control are also functions of top management. Top management relies heavily on middle management (cf. 2.2.2.1).
- 5.2.9 Middle managers are primarily concerned with the implementation of policies, plans and strategies formulated and delegated to them by top management (cf. 2.2.2.2).
- 5.2.10 The division of work according to the type of work done is known as functional arealisation. Functional arealisation refers to the grouping of jobs according to their functions within the institution or organization (cf. 2.2.2.2).
- 5.2.11 Each organization generally has eight different functional areas: the general management function, the financial function, the marketing function, the public relations function, the purchasing function, the production or operations function, the research and development function as well as the human resources function (cf. 2.2.2.2).
- 5.2.12 In each of the above-mentioned management functions problems may arise that hinder management in that area. Problems exist whenever managers have perceived a difference between what was planned and what actually happened. Such problems may lead to certain restrictions on the successful management of the functional areas in HEI's (cf. 2.2.2.2).

- 5.2.13 It is a management task to combine, allocate, coordinate and deploy resources or inputs in such a way that the organization's goals are achieved as productively as possible (cf. 2.2.2.2).
- 5.2.14 Management should be able to cope with and adapt to change and uncertainty, and proper planning will assist managers in coping with an ever changing environment (such as the higher education landscape). If an organization fails to plan, such an organization will have to rely on defensive reactions instead of planned actions. Management will then have to respond to current pressures instead of focusing on the long-term needs that the organization may have (cf. 2.3.1).
- 5.2.15 Management has to allocate human and physical resources to relevant persons and functional areas once the goals and objectives have been defined, to ensure that the objectives are achieved (cf. 2.3.2).
- 5.2.16 Delegation is the only way in which managers can deal effectively with their heavy workload (cf. 2.3.2).
- 5.2.17 Different forms of leadership are described in the literature using adjectives such as instructional, participative, democratic, transformational, moral and strategic. All these forms of leadership primarily capture different stylistic or methodological approaches to accomplishing the same two essential objectives critical to any organization's effectiveness: firstly, helping the organization to plan a set of directions and secondly, influencing employees to move in those directions (cf. 2.3.2).
- 5.2.18 Communication is the core supportive management task for all persons within an organization, because without clear communication, nobody can be certain as to what is expected of them (cf. 2.3.3).
- 5.2.19 Managers should decide in advance what level of performance they expect. This will enable them to judge outcomes against specific criteria. The aim of control is to make sure that performance and

action conform to set plans so as to attain the predetermined goals. This function enables management to identify and rectify any deviations from such plans, and to consider any factors which might oblige them to revise the goals and plans (cf. 2.2.3)

The next section portrays the conclusions from questionnaires.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

The conclusions below will be reported in the same sequence as the questions that were asked in the questionnaire. Each functional area of the HEI that was investigated is dealt with individually, after which general recommendations are made.

#### **5.3.1 General Management Function**

- Creativity and innovation are stifled and ideas get filed away due to the many policies of the HEI.
- Staff members are multi-skilled and capable of handling different tasks. Some staff members, though, do not pull their weight and they shift their responsibilities to other staff members.
- There seems to be no formal opportunities to provide feedback on service delivery, although this need was identified.
- The needs of staff are taken into consideration and staff is widely consulted when new software and office equipment are introduced to the functional area.
- There are adequate opportunities for training with regard to the use of office equipment. Training is encouraged and sessions are arranged by the Centre for Organizational Development.

- Training sessions broaden the horizons of the staff members, and are scheduled regularly.
- Tasks are seldom delegated and if so, only in situations where a person is absent. The process is dependent on a supervisor, a position which seems to change constantly due to staff shortages and restructuring.
- Language does not appear to be a barrier. English is used as communication medium. Language constraints are sometimes identified as a problem by staff who does not pull their weight.
- Training and development opportunities are relevant and freely available to all staff members.
- Although policies are very time-consuming and can hamper the execution of tasks, they can streamline tasks which are clear-cut. Policies change or are amended frequently, which may influence the proper execution of tasks.
- Communication is effective, both vertical as well as horizontal, due to frequent meetings that is held within the functional area.
- Most tasks executed resort within the position profiles of staff members, although some staff members are confronted with tasks outside their profile. This is due to staff shortages.
- Close supervision is not stressed, but staff members are held accountable for their decisions.
- The management style is open-door and democratic, and there is mutual trust amongst staff members.

