AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SOURCES AND FORMS OF
CONFLICT IN TWO SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN
THE GAUTENG PROVINCE

by

WILLIE RICHARD CHAUKE

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SUPERVISOR: PROF T C BISSCHOFF

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the mini-dissertation submitted for the Master of Education degree to the Rand Afrikaans University, apart from the help recognised, is my own work and has not been formerly submitted to another university for a degree.

[Signature]

WILLIE RICHARD CHAUKE

SEPTEMBER 1998
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I hasten to add that any flaw or inadequacies in this mini-dissertation should be ascribed to me and me alone. It should not reflect on the people I have mentioned and thanked here.

Lastly, but by no means the least, I thank the Almighty God for carrying me through to the realization of this dream.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this mini-dissertation to the memory of my late father Phineas Hlengani Chauke whose deep desire to see me complete the research was sadly overtaken by death a few days before I tied the loose ends together.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.
ABSTRACT

This research project deals with an investigation of the sources and forms of conflict at tertiary institutions. Two institutions, namely the Rand Afrikaans and Vista universities were selected for the study.

The research is necessary in view of the substantial financial and human resources put into the tertiary education sector, the need for a stable tertiary education sector which will be better able to meet the human resource and developmental needs of the country, the need for transformation at the institutions as well as the importance of the full participation of all the stakeholders and other interested parties in the maintenance of a worthy tertiary education sector. Currently the tertiary institutions are frequently troubled by turmoil and in many cases large amounts of money and valuable academic time are lost.

From the semi-structured interviews conducted with students, administrators, academics and management, as well as from the literature consulted, the following are some of the important findings of the research project:

- Conflict is inevitable.

- Conflict contributes to the development of the institutions in many ways.

- The chief sources of conflict are perceptions held by the stakeholders about each other, as well as the limited or the total lack of communication.

- The tendency by stakeholders not to learn from the past

- The lack of a common vision for the institution among all the stakeholders

The researcher recommends closer co-operation and more consultation between the stakeholders. It is also recommended that the stakeholders should work hard at avoiding the recurrence of conflict around the same issues.
TITEL: 'n Onderzoek na die oorsprong en aard van konflik by twee tersiêre inrigtings in die Gauteng provinsie

DEUR: Willie Richard Chauke

GRAAD: Magister Educationis

FAKULTEIT: Opvoedkunde

STUDIELEIER: Prof. T C Bisschoff

Hierdie navorsingsprojek handel oor 'n ondersoek na die oorsprong en aard van konflik in tersiêre inrigtings. Vir die doel van hierdie studie het die keuse geval op die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit en Vista Universiteit.

Hierdie navorsing is om die volgende redes onderneem:

- Die aansienlike finansiële bronne wat in die tersiêre opvoedingsektor gestort word.
- Die behoefte aan 'n stabiele tersiêre onderwyssesktor.
- Die behoefte aan transformasie aan tersiêre inrigtings.
- Volle deelname aan die instandhouding van 'n waardige tersiêre onderwyssektor deur alle belanghebbende partye.

Uit die semi-gestruktureerde onderhoute en die literatuur wat geraadpleeg is, het die volgende belangrike bevindings na vore gekom:

- Konflik is onvermydelik en kan bydra tot die vooruitgang van 'n inrigting
- Die hoofoorsake van konflik blyk die persepsies te wees wat partye omtrent mekaar koester, asook die beperkte of algehele tekort aan kommunikasie
- Die neiging om nie uit die foute van die verlede te leer nie
- Die gebrek aan 'n gemeenskaplike visie wat deur belanghebbende partye gedeel word.
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Orientation

South Africa is, at the present moment, gripped by a wave of demands for change and transformation in all aspects of its being. Perhaps the political landscape has taken the lead in transformation with Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites debating legislation in the same parliament. The economic sector is also seeing the emergence of new, previously unthought of ideas and leadership from all population groups. Demands from labour especially for more change and transformation are almost the order of the day. Not to be outdone, the educational sector is also seeing a lot of change and transformation. This is more apparent in tertiary institutions, namely universities, technikons and technical colleges, where the students are making demands for transformation. According to Moja, Muller and Cloete student and staff formations at tertiary institutions demand the greater Africanisation of these institutions, as well as greater representation on governance structures, better access and enhanced financial support (1996:129). They are also pushing for more effective representation on major decision-making bodies of the institutions. Decisions of management are questioned and challenged with vigour.

In this country education has, in the past, been used by the apartheid regime as one of the most powerful tools in enforcing statutory discrimination (Sonn, 1994:4). Nkomo asserts that to reach "the grandiose aims of separate development, education was to be the principal instrument" (1990:293). Through it opportunities and careers were earmarked and reserved for specific parts of the population, with
the Whites enjoying the benefit of advantage. To understand the need for transformation in education in this country, one has to know the history it has gone through. All South African universities are created by Statute, and have only those powers conferred to them by their respective statutes (Sonn, 1994:1). It is essential to know what apartheid education sought to achieve in order to fully appreciate how and why education and institutions have to transform, or be transformed. Nkomo expresses the objectives of apartheid education as having been to:

- produce a semiskilled black labour force that would support the capitalist economy as cheaply as possible;

- prepare Black students to acknowledge the "social relations" of apartheid as natural;

- forge unity between White labour and capital;

- foster the underdevelopment of the Black man's intellect, and to promote "compulsory ignorance" (1990:294-5).

There was a racist perception that Blacks were to remain a source of "non-competitive cheap labour" (Kallaway, 1984:163). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 aimed at teaching Blacks that they had to value their own cultures but realise that such cultures "were of a lower order" to those of the Whites. Furthermore, the Blacks were to prepare themselves "for a realistic place in a White-dominated society" (Kallaway, 1984:161). Perhaps Hendrick Verwoerd put it as clearly as was then possible when he uttered these words in parliament in 1953: "Education must train and teach people in accordance with their own opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live". As far as he was concerned, the Black man's place in the European community
could not be "above the level of certain forms of labor" (Nkomo, 1990: 293-4).

On the other hand, especially with specific reference to the period from 1976, schools and tertiary institutions were transformed into fields of resistance and struggle by the Black masses. The resultant participation of the youth in the struggle and resistance contributed immensely to the struggle for liberation. At the same time it also resulted in the destruction of the culture of teaching and learning (Sonn, 1994:4). This is perhaps not a surprising result if one notes conditions at tertiary institutions in the 1980s: soldiers deployed on campuses, student and staff detentions and in some cases subsequent unresolved deaths, as well as banning orders imposed on certain reading materials and persons (Moja et al, 1996:134).

In a way tertiary institutions are caught between a rock and a hard place, sometimes not entirely because of their own doing. On the one hand they have, and in the past had, to satisfy the needs of the State and those of a resistant community on the other (Sonn, 1994:4). A weak economy which has resulted in less and less opportunities for work has pushed enrolment figures at these institutions. Added to this Professor Charles van Onselen, the Director of the Institute for Advanced Social Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, stresses the demand for admission to these institutions by previously and historically disadvantaged Black students (1997:25). To some extent, the tertiary institutions have become a place of safety, a home, and the ultimate alternative for the destitute student. Beyond the tertiary institution there is usually nothing but unemployment, despair, hunger and homelessness. The influx of these students into the institutions of higher education makes new demands on these institutions.
With the advent of democracy in this country, the focus has shifted somewhat to other matters, and at tertiary institutions this has been the nature of relationships and participation in the governance of these institutions. This has not been a smooth and happy exercise. A lot of conflict has surfaced. The effects thereof have been immense and very often detrimental. A lot of energy has been expended in endeavouring to eliminate the conflict. The researcher would, however, like to argue that in order to begin to address the resolution of conflict, it is very important that the concept of conflict itself and the sources thereof be fully understood and appreciated. It is also essential to realize that not all conflict is bad. Equally important is to have the knowledge that some conflict may be used to help the institution work better, while acknowledging that some conflict needs to be weeded out.

Perhaps Sonn sums it up well when he writes: "South Africa's transition from a losing nation at war with itself, to a winning nation at peace with itself, can only come through education" (1994:4).

This study, therefore, seeks to discuss and describe conflict and the sources and forms of conflict at tertiary institutions in particular.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study will be to investigate and describe the sources, nature and forms of conflict as experienced in tertiary institutions. This is considered an important investigation in view of the transformation necessary at and besieging tertiary institutions in particular, and education in general. It is considered important in view of the topical nature of conflict at tertiary institutions, and its effects on the reputation of the tertiary institutions themselves, and their academic work. The study aims to highlight the ways in which executive
managements of tertiary institutions can harness the good that may be
derived from conflict in their bid to enhance transformation.