- Problem areas in this functional area are solved as quickly as possible, and there seem to be no problem in this regard.
- Although communication in the functional area is good, the vertical aspect thereof can be improved. Requests from management are not always taken seriously due to the relaxed management style implemented in this functional area.
- Time management in some other functional areas seems to be a problem, as these functional areas sometimes linger until an upcoming deadline before complying with a request. This result in the general management functional area having to rush to complete the requests.
- Memorandums containing interdepartmental information, such as decisions and important deadlines, should be distributed to staff members more frequently. A need for more training sessions regarding listening and communication skills exists.

### **5.3.2 Public Relations Function**

- There are adequate opportunities to provide new, innovative ideas to superiors, and the superiors value the input from staff members.
- The staff members are all multi-skilled and can handle different assignments when necessary.
- There are adequate opportunities to provide feedback, and the issues raised during such opportunities are taken into consideration.
- Staff members are not consulted with regard to equipment they need to enhance their performance. They have to be content with what they receive.
- A need exists with regard to training sessions to use all office equipment optimally.

- There are numerous opportunities for the training and development of staff members, and all of these opportunities provide skills that are beyond job specific skills, such as personal and interpersonal skills.
- Delegation is a necessity due to higher workloads brought on by staff shortages. Tasks are delegated according to the rank of the staff members. A task will only be delegated to persons with adequate experience and qualifications.
- The language medium used in this department is English. There are problems with misunderstandings – not all staff members adequately proficient in the language. Proper grammar use and spelling are not necessary in this functional area.
- Policies are time-consuming and hamper the staff in the execution of their tasks. There are too many policies to deal with effectively, and it stretches out even routine duties.
- There are training and development sessions available, but the information within these sessions is not really relevant to the functioning of this functional area. The times allocated for these sessions make it difficult to attend.
- Communication in this functional area is effective, although vertical communication can be improved. More frequent meetings and memorandums will improve the level of communication.
- Most duties fall within the range of the position profiles, although many staff members are faced with duties outside their profiles, due to staff shortages.
- Accountability for decisions made is stressed in this functional area, but close supervision is not the norm.

- The management style is democratic, and staff members are consulted when necessary.
- Most problems are solved within a reasonable time frame, except problems which involves Facilities Management and Human Resources, as there are a lot of policies to adhere to.
- A perception exists that students, and especially the SRC, have too much power and they sometimes dictate actions. A further concern is that the functional area is understaffed, which leads to overworked and stressed-out staff members.
- Students should have less power and their inputs should carry less weight. More staff should be appointed, and policies and procedures should be shortened and made more accessible.
- There are delays in feedback from other functional areas, which leads to a delay in the service delivery of this functional area. Other functional areas do not understand the urgency of some requests made, slowing down the functioning of this functional area.
- More frequent meetings should be held, and specific timeframes for the execution of tasks should be decided on.

### **5.3.3 Financial Management Function**

- Superiors welcome innovation and creativity, but the ideas never seem to be implemented due to restrictive policies and procedures that have to be adhered to.

- Staff members are all multi-skilled and can handle different tasks effectively. Problems arise with the meeting of deadlines, hampering the overall streamlining of the functional area.
- There are infrequent opportunities to discuss service delivery, which sometimes lead to inadequate results for this area. Staff members try to improve service delivery on their own.
- Staff members are not consulted regarding the acquisition of new equipment.
- Training regarding the use of office equipment is limited, leading to problems and breakages of equipment. Training is organized interdepartmentally by any staff member if it is deemed necessary.
- There are adequate opportunities for attending courses, which develop skills broader than job specific skills, but staff members can often not attend due to a heavy workload.
- Authority is generally not delegated due to the specialized nature of the tasks that are executed. Minor tasks may be delegated.
- Language *per se* is not a serious problem in this department, as English is used as the medium of communication. The communication skills of some staff members, however, are not up to standard and misinterpretations frequently occur.
- Training and development sessions are available, but the information provided is too broad. These sessions do not focus on the development of certain skills, but on the development of the functional area in general. It is also difficult for staff members to attend these sessions due to inconvenient times that they are held.