Bearing the above in mind, it appears as if the dilemma of this research
project can be summarized by the following questions:

- What is conflict?
- What are the sources of conflict at tertiary institutions?
- What are the forms of conflict prevalent at tertiary institutions?
- Who are affected by conflict at tertiary institutions?

Eisemon and Holm-Nielsen point out that higher education systems "are
in a state of constant change nearly everywhere" (1995:405). Most
tertiary institutions are frequently faced by the boiling over of conflict
which, in many ways disrupts governance, usually results in the
damaging and plundering of property or the trashing of campuses, leads
to the loss of valuable academic time and sometimes ends with criminal
charges being laid against students (City Press, 1997:19). Violence is
not ruled out. Baldridge states that the "university is in turmoil and the
changes that are overwhelming it are outrunning our ability to
understand them" (1991:1). Van Onselen argues that South African
tertiary education institutions "are plagued with apparently endless
unrest. This constitutes a major crisis, not only for these institutions:
the country as a whole cannot do without properly functioning
universities and technikons" (1997:25). Professor Cecil Abrahams,
rector and vice-chancellor of the University of the Western Cape states
that: "Intransigent students believe the managements of the various
historically disadvantaged universities are "hard-hearted" (1998:35).
The concern with turmoil at universities has even elicited the response
from the Deputy President, Mr Thabo Mbeki that by trashing campuses
to make their demands known, today's students are actually betraying
the 1990’s generation of students who played an important role in the
If one looks at the funding channelled into higher education, the aims and functions of tertiary institutions, it becomes clear that ways need to be found to manage conflict at the institutions. In 1990, R2 886 million (of the total R17 152 million budgeted for education) went into higher education (Bunting, 1994:122). The total expenditure on education per full-time equivalent student at universities amounted to R14 700, against R2 100 average for all institutions (Bunting, 1994:123). From these figures it is clear that 17% of the total education budget went towards higher education. This should be an important and significant investment. For the 1997/98 financial year, education has been allocated 21,3% out of the total budget of R40 270,5 million (SAIRR, 1996:3). With such huge financial resources directed at education in general, and tertiary education in particular, it is crucial to create and maintain a climate in which maximum benefit is derived from such investment. This is even more important since these resources are not easy to come by in the current economic and social state of the country.

Education in general, and higher education in particular, has noble aims and purposes. It aims at preparing students for responsible and productive citizenship (Bunting, 1994:184-185). "Higher education provides the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge dependent society, with the high level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy" (Green Paper, 1996:3). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) document expounds the purpose of the education system as ascertaining that people are enabled to reach their maximum potentials (Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994:59). The National Education Policy (Act No. 27 of 1996) sees education policy as aimed at the "advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every
person guaranteed in terms of Chapter 3 of the Constitution" (1996:6). Noble aims as they are their mere pronouncement is not enough. They need to be turned into reality and tangible products. This is very difficult in a situation beset with damaging conflict and strife.

Tertiary institutions are still saddled with structures, policies and procedures which, as Van Onselen notes, "need to make way for 'models of co-operative governance' which would involve a wider range of stakeholders and strengthen democracy at every level of the system" (Sunday Times, 1997:47).

If one considers the financial impact of conflict and turbulence at tertiary institutions, one realizes the great loss that is being incurred at the expense of the taxpayer. In 1996 unpaid student fees at universities and technikons already exceeded R300 million (Naidu, 1996:19). These unpaid fees add to the substantial cost of the damages caused during unrest at tertiary institutions. This amount of money would have gone a long way in improving education and the provision thereof at these and other institutions of learning. Now it has merely gone down the drain. South Africa’s "long-term growth and development prospects hinge on the quality and effectiveness of educational reconstruction", (Sonn, 1994:5), therefore great care has to be taken to ensure that education proceeds with least disruption. Abrahams points out that South Africa desperately needs the development of human resource potential at the highest level (1998:25).

Viewed against this background universities need to be aware of the sources and forms of conflict that besiege them. This, I believe, would provide a better understanding of the issues, and the thinking behind these issues, with a view to formulating and implementing effective conflict management strategies. The results of the study will hopefully help the stake-holders in conflict situations at tertiary institutions realize
the extent of the influence arising out of their actions. Furthermore, the study aims to encourage further studies which may delve deeper into the issue of conflict, or take the study even further by looking at other related issues, like ways of reducing or eliminating negative conflict and suggesting possible solutions to recurrent problems.

1.3 Aims

The general aim of this research project is to:

- investigate the sources of conflict at tertiary institutions, with special focus on the Vista and the Rand Afrikaans Universities; and

- discuss the forms of conflict prevalent at these institutions.

The research project will not attempt to investigate the management styles, nor will it attempt to establish the strategies used for conflict management and conflict resolution at these institutions. Such investigations demand independent studies on their own. These need to be done independently. This research project will also not try to make an indepth study of student bodies and their strategies. This, again, is a study on its own. However, reference will be made to these, and other related aspects, within the constraints of the selected focus of this research project. Such reference will serve mainly to localize and contextualize the circumstances and arguments.

1.4 Significance of the study

The investigation is significant because the leadership of tertiary institutions have to manage the change process as institutions are being
transformed, and for this they need to know conflict as it exists in their, or similar, institutions. Students will also seek alternatives to the expressions of their frustrations and grievances rather than destructive boycotts and violence. Perhaps indirectly, the academic programme itself will be afforded a chance to run smoothly and without undue disturbance. The possible resultant financial benefit cannot be overemphasized. With less or no damage caused to property, scarce resources may be released for other beneficial and developmental purposes. It is also essential for all stakeholders to appreciate that conflict is in itself not necessarily undesirable and disastrous. It may actually serve to benefit the institution as well.

1.5 Limitations of the study

For the purposes of collecting relevant data the study will focus on Vista and Rand Afrikaans Universities, both of which are in the Gauteng Province, and will confine itself to the use of semi-structured interviews.

1.5.1 Vista University

Vista University is selected for the study mainly for three reasons, namely:

- it is a historically Black university (HBU). It came into being after an investigation into the ".... university needs of urban Blacks in the Republic of South Africa" (Vista University Calendar, 1997:8);

- it is, after the University of South Africa, the second largest university in the country;

- it has seven decentralised contact tuition campuses located in
seven major urban areas of the country, namely Soweto (Johannesburg), Mamelodi (Pretoria), Daveyton (East Rand), Sebokeng (Vaal Triangle), Zwide (Port Elizabeth), Welkom and Bloemfontein. This geographical spread, it is hoped, will offer a more generalized perspective. It also has an eighth campus, known as the Vista University Distance Education Campus (VUDEC) which caters for the further training of teachers in service. This campus is located in Pretoria.

1.5.2 Rand Afrikaans University

The Rand Afrikaans University is selected for the following main reasons:

- it is a historically White university (HWU). It was established to cater for the University needs of especially the Afrikaans- speaking people. One could even view it as having been established to compete somewhat with the University of the Witwatersrand whose focus is mainly English; and

- it has opened its doors wider for other students of colour.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher has chosen the qualitative research method for a number of reasons. These, as seen by Fraenkel and Wallen, include inter alia:

- the possibility of going directly to the setting with a view to collecting data;

- allows for the interviewing of the relevant stake-holders in their own
environment; and

- observing the participants in the research (1993:380-381).

1.6.1 Literature Research

A literature research will be used to elucidate conflict in an effort to establish what it is, what its sources are and the forms that it tends to manifest itself in. The literature research will also be instrumental in the formulation of the semi-structured interview questionnaire which will be used during the empirical investigation. In this regard appropriate literature, books and journals will be sought and studied with a view to informing and directing the investigation. To keep abreast with current and ongoing trends, newspapers will also be referred to.

1.6.2 Data Collecting Strategies

For the purposes of collecting relevant data, the following strategies will be put into practice:

1.6.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted, recorded on audio tape, and transcribed, with the stakeholders as identified hereabove. It is envisaged that the interviews will afford the researcher the opportunity to discuss face-to-face issues of conflict with the relevant stake-holders. The researcher hopes to use the opportunity to follow up statements and issues raised during the interviews in a bid to enhance clarity.
The semi-structured interviews with the following stake-holders:
- Vice-Chancellors, wherever possible, or Transformation Officers;
- Registrars where possible;
- Seven academics from each of the tertiary institutions selected where possible;
- Deans of Students or Directors of Academic Administration or Student Affairs; and
- Presidents or General Secretaries of Student Representative Councils.

1.6.2.2 Observation

Berg asserts that the larger portion of ethnographic research "involves entering the setting of some group and simply watching and listening attentively" (1998:140). Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln state that "For as long as people have been interested in studying the social and natural world around them, observation has served as the bedrock source of human knowledge" (1994:377). Although the researcher will not go out to do indepth observation of the respondents in their immediate setting, secondary sources like newspapers and other literature will be used as means of observation. Observations from these sources should be sufficient for the purposes of the study.