- Policies hamper staff members in the execution of their duties, as the policies tend to slow down processes, making it difficult to complete tasks. There are too many irrelevant policies.
- Vertical as well as horizontal communication is adequate, but there is room for improvement in both cases.
- Duties are mostly within the position profiles, and most of the staff members do not experience any problems in this regard.
- Work is not checked on a daily basis, and close supervision is not stressed, although staff members as well as supervisor are held accountable for each decision that is made.
- Crisis management is the norm, and there is trouble meeting deadlines, as little planning is done.
- Problem areas are seldom, if ever, resolved, and often ignored.
- The main concerns in this functional area are poor communication skills, which lead to misunderstandings. Other problems are lengthy processes which hamper them in the execution of their duties, as well as a lack of certain computer software that is needed to complete work successfully.
- The management style as well as the way in which staff is approached should be changed. There should also be more systematic planning, which will allow staff members to change the crisis-management approach. Lengthy processes should also be shortened, as they hamper the staff in their duties.
- Communication between the functional areas is not very good, and messages and information tend to get lost. The many staff shortages in all functional areas impede the efficiency of all functional areas, as staff

members often do not deal consistently with the same person regarding a particular problem.

- More regular meetings should be held amongst staff as well as with supervisors, as this will improve communication. Functional areas should also function individually, and there is a need for specific guidelines on how functional areas should interact with one another. Qualified and experienced staff members should also be appointed in vacancies.

#### **5.3.4 Marketing Function**

- The employees are encouraged to think innovatively and the ideas are appreciated and implemented as far as possible by the functional area manager if viable.
- Staff members are multi-skilled and experienced, and are capable of handling diverse tasks and projects at the same time.
- There are adequate and frequent opportunities during which service delivery is discussed, these matters are taken into account, and service delivery is adapted accordingly.
- Staff members are not consulted when new office equipment is purchased, despite the fact that can make valuable inputs.
- Adequate training sessions are made available by the Centre for Organizational Development, but the time slots make it impossible to attend. Employees are not sent to training on a scheduled basis; they have to find their own ways and times to attend.
- There are adequate opportunities to attend courses organized by the Centre for Organizational Development in association with the HR functional area, but these courses focus on job related skills only.

- Tasks are seldom delegated, and if they are, only to persons with ample experience and qualifications. Authority is not delegated; it stays with the person who delegated the task.
- There are no language barriers. English is the main medium of communication – Afrikaans or Sesotho are also used if a situation dictates it.
- There are adequate training and development sessions available with information relevant for the enhancement of the performance of the different staff members.
- There are too many and unnecessary policies, and these obstruct staff members in the execution of their duties. Policies should be changed to allow processes and work to occur faster.
- Vertical as well as horizontal communication is very good due to an open door policy, frequent meetings and memos as well as messages that are sent via the intranet.
- Most of the duties that are performed fall within the range of the position profiles, although understaffing sometimes causes staff members to face extra duties that fall outside their profiles.
- Tasks are not directly supervised, but each staff member has to report to a supervisor on a regular basis. They are, however, held accountable for each decision that is made.
- The management style is participative, also known as a consensus approach. Staff members are consulted when certain decisions are taken.
- Problem areas in this functional area are solved within a very short time frame, as staff members work together to find suitable solutions.

- The restructuring process as well as the uncertainty caused by it is viewed as the most threatening problem. The functional area is heavily understaffed, leading to problems in the performance of certain duties.
- Vacancies should be filled with capable persons, as this will allow staff to structure their activities properly. A horizon clause regarding affirmative action will allow staff members to plan their career futures with more certainty.
- This functional area is not fully supported by other functional areas. Persons who are supposed to be role models have a low morale, influencing everybody negatively. The restructuring process has a negative impact on all functional areas, as it creates a considerable amount of uncertainty.
- Communication internally as well as with other functional areas should be better aligned. Vacancies should preferably be filled on the basis of merit alone. Formal work-study research is proposed - this will allow available vacancies to be filled with scarce and most-needed skills.