1.7 Clarification of Concepts

1.7.1 Conflict

Sandole and Sandole-Staroste define conflict as "escalated, natural competition between two or more parties about scarce resources, power and prestige. Parties in conflict believe they have incompatible
goals, and their aim is to neutralize, gain advantage over, injure or destroy one another" (1987:17).

According to Milton, conflict may be defined as "all kinds of opposition or antagonistic interaction". He notes that each participant tries to establish a situation in which he is advantaged in terms of power over the other (1981:426). Implied in this is that there is more than one party in a conflict situation.

Graham sees conflict as existing when one is faced with a situation in which the satisfaction of one need leads to the denial of the other (1975:95).

For the purposes of this research project "conflict" will mean the opposing interaction of stakeholders in a tertiary institution.

1.7.2 Change

Graham views change as the initiation of a new order of things, with the new constantly replacing the old (1975:473, 475). Ivancevich and Matteson see change as inevitable in the modern dynamic world. It constantly acts on the organization (1996:616).

For the purpose of this research project, change will mean the desire and pressure to move from one position to another with a view to taking the organization to further heights.

1.7.3 Transformation

One of the buzz-words these days, transformation will be used here to refer to the changing of the face and composition of structures, character, opinions and institutional governance. This is in line with
the definition of transformation as in the Little Oxford Dictionary.

The Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation sees transformation as the provision of "cooperative decision-making between separate but functionally interdependent stakeholders who recognise their different identities, interests and freedoms, while pursuing the common goals of a coordinated and participative polity and civil society" (1996:8).

Dlamini defines transformation as fundamental change. He regards it as radical and a very definite step away from the past (1995:39).

1.7.4 Stakeholders

This concept will be used to refer collectively to the participants in the conflict situation in a tertiary institution as described in this study. In the main, and for purposes of this study, stakeholders will be:

- Vice-Chancellors (if possible) of the selected institutions;
- Registrars (if possible) of the selected institutions;
- Academics at the selected institutions;
- Transformation Officers at the selected institutions;
- Deans of Students or Directors of Student Affairs or Academic Administration at the selected institutions; and
- Presidents or General Secretary of Student Representative Councils at the selected institutions.
1.7.5 Communication

Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly define communication as the "transmission of information and understanding through the use of common symbols" (1988:542). In this research project this definition will guide the investigation regarding communication between the stakeholders in the tertiary institution.

1.8 Plan of Study

In this chapter the researcher has given an account of the circumstances surrounding conflict at tertiary institutions in this country. A statement of the problem has been given as the interrogation of the sources, nature and forms of conflict at tertiary institutions, and the justification of the study has also been provided. A statement of the general and specific aims of the research project has been briefly outlined. The focus will be on what the term 'conflict' entails, what its causes are, how conflict manifests itself, and its effects on the tertiary institutions. For purposes of this research project the field of study has been demarcated to two tertiary institutions in the Gauteng Province. The qualitative research methodology has been selected for its advantage in permitting the researcher to proceed to the actual milieu to meet and discuss directly with the participants. Important concepts in the research topic, as well as other concepts that will be used in the research project, have been defined.

The rest of the study will unfold as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Design of the Project
1.9 Conclusion

Bearing the above in mind, Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review which will serve to inform and direct the research project with regard to conflict, its sources and its forms with special reference to tertiary institutions.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In the light of what was said in the preceding chapter, Chapter 2 delves more into expatiating on the definition of conflict, a discussion of its nature, sources and forms. Reference will be made to the perspectives emanating from various pieces of literature. To give the study a more relevant approach, reference will also be made to newspaper reports and to other forms of recent publications dealing with what is currently transpiring at tertiary institutions. The definitions of conflict and the discussion thereof aim at ensuring that the concept is clearly and fully understood, and to opening the way for a more focused elucidation of the nature, sources and forms of conflict. It is therefore the intention that at the end of this chapter, a lot of light will have been shed on, and a better understanding established regarding, conflict, its nature, sources and forms.

2.2. General Review

2.2.1 Defining conflict

In Chapter 1 reference was made to Sandole and Sandole-Staroste’s definition of conflict as a struggle between two or more groups of people for dominance over the other, with regard to resources that are not in abundance, power and reputation. They go on to argue that conflict is not only natural in all human relationships, it is also
unavoidable. Conflict is defined as present everywhere simultaneously (1987:17). Their definition of conflict therefore stresses the occurrence of struggle between the two or more groups.

Everard and Morris see conflict as the "honest difference of opinion resulting from the availability of two or more alternative courses of action. They also support the notion that conflict is unavoidable and is also a valuable part of life" (1990:96-97). In this definition and perception of conflict, difference of opinion or points of view and the existence of other possible courses of action are highlighted. It is, perhaps, important to note that the stress falls not on the people involved, but on the ideas that they hold and which they seek to see taking preponderance. They also add the dimension that conflict is an important component of life.

In quoting Schmidt and Kochan, Pfeffer notes that incompatible goals are a precursor to conflict (1972:361). This implies that conflict results from divergent objectives. This assertion is further supported by Walker to whom Pfeffer also refers. In the case of divergent objectives members will be encouraged to act in a way that goes against the objectives of the other (1981:75). Since the other will not remain passive, and will naturally proceed to act in a way that seeks to strengthen the position of his own idea, a situation of clashing will arise. Pfeffer's outlook at conflict introduces the presence of incompatible goals, that is goals that are incapable of existing together in harmony, as well as the notion of divergent objectives which seems to stress that the objectives are destined to go their separate ways.

Eitzen and Zinn view conflict from an express social background. They believe that conflict is actually about competition, domination and subordination. As the one party moves decisively towards
dominating the other and others, the other in turn envisages and works towards achieving the same result (1987:41). Conflict then, viewed from this angle, is about gaining the upperhand over others, and subjugating them in the process. It is about the rivalry to promote and secure the domination of the one party’s opinions over those of the opposition, or whatever is perceived as the opposition.

The mix of competition and working together takes centre stage in Rangarajan’s definition of conflict. He asserts that both parties holding different opinions about an aspect have decisions to make. The decision made by the one party towards a goal depends to a large extent on the decisions taken by the other party (1985:17). No party can seemingly go it alone towards the attainment of the conceived goal.

Pienaar and Spoelstra state that conflict "occurs when people have separate and conflicting interests and needs" (1991:19). The emphasis in this definition rests on both the distinction and inconsistency in interests and needs. They go on to expound that conflict occurs when resources "are fixed and limited, and each party wants to maximise its share of the resources" (1991:178). Obviously, rivalry will be on the rise as each party moves towards maximising its share, which entails disadvantaging or de-maximising the share of the other party.

Anstey uses the definition expressed by Coser, Himes, Kriesberg, as well as Pruitt and Rubin to expand upon the concept of conflict. Anstey says that Coser views conflict as "a struggle" about value, status, power and resources which are available in insufficient quantities. In this battle the aim of each party is to "neutralise, injure or eliminate" the other (1991:2). Conflict is therefore perceived as a struggle over commodities which are not available in large numbers,
over which the parties concerned seek to render each other ineffective in attaining them. Perhaps this definition and viewpoint serves more to reflect upon the mercilessness and belligerence which sometimes besets and surrounds conflict.

Anstey also refers to Himes who sees conflict as a battle or struggle that has a definite or fixed object. He breaks the fixed object into two. The first purpose of the struggle is to get rid of all opposition. The second purpose is to take over the control of the rare commodities that brought about the conflict in the first place (1991: 3). Implied in the definition by Himes is that planning regarding how the aim will be reached must be intense. Furthermore, power and forcefulness play a vital role. The idea of a struggle being present in conflict is further enhanced by being referred to as having a definite purpose, in which planning has played an essential role.

Perhaps more importantly, Anstey highlights in the definitions of Kriesberg as well as Pruitt and Rubin the role played by belief and perception in explaining conflict. On the one hand, Kriesberg states that conflict occurs in a situation where two or more parties "believe they have incompatible goals" (1991:4). One gets the impression immediately that the goals may not be incompatible after all. The problem may be the belief held by each party. On the other hand, Pruitt and Rubin see conflict as "perceived divergence of interests, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously" (1991:4). Again, one gets the impression that the perception may be unfounded or ill-founded.

Finally, Swingle adds a different point to the definition of conflict by stating that conflict and disagreement may be manifested even within the one group with regard to how the goals are to be achieved (1990: 70). This then serves to dispel the possibility that members
of a single group see eye-to-eye on all matters and procedures to be followed. It also helps to remind us that conflict is not easy or uni-directional. It is a complex concept.

From the definition expounded upon and viewpoints expressed above, it emerges that conflict is about struggles between two or more groups. It is about gaining the upperhand, one party over the other. It is also about getting rid of the opinions and ideas of other people. It is not surprising therefore that conflict is littered with emotions to render the opposition irrelevant, to dispose of them, and to finally drive them into the ground. Conflict is also about the expression and endeavour to defend the different opinions as held by the opposing parties. It also emerges that the struggle is for the acquisition of and control over resources that are scarce. The resources include power, reputation, interests, status and needs. The aims of the opposing parties are not only different but also divergent and incompatible, or so are they believed and perceived to be. Conflict is therefore existent in a relationship between two or more parties whose individual or group ambitions and desires cannot be achieved at the same time to the satisfaction of both parties. It is also a situation in which power, influence and determination plays a large role in the rivalry that has emerged.

It has also been stated that conflict is not only inevitable, it is also necessary. To understand this aspect more, it is important to briefly look at the nature of conflict.
2.2.2 The Nature of Conflict

2.2.2.1 The inevitable nature of conflict

The definitions given and discussed above can easily evoke in one the misconception that conflict must be avoided at all costs, that whatever conflict has already overtaken society or an organization must quickly be uprooted and destroyed. One would even feel that conflict should have no place whatsoever in our dealings and activities. This possible misconception is the one that must not be allowed to take root.

One underlying characteristic that is largely agreed upon relating to conflict is the fact that it is unavoidable. It is viewed as a part of human and societal life. Perhaps Eitzen and Zinn sum it up quite powerfully when they state that "society is fundamentally competitive, conflictual, coercive and radically changing" (1978: 61). Conflict is almost an automatic result of the situation described above. If competition is regarded as part of societal being, it stands to reason that the consequent conflict is also part of society. To this Eitzen and Zinn add that societal organisation implies inequalities in the ways in which power is allocated and distributed, and in the way in which society has different hierarchical layers in its make-up. They maintain that the very act of organisation is fertile ground for conflict (1978:45).

The idea of the inevitability of conflict is also expressed by Graham (1975:189), Sandole-Staroste (1987:17) and Anstey (1991:5).

2.2.2.2 The Functions of Conflict

It would be wrong to regard all conflict as bad or as deviant. As
Sandole and Sandole-Staroste put it: "It is important to understand that conflict is not the opposite of order" (1987:17). While acknowledging that conflict can become disorderly and hurtful, it is imperative to realize that it also has a lot of benefits as well. Everard and Morris stress the importance of conflict by stating that its absence may be a sign of the shirking of responsibility and lack of thinking (1990:97).

Anstey tabulates the functions of conflict, using Coser’s propositions. Conflict, he argues, serves to bring about and preserve divisions in society, as well as acting as a facility to air one’s views openly and releasing tension instead of allowing these to fester and deteriorate into pure hatred. Parties are driven to action in an interdependent way, thus serving to draw them closer together rather than drifting further apart. It is also believed that frequent conflict may be an indicator of more stable and closer relationships, if such conflict is not powered by hostility and belligerence that is growing from strength to strength. Conflict also serves to bind the group together, especially as the group members agree with the energy being expended at a particular instance. There is a danger of the group falling apart if bondedness is low due to low solidarity and low consensus. Conflict may also encourage the stimulation of new challenges, the formulation and promulgation of new rules and ideas as well as ways of doing things, intensifying participation and instituting or adding pace to development. It promotes transformation, re-organization, and discourages a state of static behaviour and stagnation. Power relations are also reviewed by conflict (1991: 8 - 11).

Conflict may also serve a good purpose in the alignment of individual differences towards objectives that will be more
acceptable to various groups. It may bring about a reconciliatory attitude and viewpoint (Graham, 1975:189). It also helps in the highlighting of an organisation’s problems and difficulties as well as facing the revision of erstwhile methods in favour of new ones (Graham, 1975:189). Gibson supports this point by stating that "conflict may prove beneficial if it used as an instrument for change or innovation" (1994:337). Milton maintains that conflict may be helpful by provoking fresh challenges, ideas and possible problems to solutions. It may also lead to better acceptance and acclimatization to change, and to continuity. It may also be a reflection of "democracy, diversity, growth, and self-actualization". Its absence may be an indication of despotic tendencies, lack of diverse and active growth, and a state of fixation (1981:429).

Everard and Morris state that conflict helps in that it offers or promotes opportunities for varying options to be placed on the table for discussion. It also serves as a way of dismembering the options available for full consideration, study and revision before they are finally implemented. They believe that conflict may encourage other courses of action to be looked into, and put to practice (1990:97).

A lot of good may, therefore, emanate from conflict. The parties involved can benefit from it if they are not merely bent on and blinded by hostility that has no room for listening to or learning from others; and from the past. Conflict may be a tremendously good source of group and organizational growth, and a situation of constant renewal and re-visiting of ideas and strategies. I would venture further and state that actually beneficial conflict should be encouraged at all times.

The misconception must not be created that all conflict is for the
good. It may also have effects that are not of any good for the organisation (Gibson, 1994:337). This, according to Everard and Morris, may happen if conflict is allowed to go on and develop without a solution being sought (1990:98). Conflict needs to be managed effectively, as this spells the difference between it being beneficial or destructive (Gibson, 1994:337).

2.2.2.3 Cycle of Conflict

Sandole and Sandole-Staroste declare quite clearly that conflict "is highly patterned" and that it is possible to even foretell some of the steps of development that conflict will progress through (1987:17). The progression of conflict is something, therefore, that can be identified. The notion of conflict having steps of progression implies that conflict is not a single event. It is a series of interlocking events, a process of escalation, having as its source some provocation and at its tail-end some form of new dispensation or ideas (Baldridge, 1971:167).

Baldridge sees conflict as going through a cycle as depicted in Figures 2.1. and 2.2.

Baldridge explains the cycle of conflict as follows:

i) The Issue

In discussing this aspect, Baldridge breaks it into four characteristics, namely:

(a) There is what he refers to as the ice-berg phenomenon. He stresses that usually the issue that is initially raised as the problem is more of a red herring. There are usually more basic
Sanctions are applied

Calls for allies

Terminating processes

The issue

Intensity increases

The issues expand

Sanctions are applied

Mediation and conciliation

Bureaucratization of conflict

Figure 2.1 Baldridge's cycle of conflict

Figure 2.2 The Cyclical path of conflict
issues at the bottom of the problem which are not immediately raised or which are not immediately apparent. Such shrouded issues may be "participation in decision-making, the right of students...". The implication of this, therefore, is that any endeavour at bringing about the settlement of the issue must go below the surface of the issue raised, and probe further for the more fundamental causes.

(b) He also maintains that opposing interest groups may actually be brought closer together by issues that precipitate conflict at a larger scale.

(c) Contrary to expectation perhaps, conflict does not in many cases arise out of deteriorating conditions, it usually takes root in situations where expectations have taken an upward turn. With this viewpoint in mind it is therefore not really surprising or discomforting to see conflict on the rise at our tertiary institutions. The birth and dawning of a democratic dispensation and era has ushered in new expectations. It has also made it even more possible and tolerated to air one’s discontent with the lack or slow pace of expected or demanded transformation.

(d) The issue, according to Baldridge, has "moral overtones" which will make radical action understandable. It justifies the action taken.

ii) Intensity Increases

As soon as the issue has been spelled out, the pace of demands made picks up quite drastically. Baldridge indicates that radicalism
takes over, with the usual result being that the moderate leaders are ousted and replaced by the more radical ones (1991:168). With this turn of events, the gap between the opposing parties tends to become a chasm.

iii) The Issues Expand

The situation then declines further as the initial issue or issues raised begin to relate more to the questions of power and authority. Not only must the issue or issues be settled in the group's favour, each group begins to demand and declare that it is its proper right to make the envisaged decision. With this escalation the issue suddenly swerves to encompass factors such as the legitimacy of the decision-making structures, and demands for seats on such structures by the opposing groups.