#### **5.3.5. Purchasing Function**

- In this functional area there are adequate opportunities to introduce new ideas, but the implementation thereof is hampered by the lack of specialized staff.
- The staff is required to be multi-skilled; they handle additional work loads due to a serious staff shortage.
- There are regular opportunities to provide feedback regarding service delivery to the senior staff, but problems and suggestions are not taken seriously or acted upon.
- Staff members are not consulted when new equipment is introduced.

- There are adequate opportunities for training and development in the use of equipment, but staff members do not make use of these opportunities.
- The training and development sessions are job specific only and do not include any broader skills.
- Delegation is not done randomly; only to persons capable of handling these tasks. Delegation is difficult due to serious staff shortages.
- English is the main medium of communication in this department. There are, however, a language problem – poor grammar and spelling and frequent misunderstandings due to inefficient language ability.
- There are ample opportunities for training and development, but due to time constraints staff cannot attend these. The training itself is also not job specific enough. This probably plays a role in the low attendance rate.
- There are too many policies most are outdated. The execution of duties is therefore weighed down and work is not streamlined.
- Vertical as well as horizontal communication is inadequate, and more attention should be paid to both these aspects. Many staff members will benefit from improved listening skills, as information gets misinterpreted, leading to all sorts of problems.
- Due to staff shortages staff duties are not in line with position profiles. In many cases staff members are executing tasks that do not fit into their profiles.
- Accountability is stressed, but due to a serious shortage of supervisors staff members are not closely supervised. Staff members conduct their work within a framework that is set by the available supervisors.

- This functional area is not managed in a specific management style. Staff members perform their duties as they see fit, and they are held accountable for their actions and decisions.
- Small problems are resolved quickly, but bigger problems take longer to resolve, as there are lengthy processes to be followed.
- Communication is the biggest problem facing this functional area – both internally as well as in their daily communication with other functional areas. As is the case with the other functional areas, they are here also faced with staff shortages and a lack of specialized and experienced staff.
- More frequent meetings are preferred and staff should be involved in decision making processes. Qualified and reliable staff appointments should be made in vacant positions, as it will lessen the burden of the current employees.
- The channel of communication between the functional areas is not open enough, and important information goes missing. Administrative processes are also too lengthy, hampering the optimal execution of duties.
- The communication practices between the functional areas should be revised. Problems need to be discussed before it gets out of hand.

### **5.3.6 Research and Development Function**

- There are no specific opportunities for innovation, but relevant ideas get implemented and such ideas are generally supported by all staff.
- Staff members are not multi-skilled due to a lack of experience. They only handle one task at a time, which leads to slow performance. The work of effective workers is falling behind mainly because of the

ineffectiveness of other employees who tend to shift their workload to the more capable employees.

- There are no opportunities to provide feedback, neither formal nor informally, and nothing is done regarding service delivery.
- Staff members are not consulted about their needs for office equipment and software. Suggestions might be taken into consideration only after contemplation by management.
- There are adequate training sessions for the use of software, but not for other office equipment. Training is not regularly scheduled and when it occurs, the time slots do not allow persons to attend.
- There are many opportunities to attend workshops that offer broader skills development, but staff members are only allowed to attend workshops that are job related.
- Delegation is done fairly and to persons who are capable of handling the tasks. These people are frequently checked upon and authority is therefore not delegated.
- English is the medium of communication in this department. Some staff members are not sufficiently proficient in English and they tend to execute duties incorrectly due to misunderstandings. This inevitably leads to an increase in the workload of other staff members.
- Training and development sessions are available, and the information received is valuable and necessary. Courses are, however, held at times slots which are difficult to attend, and time constraints also play a role.
- The importance of policies is acknowledged, but current policies is a nuisance which hampers the execution of duties - they are time-consuming, outdated and mostly irrelevant.