Mitchell holds that because of heightened hopes and frustrations, as well as an issue becoming a matter of principle, the issue may be expanded and new ones may crop up (1981:52,56). Sometimes, and because of the tactical behaviour or strategies used by the opponents, the original issues may change as well (1981:53).

iv) Sanctions are applied

The escalation of conflict then leads to threats being made by the one party against the other. Each is somewhat held at ransom, if it does not do 'this', the other party will do 'that'. Indeed, if the demanded response is not forthcoming the threat becomes a reality. Some of the actions may be of such a nature as to be costly, both materially and in relation to the relationship between the opposing groups.
Mitchell sees the escalation of conflict as the increase in "the level of coercion or violence in the threats or actions they (the opponents) direct against each other" (1981:60).

v) Call for allies

This is the stage at which attention becomes focused on attacking the decision-making structures, and during which the tendency is to lobby and recruit other interest groups in order to increase pressure on the opposition. Generally the first new group or groups to be drawn in will be interest groups with a stake in the decision that will finally emerge. As days go by, and as the conflict rages on, the field of recruitment extends and may ultimately draw in all stake-holders, up to and including the highest office of appeal available.

vi) Mediation and Conciliation

This is the stage at which the opposing parties come together and begin to offer and make compromises in search of a solution. The conflict has reached its zenith, and the opposing parties are willing or persuaded by circumstances to reconsider their stances.

vii) Bureaucratization of Conflict

This is the time during which calm descends once again upon the situation, as bureaucratic action swings into gear. It is an interesting stage as committees and commissions begin to work. The interest is also heightened by, in most cases, the departure of the radical leaders who may still not find within themselves the urge to co-operate with the opposition. In a way, the more conciliatory and moderate leadership re-emerges, perhaps until the
next issue of conflict declines into intensity again. The cycle may have begun once again.

2.2.3 Forms of Conflict

Mitchell distinguishes between two main types of conflict, namely latent and manifest conflict (1981:50).

2.2.3.1 Latent Conflict

In his description of latent conflict, Mitchell stresses three of its identifying characteristics. These are:

- the occurrence of a situation of conflict that is not realized by either one or both parties involved, or
- the existence of a situation of conflict that is recognized by both parties who also admit or realize that pursuing their desired goals is loaded with too much high risk, or
- the existence of a situation of conflict that is recognized by both parties who realize that pursuance of the conflict will only serve to increase the loss of other desired goals (1981:49 - 50).

2.2.3.2 Manifest Conflict

In this regard the parties that possess mutually incompatible goals realize their disagreement, and actively pursue the achievement of their own desired goals by employing open means to attain these (Mitchell, 1981:50).
Mitchell also identifies other forms of conflict which he sees as instrumental in understanding conflict. He identifies the following:

- Promises
- The strategy of ‘making a case’ by targeting an audience or third party
- Civil disobedience, or non-violent behaviour
- Persuasion
- Threats
- Coercion
- The breaking of cordial relations, which is equivalent to severing communication ties

2.3.3.3 Other views on forms of conflict

Mintzberg describes four forms of conflict which he sees as instrumental in understanding conflict. He describes:

- Confrontation - in this case the conflict may be intense, but it is within control and it is focused on the two parties involved
- Shaky Alliance - in this instance the parties involved, realizing the extent to which they will lose if they persist with their actions, decide to moderate their conflict for the good of the organization.
This does not mean, however, that conflict never flares up again. It rears its head from time to time.

- **Politcized Organization** - in the politicized organization conflict has spread to the whole system but the parties in opposition allow the organization to go on.

- **Political Arena** - when conflict moves beyond the political organization phase and brings the organization to a halt (1989: 244 - 245).

Behr, in describing the types of conflict in tertiary institutions in South Africa, highlights the following:

- Marches;

- Clashes with the police;

- Stone-throwing; and

- the burning of school buildings and other property (1988:196).

2.3. **Summary**

In the light of the above discussion, the researcher will define conflict as a battle for the upperhand between two or more opposing parties aiming at the attainment of their own desired goals. Towards the end, promises, persuasion, coercion and force may be used. The researcher will also seek to affirm the fact that conflict is not necessarily harmful and therefore deserving of elimination only. Conflict is natural and should be treated also as a normal aspect of organizational life. Care
should nevertheless be exercised to see to it that conflict does not run haywire. Conflict cannot be avoided.

The investigation will also use the information gleaned from the literature review to seek sources of conflict at the selected tertiary institutions. The cyclical path of conflict will also be given attention. Conflict does not explode without warning, it is a result and a constituent part of a process. The investigation will seek to identify the path of conflict as manifest in tertiary institutions.

The forms of conflict as identified by Mitchell (1981), Mintzberg (1989) and Behr (1988) will be interrogated within the tertiary institutions selected. The study will also seek to establish if no other forms of conflict have evolved, or have been present anyway in the past.

2.4. Conclusion

Bearing the discussion in this chapter in mind, Chapter 3 will pay attention to the research methodology that the researcher has chosen to use and why the choice was made. It will also discuss the instruments available for use in the research. Chapter 3 will also focus on population and sampling, as well as on validity and reliability.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

Bearing in mind the discussion in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 will look into the research design. The researcher has chosen to use the qualitative research methodology. In this chapter the following will receive attention: justification for employing the qualitative research methodology, the instruments to be used, population and sampling, as well as validity and reliability.

3.2. Why the Qualitative Research Method

In defining qualitative research, Fraenkel and Wallen state that refers to the "documenting or portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and relevant others" (1993:10). The emphasis is therefore on the researcher going out to the participants.

3.3. Research Design

McMillan and Schumacher see research design as being concerned with the planning and formatting of the investigation to get answers to the research questions posed. It is also concerned with the acquisition of answers that are as close to accuracy as possible. Wiersma (1991: 81) defines research design as a "plan or strategy for conducting the research" (1993:31).

It is worthwhile discussing, even briefly, the general characteristics of
qualitative research and the ethnographic study, which lend it to being more suitable for this kind of study. Fraenkel and Wallen list some of the characteristics as being:

- Data is drawn directly from the natural milieu in which it occurs. The researcher, who is the driving force in the qualitative research, goes out there, meets the participants, spends some time with them, usually observing and interviewing them. The researcher is therefore concerned with context, in a "non-manipulative, unobtrusive" way (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:38). Creswell endorses this aspect (1994:145).

- The researcher collects the data by, amongst other means, interview transcripts, field notes, audio recordings, video recordings, comments made by the participants or others, and official recordings. In short, the researcher chooses not to ignore anything.

- Qualitative research is also concerned with both the process and the product, with how events take place. Essential in this regard are the modes of interaction, meanings attributed and the attitudes portrayed.

- Qualitative research allows the picture to develop as the process goes on, therefore permitting inductive analysis.

- By going out to the subjects of the study, and by actually interacting with them in face-to-face discussions taking place within the natural setting, the researcher affords himself the opportunity to experience and understand how the subjects think, and why they think the way they do (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:380 - 381; Creswell, 1994:145).
These characteristics, amongst others, make the qualitative research methodology and the ethnographic approach more preferable for this study. According to Fraenkel and Wallen it seeks to provide a wider understanding of the actual behaviour of the subjects under study (1993:393). In line with what McMillan and Schumacher point out the researcher in the ethnographic study uses observation, interviewing and document analysis as pillars to get to grips with what he is studying (1993:37).

The historical research method, with its tendency towards the reconstruction of what happened in the past as accurately as possible, would be problematic for this study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:11). Finding the individuals who lived in that past, or experienced certain events, and confirming veracity would be difficult. It is perhaps not even desirable as the object of this study is the present and the immediate future. Similarly, the analytical research design would be unsuitable for this study as it tends to base its investigation on an analysis of documents only (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:37).

3.4. Data Collection

According to LeCompte and Preissle, data "are any kind of information which researchers can identify and accumulate to facilitate answers to their queries" (1993:158). In order to collect data that will answer the questions that the researcher has posed in Chapter 1, the researcher will use semi-structured interviews and observation.

3.4.1 Gaining access

As Bell suggests permission must be sought first before the researcher can move into the institution at which the investigation
will be conducted (1989:42). The researcher will gain access to the milieu mainly in two ways:

- By an introductory letter written by the Department of Educational Management and Nursing Sciences at the Rand Afrikaans University, at which the researcher is a registered student;

- The researcher is currently an employee at the Central campus of Vista University, which is one of the two institutions at which the data will be collected.

The participants will, as suggested by Bell also be set at ease by being assured that their anonymity will be respected, and that the information they will provide to the researcher will be treated in the strictest confidence (1989:43). An offer of the results of the study will also be made available to any of the participants who may require it.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

According to Fraenkel and Wallen, Fetterman views interviewing as of utmost importance in collecting data. Interviewing is used to find out what is on the minds of the subjects of study, what feelings, attitudes, intentions and meanings are (1993:385). Perhaps more important is the fact that in interviewing the researcher is able to ask questions and pursue answers in a face-to-face situation (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:10).

Amongst the advantages identified by Bailey and Wiersma as being offered by interviews, the following three may be highlighted:

- there is no problem with the lack of response as the respondents
and the researcher meet face-to-face in most instances;

- there is the added benefit that the researcher is in a position to follow up any aspects that need further clarity. This can be done instantly, and as the interview progresses;

- the respondents give the answers themselves on the spot. They do not consult others or merely request others to answer questions on their behalf, as is possible with mailed questionnaires for example (Bailey, 1987:174; Wiersma, 1991:190).