- Communication is impeded due to group forming, and information only reaches certain individuals. More meetings should be held, and both vertical as well as horizontal communication can be more effective.
- Duties are not in line with position profiles, as the functional area is understaffed due to the restructuring process. Staff members are therefore performing duties outside their profiles in order to ensure the smooth running of the area.
- Close supervision is not stressed and staff members are encouraged to use own initiative when problems arise. They are held accountable for their decisions and actions.
- This functional area has a liberal management style based on trust and mutual support.
- The time frame for problem resolution depends on the seriousness of the problem – severe problems are dealt with more speedily than less severe problems.
- Although the communication in this functional area is adequate, there is room for improvement. Staff shortages are also a problem, and the current staff members experience considerable stress because of an increased workload.
- Contract and hourly staff should be appointed permanently. This will lighten the burden carried by the current permanent staff members.
- The completion of projects is held up because of delays in other functional areas. The processes and procedures that have to be followed are also too lengthy. There seems to be a divide between the faculties which is difficult to bridge.

- The restructuring process must be fast tracked, as it causes many uncertainties within the various functional areas. Policies and processes that go via various committees should also be streamlined as it is lengthy and very time consuming.

### **5.3.7 Production/Operations (Services) Function**

- There are opportunities for critical thinking and innovation, but ideas are rarely implemented, as senior staff members are resistant to change.
- The majority of workers are not multi-skilled due to a serious skills and qualifications gap. In many cases, skilled workers have to take over the workload, which causes tension and frustration.
- There are regular opportunities to provide feedback and this information is used to adjust the work environment accordingly.
- Staff members are consulted about the acquisition of new equipment and software, and they can state their preferences. Whenever possible their requests are considered.
- Staff members receive adequate training in the use of office equipment, and they use it with confidence. One staff member usually attends training sessions and explains the mechanics of the equipment to other members. In this way the work of the functional area does not fall behind.
- There are adequate opportunities to attend workshops that offer broader skills development, but these cannot be attended regularly due to time constraints. HR structures training sessions according to the specific needs of the functional area.

- Delegation is done according to post level and experience. Accountability remains with the person who delegates, making supervision necessary.
- English is the medium of communication. Some staff members are not fluent in the language, making the fair distribution of tasks difficult.
- There are ample opportunities for job specific training and development. This assists staff in assisting their duties more effectively.
- Policies are too restrictive and waste a lot of time. Because of this, execution of duties is hampered.
- Communication on a vertical as well as a horizontal level is very good, due to frequent meetings and memos that are circulated.
- Many duties are not in line with staff position profiles, as the functional area is understaffed. This creates a heavy workload for current members.
- Close supervision is not stressed, and there is a mutual understanding of trust. Staff is held accountable for the decisions they make.
- The management style of this functional area is autocratic, and staff members are seldom allowed to make an input.
- Problems within the functional area are solved quickly and effectively, but problems solved by committees outside the functional area tend to linger.
- The main concerns in this functional area are the lack of sufficient staff as well as a lack of discipline amongst staff. Maintenance of buildings is also a problem.

- Staff members wish to be involved in meetings and discussions, and want their inputs to be taken into consideration when decisions are made. Temporary staff members should also be appointed in a permanent capacity, as this will allow the functional area to structure its activities more effectively.
- There are delays in the responses from other functional areas causing work to be extended unnecessarily. Paperwork sent to the Human Resources functional area tend to disappear, causing frustration. In such cases everything needs to be redone.
- Policies must be streamlined for more effectiveness. Measures need to be put in place to ensure that people stick to deadlines.

### **5.3.8 Human Resources Function**

- New ideas and creative inputs are appreciated and are implemented as soon as it has been discussed thoroughly with all the relevant stakeholders.
- Employees are all multi-skilled and capable of handling diverse and difficult tasks simultaneously. This can be ascribed to adequate experience and qualifications.
- There are no opportunities to provide feedback, and reports sent in this regard are ignored.
- Staff is not consulted regarding their needs for new equipment, even though they receive updated software on a regular basis.
- There are regular workshops on the use of software, but these sessions are scheduled at inconvenient times. There is no training on the use of office equipment.