Having said this, it must be pointed out that interviewing does come with its own problems, like the high cost in terms of time and money, the inability of respondents to consult other people or other documents (Wiersma, 1991:190).

Fraenkel and Wallen distinguishes, amongst others, between three types of interviews, namely:

- Semi-structured interviews - these are more formal and a series of questions are asked with the aim of soliciting somewhat specific answers. The information so obtained may be compared as the questions asked to all respondents are the same;

- Informal interviews - these are more like casual discussions with no specific questions asked in any particular pattern or format. The result is that many different questions are asked, resulting in different answers which may render comparison difficult or even impossible;

- Retrospective interviews - in this type of interview the respondent is requested to recall details from the past. This interview has the problem that it tends to be less accurate and unreliable (1993:385).
In this investigation, the researcher will use the semi-structured interviews exclusively to delve a little deeper into issues not fully clarified by the respondents initial answers. The questions asked will be close-ended to allow for comparisons to be made (Bailey, 1987:187). With this in mind, a tape recorder will be used. The researcher will reduce note-taking during the interview to a minimum so that there is very little interference with the process. The questions will be asked in the same order throughout all the interviews.

In the main, and in line with the definition used by Fraenkel and Wallen, only two types of questions will be used for the interviews, namely:

- Opinion or value questions - to find out what the respondents think about specific issues or topics;

- Feeling questions - to find out the feelings of the respondents around the specific issues (1993:386).

3.4.3 Observation

Observation, according to Bailey as well as Fraenkel and Wallen, is focused on the collection of data on non-formal behaviour, and is done over a longer period of time (that is, over weeks or months) with researcher participation as an essential factor in the process (Bailey, 1987:239; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:384).

In this study, and especially with regard to the scope thereof, observation of the participants will not be pursued. The literature survey as well as the interviews have supplemented the need for observation in this study.
3.4.4 Documents Analysis

Document analyses refers to the examination in some detail of the written contents of a book, essay, newspapers, or any written material which contains information about the phenomena that we have sought to study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:389; Bailey, 1987:290).

A substantial analysis of written material has been done in Chapter Two of this investigation. This information has been used to create a framework for the study.

3.5. Population and Sampling

3.5.1 Population

LeCompte and Preissle define a population as "a group of participants assumed to share a cultural or subcultural tradition distinguishing them from their neighbors" (1993:57). Fraenkel and Wallen add to this definition by pointing out that a population is the larger group to which the results of a study can be applied (1993:79).

For the purposes of this study, the population comprises administrators, academics and students at tertiary institutions. It includes student representation and members of governing bodies as well as student representatives. In this context, the target population, that is the actual population to which the researcher would ultimately like to generalize (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:81) comprises the afore-mentioned groups of possible participants located at twenty-one universities, 15 technikons and about 40 colleges (NCHE: 10). It is impossible to reach the whole population defined
in this study. The accessible population is the population to which the researcher is able to generalize (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:10). For this purpose Vista and the Rand Afrikaans universities have been selected. Vista university was selected because the researcher is employed there in an administrative position. Rand Afrikaans university is the institution at which the researcher is registered as a student. The researcher intends to use the familiarity of the two institutions to best advantage.

3.5.2 Sampling

From the above it is apparent that it would be very difficult to study the whole population as defined and identified. Babbie cites problems like the inevitable need for a huge interviewing staff complement, the obvious requirement for large amounts of time and the related astronomical financial cost, as indicators that the population should indeed be limited (1975:136). This limiting is what is known as sampling. A number of authors define sampling as the process of:

- selecting the individuals who will participate, that is, those who will be questioned as part of the study, and from whom data will be collected;

- extracting such individuals from the larger and defined population systematically so that the still represent the larger population as accurately as is feasible; and

- selecting the participating individuals in such a manner that all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected into the sample population (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:79; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993:60; Wiersma, 1991:247; Bailey, 1987:80; and Babbie, 1975:147).
This study will use a sampled population that is selected as described hereabove.

3.6. Sampling Procedures

The researcher chooses to use purposive or judgmental sampling. Purposive sampling permits the researcher to select his sample on the basis of his own judgement and knowledge of the population (Babbie, 1975:167); Bailey (1987:194); Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:88). The researcher has the knowledge that the sample will provide the data he needs to satisfy his research aim. As Fraenkel and Wallen assert, in purposive sampling the researcher "wants to ensure that he or she obtains a sample that possesses certain characteristics relevant to the study" (1993:383). It is not always the case that random sampling will be appropriate for all educational research situations (Wiersma, 1991: 265). Random sampling is also made difficult by the fact that a list of all possible participants at all tertiary institutions cannot be accurately constructed under these circumstances.

The researcher is of the opinion that a sample derived from the following sub-groups is representative enough, and should provide the data required for the purposes of this study:

- Vice-Chancellors, wherever possible
- Transformation Officers, or equivalents thereof, wherever possible
- Registrars, wherever possible
- Academics
- Deans of Students or Directors of Academic Administration or Student Affairs
- Presidents or General Secretaries of Student representative bodies
- Leaders of other student formations.
3.7 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which the explanations given regarding phenomena represent the state existing in the real world. It therefore refers to the level to which the propositions or explanations made are true or false in relation to what actually occurs in the real situation. It deals with the ways in which these propositions and explanations can be defended and supported by the data that the researcher collects. The suitability, eloquence and potential for the use of such data is also very important in promoting validity (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:158, 225-6; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:139).

A conceptual framework for the study has already been developed, supported by a literature review. The questionnaires and interviews will be used to obtain data from the subjects of the study. The validity of such collected data will be checked against the propositions and explanations already made, and their validity will be determined thereby.

With regard to the above, internal validity - which refers to the level to which the results of the study can be accurately understood, correctly interpreted and valid conclusions drawn therefrom - will also be done (Wiersma, 1991:104). The same applies to external validity, which refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be generalized to the larger population (Wiersma, 1991:4, 104). The study aims to produce results that can be used effectively by the stake-holders at tertiary institutions to improve their own situations.

3.8 Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency (Bailey, 1987:70). It is the extent to which "an instrument will give similar results for the same individuals at
different types" (Wiersma, 1991:274). In other words, if the instrument was to be used in the same population, under more or less the same conditions, even after the elapse of months, it should yield the same outcome.

3.9 Conclusion

The investigation envisaged in this study will be conducted using the qualitative research methodology which seeks to meet at some point face-to-face with some of the stakeholders. In pursuing the data, the researcher will rely heavily on questionnaires to be distributed at Vista and Rand Afrikaans universities. These will be supplemented by structured and semi-structured interviews. Observation will not play a crucial role in this investigation. This is because of time constraints and the focused scope of the study. The sample population will be largely selected by the researcher, using his knowledge of the types of respondents whose responses will help the research. The results of the study will also be checked for validity and reliability.

Having regard to what has been discussed in this chapter, Chapter 4 will deal with the analyses and interpretation of the empirical data collected by using the instruments already discussed in this chapter.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In view of what has been discussed in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 will deal with the analysis of the empirical data as collected by the researcher by means of the semi-structured interviews. This chapter will also provide an interpretation of the analysed empirical data.

4.2. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used during the interviews is included here as Table 4.1. These questions were asked to all the interviewees without exception.

Table 4.1:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>How would you define or explain conflict in your institution?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>What, do you think, are the causes of conflict at your institution?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Does conflict occur throughout the year, or are there specific periods of high conflict risk? (If Yes, when are these and why?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How does conflict become visible in your institution?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Should conflict be encouraged? Why?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Should executive managements or students carry the largest share of the blame for conflict? Give reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A passive executive management would mean less conflict. Do you agree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A passive student body would mean less conflict. Do you agree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conflict sometimes results in time losses, financial losses and poor learning and/or teaching. Are these loses justifiable?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. **Analysis of the empirical data**

The interviews conducted were captured on audio-tape. Full transcriptions were drawn up and from these transcriptions the data was analysed. The resultant analyses are contained in the Tables 4.2 - 4.11, each of which is a summary of the responses elicited per question from the interviewees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>- It is when people do not agree.</td>
<td>- It is the result of tension that exists between the management and students, students and academics, students and the administration.</td>
<td>- Difference in what Management perceives as managerial role, the National Transformation Forum also has its own expectations.</td>
<td>- A dynamic process whereby management and students disagree and agree on certain issues.</td>
<td>- We have not formed a total common vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It is a situation in which students raise a concern and the management views it as a way of creating problems.</td>
<td>- It is almost impossible in the situation for everyone to see issues the same way.</td>
<td>- There is a thin line between transformative issues and management issues.</td>
<td>- Students not satisfied with managerial decisions.</td>
<td>- Efforts to bring about a common vision are always opposed by individuals or groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- It can be defined as the contradiction, the contrasts and differences between the management and the students on a particular issue.</td>
<td>- Conflict is disillusionment that takes the form of a physical action.</td>
<td>- The interest of the internal stakeholders as opposed to the strategy and programmes that the Management has in place.</td>
<td>- The very unhealthy relationship between the lecturers and students.</td>
<td>- It manifests itself as a very unhealthy relationship between the lecturers and the students.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- It is when students and academics feel marginalized by Heads of Department and by Management.</td>
<td>- Any undesirable situation.</td>
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Table 4.2: How would you define or explain conflict in your institution?
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<th>STUDENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The relationship between the SRC and Management is not a mutual one. We differ in terms of ideas.</td>
<td>- Divisions and differences in viewing issues.</td>
<td>- Not being able to find each other.</td>
<td>- Poor communication.</td>
<td>- The decentralization of Vista into campuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There is a perception by Management that students want to lead the university. There is no institution that can be run by students.</td>
<td>- Administrative flaws that students take advantage of.</td>
<td>- It's expectations that create conflict.</td>
<td>- Different attitudes.</td>
<td>- There are closer to eleven units operating independently from each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Management is selective in listening to students.</td>
<td>- There is too much flexibility in the application of the institution's rules and regulations.</td>
<td>- It is different ideas.</td>
<td>- Preconceived ideas.</td>
<td>- Our internal communication is not that effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The different interests between the students and the management of the academics.</td>
<td>- The creation of precedents which are very difficult to maintain.</td>
<td>- People seeing things from different levels.</td>
<td>- Students view management as adamant and arrogant.</td>
<td>- Each campus wants to become independent, totally independent ... they want to do their own thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The perception is that the SRC causes the conflict because many SRC members have been at the institution for more than three years, and may have developed clashes with certain members of the management.</td>
<td>- Our institutions are now led by men and women who do not have enough background of the plight of the people.</td>
<td>- People not prepared to come to the drawing board and discuss issues.</td>
<td>- Management view students as violent and not co-operative.</td>
<td>- Decisions taken by Central Campus without proper consultation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The students and the management see each other as opposition parties.</td>
<td>- There is a big gap between the executive management, and the people they are trying to lead.</td>
<td>- It must be seen in the context of changes in the country.</td>
<td>- Lack of consultation.</td>
<td>- One consultation cannot define praisably what belongs to senior management, and what belongs to local management.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Management feels people should come up to them, people feels management should come down to them.</td>
<td>- The transformation of the institution, the structures of government and the transformation of the curriculum.</td>
<td>- Decisions taken by the Central Campus.</td>
<td>- Head office tends to bend to student demands too easily.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Lack of communication and financial resources.</td>
<td>- Academic and financial exclusions.</td>
<td>- The University must admit more students.</td>
<td>- The University must admit more students.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Students wait until the last minute before bringing their problems to the management.</td>
<td>- The raising of tuition fees aimed at barring some students.</td>
<td>- The examination timetable is congested.</td>
<td>- The examination timetable is congested.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The inability to realize that criticism comes because others want change and to see the institution grow.</td>
<td>- The University must admit more students.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Students complain at the very last minute instead of negotiating earlier in the year.</td>
<td>- The inability to realize that criticism comes because others want change and to see the institution grow.</td>
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Table 4.4: Does conflict occur throughout the year, or are there specific periods of high conflict risk?

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<tr>
<td>- It is during registration time and examinations, especially with the release of the results. - It is guaranteed that there will be conflict during examinations. - There is a 50:50 chance of conflict during the rest of the year.</td>
<td>- It rarely goes on throughout the year. - It occurs mainly during registrations and examinations. - It occurs throughout the year but is less discerned during much of the time if it involves a smaller number of people.</td>
<td>- It occurs throughout the year. - It's not periods per se, but it's the issues at hand that determine the events. - It happens throughout the year, and annually.</td>
<td>- Basically on examination issues, and confined to that period. - Also during registration and admission periods. - When students still have a lot of money in their budget.</td>
<td>- It is not always throughout the year. - It's before or just at the time of writing examinations or during registrations. - There are more problems when students have a lot of money in their coffers. When the coffers are almost emptied, problems tend to disappear also.</td>
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Table 4.5: Does conflict grow from step to step?

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<tr>
<td>- It begins as a minor issue.</td>
<td>- Definitely. It starts with two people, then it involves more people and committees. Sometimes the issue changes and makes the conflict bigger than what it was originally.</td>
<td>- If those expectation’s are not addressed at a certain level, they sort of blow out of proportion and they overlap to another level.</td>
<td>- There is less conflict at the beginning.</td>
<td>- It gets more intense as people look into it or the ground swell enlarges. People take colleagues with them.</td>
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<td>- It may explode by moving from being a stay-away, not attending classes, not writing, violence and police intervention.</td>
<td>- When it is allowed to go on for long periods of time it tends to become bigger as fresh questions are posed.</td>
<td>- Then you find that it clouds every other issue unnecessarily</td>
<td>- It ultimately leads to strikes.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Firstly, we have a situation wherein things are discussed, then there is deadlock, then singing, intimidation, demonstrations and finally confrontation.</td>
<td>- Talking turns into chanting and into singing, and then it is toy-toying and threats. At the end somebody might as well get hurt. Property may be vandalised and damaged.</td>
<td>- students are “not consistent in deciding, in taking decisions”</td>
<td>- There is withdrawal from the losing party.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Negotiation is not something that is done in good faith.</td>
<td>- Strikes.</td>
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<td>- The longer the process takes the more other issues get a lift.</td>
<td>- Mass action.</td>
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<td>- Littering.</td>
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<td>- Threats.</td>
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<td>- In some cases it reaches abnormal proportions which are sometimes very dangerous.</td>
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<td>- Discussions between the management and students.</td>
<td>- It is visible when there is continued and prolonged negotiation, mass action, singing and violence.</td>
<td>- One would not pick it up in the corridors</td>
<td>- Students pass a motion of no confidence in the negotiation processes.</td>
<td>- People start corresponding on the issue with each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Toy-toying and singing.</td>
<td>- It is so much part of the daily life of the university that only when a building goes up in smoke does anyone really take notice.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- They walk out.</td>
<td>- They involve people who have nothing to do with the conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Damage to property.</td>
<td>- Circulars begin to be sent about, students put writings on walls.</td>
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<td>- Mass action.</td>
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<td>- Students stop academic activities - there might be boycotts.</td>
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<td>- They become very violent, force people out of class, disrupt lessons and tests</td>
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<td>- No, we mustn't encourage it.</td>
<td>- A university is not supposed to be a quiet place.</td>
<td>- No, it is disruptive in nature.</td>
<td>- Yes, it is the way in which the organization realizes it is serving its customers or its clients accordingly.</td>
<td>- I don't think it is positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If you suppress conflict you will do harm to all parties.</td>
<td>- Management should seek to train its students in dealing with and handling conflict.</td>
<td>- A situation should not be allowed whereby the management of the students or whosoever encourages conflict.</td>
<td>- Conflict is not always negative.</td>
<td>- To get to certain changes conflict is necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People should discuss issues in a professional way.</td>
<td>- Students should always search for answers.</td>
<td>- The organization can learn to perfect itself.</td>
<td>- Students and management should learn to sit together early in the year and discuss things.</td>
<td>- People should sit down and discuss conflict before it gets out of hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It is a part of life; it cannot be avoided.</td>
<td>- Constructive conflict must be encouraged because this will help the institution to grow.</td>
<td>- It should be avoided by all means; it is disruptive.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- In any society one cannot hope that there will be no conflict.</td>
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Table 4.8: Should executive managements or students carry the largest share of the blame for conflict?

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</table>
| - Both the management and students.  
- It is both of them that fail to agree, and make conflict worse. They are failing the people who elected them. | - Executive managements only meet students in times of problems.  
- The management should carry the full blame because they do not seem to learn from the past.  
- If management was more decisive students would know that management would always stand firm.  
- Academics are left vulnerable when management changes decisions without consulting them.  
- Managements are inaccessible.  
- Yes, we are disappointed with the way the management operates.  
- Students win at every situation of conflict.  
- Students sometimes have very good reasons for their demands.  
- We have to change the management style of the university.  
- Management know about the things that cause conflict every year but they let it happen again and again. | - Definitely yes, the Executive Management should shoulder the blame.  
- Management should have a plan that they must make sure that everybody buys into.  
- By not addressing the concerns of the people.  
- Management doesn’t really go down to the people at the grassroots.  
- They are aloof.  
- They are too distant.  
- They don’t have time for the grassroots people.  
- Everyone must be brought on board.  
- Definitely students to a large extent.  
- Students make a lot of demands.  
- Management is also to blame for surrendering to students’ demands too easily. | - Both the management and the students.  
- Management should devise a means of trying to urge the students to come forward.  
- I think students should carry the blame as well.  
- Management surrenders, they submit to students’ demands unduly and too easily.  
- Student work hard at finding problems to complain about. | - The government is agreeing with management that students should change their ways of demonstrating.  
- Forces running the student politics at this stage are doing it for political reasons. |
Table 4.9: A passive executive management would mean less conflict. Do you agree?