- Training and development sessions are available for both job related and broader skills.
- Tasks are delegated according to rank, not at random. Delegates do not accept accountability for these tasks, neither do they receive recognition for completed tasks.
- English is the language medium used within this department. Some staff members are not adequately fluent in the language, and this leads to confusion and frustration - tasks are not handled effectively.
- Training and development sessions are relevant and job specific, and assist staff members in the execution of their duties. Attendance is, however, a problem due to inconvenient time schedules of courses and other job related time constraints.
- Policies and procedures are time consuming and many are redundant. Policies are viewed as a necessity but that the current situation is ridiculous.
- Communication is very good, although horizontal communication can be improved. Role clarification due to a large staff turnover is unclear, making it difficult to disseminate information to relevant persons. The intranet is the most frequently used method of communication.
- Due to understaffing, duties performed are not in line with the position profiles of staff members. Current staff members are compelled to do extra work to ensure that all the work in the functional area is completed in time.
- Close supervision as well as accountability is stressed due to the sensitive nature of the information staff members work with. Work often gets double checked, and staff is held accountable for problems that may arise.

- There is a relaxed, democratic and participative management style in this functional area, influencing productivity in a positive way.
- Problems are resolved within a reasonable time frame, ranging from one day to a week. Problem resolution takes longer only on rare occasions, for instance when a serious problem cannot be handled by the functional area itself.
- Communication is a problem, as staff members don't always communicate effectively and clearly. This functional area is also understaffed, putting pressure on the existing staff members. Deadlines and other important notices are frequently ignored by staff members within other functional areas.
- The lines of communication should be improved and staff shortages should be addressed, as this causes unnecessary stress. A need exists for a system to be implemented that will remind people of deadlines and tasks.
- Deadlines are missed by other functional areas, and information received from them is often not accurate, causing work to be redone. This slows down the functioning of the functional area.
- Communication structures in all functional areas should be similar, as this will minimize mistakes. Persons should also be held accountable for the information they send through.

The next section deals with recommendations relating to the problems identified by respondents from the various functional areas.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The flow of communication, both vertically as well as horizontally, should be streamlined. More frequent meetings are necessary at all levels of the functional areas, and staff should receive frequent

memorandums with all the necessary information they need, including deadlines and requests from other functional areas. This will ensure effective internal as well as interdepartmental communication, leading to a reduced number of misunderstandings.

- Staff members should be updated regularly on the progress of the restructuring process. Many staff members experience a high level of stress and anxiety due to job uncertainty.
- The understaffing problem should be addressed, as it is difficult to function effectively when some of the key positions in a functional area are not filled. It is also difficult for a person to perform duties which he/she is not accustomed to nor trained for; even more so if there is a risk of making the wrong decisions. The quality of work delivered by current staff members will improve when they are in a position of paying full attention to their own duties.
- Training and development sessions should be scheduled at times that are accessible and convenient for all staff members to attend. It is clear from the research that the training opportunities are of a high standard, but unfortunately they are not very accessible.
- The language skills of the staff members should be addressed, as the usage of English is compulsory. Obligatory short courses can be offered for staff members who are not mother tongue speakers of English. This should decrease communication problems within the various functional areas.
- The lines of communication between all the functional areas should be similar. If, for instance, all areas make use of the same methods of communication such as the intranet or memorandums, this will ensure the equal spreading of necessary information. All functional areas should have the same rules and regulations.

- Existing policies and procedures should be revised and streamlined. The processes that are followed should be updated according to the needs of each functional area so that it will assist, and not hamper, in the execution of tasks.
- Staff members should be consulted with regard to the acquisition of new office equipment, and they should receive adequate training in its use. This will reduce possible stress and anxiety levels and improve the self-confidence of staff members.
- Ideas and innovations from staff members should be appreciated and implemented where possible and applicable. This will increase their productivity levels and give them a sense of pride and ownership.
- Staff members should be able to provide inputs and feedback at regular intervals. This will allow potential problems to be identified and solved timeously.
- Problems should be resolved within a reasonable timeframe, as this will increase the productivity levels of the functional areas.

Although it is not always possible to implement all recommendations made, it is very important that organizations are made aware of possible solutions that can improve their functioning.

## **5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- An investigation into the most effective interdepartmental methods of communication in Higher Education Institutions.
- The impact and effect of restructuring on the functioning of Higher Education Institutions.

- The effective implementation of policies and procedures within Higher Education Institutions.

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