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<tr>
<td>No, there is no such condition. Management should be active, otherwise these ancillary things will be done. The bill will be shadowed by destroyed. Management must legislate.</td>
<td>- No, it would mean they had capitulated their duties. - I think students would actually challenge such passive management even more vigorously. - No, that would be self-defeating. A passive management would be a side joke. - It would be like having an institution without a compass. - No, it would amount to implying that the students must run the university.</td>
<td>- An executive management that consults and informs and communicates and workshops people would be a more better approach. - They should make sure those decisions are understood. - It would make matters worse. - Management should engage students in times of peace and in times of conflict.</td>
<td>- No, if there are still problems there will still be conflict. - It could make things worse. - You must be visible as a manager. - Management must have their eyes and ears open, and must always work very hard. - They must tackle issues.</td>
<td>- A passive management will probably encourage conflict.</td>
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</table>
Table 4.10: A passive student body would mean less conflict. Do you agree?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Yes, they will just agree to anything. But students do not want to be passive.</td>
<td>- Yes, it will, but this is not what we want to see.</td>
<td>- Not really.</td>
<td>- To a greater extend there might be.</td>
<td>- I don't think so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People should engage each other.</td>
<td>- There should be involvement from both sides.</td>
<td>- People should engage each other.</td>
<td>- Students' lives should be activated somehow.</td>
<td>- Important decisions stay with the SRC and are never shared with the student body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students should have a voice but should not be given the power to run the university.</td>
<td>- No, a student body that is passive needs to be activated.</td>
<td>- Their brain must challenge things.</td>
<td>- You cannot live in a situation of higher learning where the students do not seem to exist.</td>
<td>- There's approximately twelve to fifteen percent of the student body participating in the election of the SRC. That is not a representative body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A Student body should be able to stand up and challenge things.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Since 1976 the students have become more politically involved.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Table 4.11: Conflict sometimes results in time losses, financial losses and poor learning and/or teaching. Are these losses justifiable?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Every struggle has casualties. The losses will be there.</td>
<td>- Losses are not what we hope or wish for but they are incorporated in conflict.</td>
<td>- If you measure the conflict with loss it is an unfair comparison.</td>
<td>- Yes, conflict in most cases results in both negative and positive results.</td>
<td>- We cannot afford it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not, they are not justified. The damages are not justifiable.</td>
<td>- Major losses are however not justifiable, especially if they recur.</td>
<td>- Some of these conflicts are necessary to bring the changes that we find ourselves and the society in.</td>
<td>- In each and every struggle there are casualties.</td>
<td>- It tarnishes the image of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes, if it is worthwhile, yes. Whether we lose or not, we go forward.</td>
<td>- If discussions are conducted with closed minds than the time lost will have gone to miserable waste.</td>
<td>- It happens for a good cause.</td>
<td>- If the conflict can resolve a problem more permanently, you have to make a sacrifice.</td>
<td>- The university is that less accepted in the private sector if it always embroiled in conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sometimes no. If a problem recurs into the future years the losses cannot be justified. If the problems are solved, the losses can be explained.</td>
<td>- Otherwise, yes, losses that contribute to a good solution are justifiable.</td>
<td>- It does occur that some conflict are not really necessary.</td>
<td>- In some instances conflict cannot be resolved without casualties.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- There should be no such losses.</td>
<td>As long as that loss of time, loss of property and money can be restricted to short time.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sacrifices must be made if there is a goal to be achieved.</td>
<td>I don’t agree that money should be spent erecting the same building or repairing it more than once. It is a big waste.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.4. Interpretation of the empirical data

4.4.1 Question 1: How would you define or explain conflict in your institution?

Aim of the question: To establish what the interviewees think conflict is.

The responses to Question 1 revealed that the respondents generally understood conflict to refer to situations of disagreement, contradictions, differences, disillusionment, tensions, opposition, dissatisfaction, the lack of a common vision and an undesirable atmosphere. They also highlighted that conflict is the spilling out of the tensions and disagreement into the open. The majority of the respondents referred automatically to the unhealthy relationships between the Executive managements and the students as the location of conflict. Interdepartmental conflict, or conflict between the academics and the Heads of Department and Executive management was mentioned by very few respondents.

4.4.2 Question 2: What, do you think, are the causes of conflict at your institution?

Aim of the question: To find out what the respondents regard as the causes of conflict.

The causes of conflict as seen by the respondents are divided hereunder into three large categories:
(a) **Relationships**

- Lack of mutuality
- Stakeholders view each other as opposition
- Lack of, or poor communication between the stakeholders
- Lack of, or inadequate consultation

(b) **Perceptions**

- Management teams believe that students want to usurp their power and take over the running of the institutions
- Student Representative Councils (SRC's) are not representative of the student body
- Management teams are out of touch with the rest of the stakeholders
- Management teams are adamant and arrogant
- Students are unco-operative and violent
- Different interests between the stakeholders

(c) **Administration**

- Management teams are lacking in administrative and management skills
- There is too much flexibility in the application of the rules and regulations that govern the institutions
- Precedents are created
- Poor definition of responsibilities for stakeholders
- The exclusion of students from further studies on financial or academic grounds
- Management teams bend too easily under student pressure
- Lack of foresight to prevent conflict or its recurrence especially on the same issues
4.4.3 **Question 3:** Does conflict occur throughout the year or are there specific periods of high conflict risk?

**Aim of the question:** The intention of this question was to find out if the respondents saw conflict as going on throughout the year, or if it was confined to specific periods.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that conflict occurs during specific periods of the academic calendar. This is especially during the student registration and examination periods. One view added that conflict was also high during the earlier part of the year when the SRC's coffers were still filled up. An opinion was also advanced that conflict occurs throughout the year but may be less discernable during certain periods because of the lower number of people involved. An interesting remark made was that some types of conflict occur annually, at the same time and around the same issues.

4.4.4 **Question 4:** Does conflict grow from step to step?

**Aim of the question:** To establish if the respondents think there is some form of progression in conflict.

There was unanimous agreement that conflict moves from step to step and gets worse from day to day. Figure 4.1 is a representation of the progressive stages of conflict as understood by the respondents. This representation is based on Figure 2.1 discussed in Chapter 2.
4.4.5 **Question 5:** How does conflict become visible in your institution?

*Aim of the question:* The aim of the question was to determine how the respondents felt one could see that there is conflict at the institution.

The respondents felt that the following occurrences were signs of conflict at tertiary institutions:

- Prolonged discussions and negotiations between the Management and students.
- The distribution of circulars, as well as graffiti.
- The passing of motions of no confidence by one sector of the stakeholders on the other.

It is also noteworthy that some respondents felt that at other tertiary institutions there is so much conflict anyway that the signs of conflict have become a part of life at such institutions. Unless something major happened, like the burning of a building, it would be impossible in such institutions to see that there is conflict.

To some extent the contents of Figure 4.1 were also stated as manifestations of conflict in institutions.

4.4.6 **Question 6:** Should conflict be encouraged?

*Aim of the question:* To establish whether the respondents believe that conflict should be encouraged.

The respondents were divided on this question. Some respondents believed that conflict should be encouraged while others were
against this. Interestingly, though, all respondents pointed that conflict should not be suppressed as the institutions learn and grow from it. The respondents pointed out that conflict is natural in society. They felt, however, that the stakeholders should rather pre-empt conflict by engaging each other in discussions.

4.4.7 **Question 7:** Should executive managements or students carry the largest share of the blame for conflict?

*Aim of the question:* To find out from the respondents if they thought blame for conflict could be apportioned between the Management and the students, or if it should be carried by one party only.

Students and administrators are of the opinion that both Management and students should share the blame for conflict. They felt that Management was adamant and the students too demanding. Academics, on the other hand, believe that the Management should shoulder the blame for the conflict because they do not seem to learn from the past and to plan ahead. Management is of the opinion that students should move away from the way they bring their grievances to the fore. There is also feeling within management circles that there are sinister forces behind the students.

4.4.8 **Question 8:** A passive executive management would mean less conflict. Do you agree?

*Aim of the question:* To establish whether the respondents feel a passive management would encourage less conflict.
There was a resounding negative answer to this question. The respondents felt that a passive management would actually encourage more conflict as it would amount to the abdication of responsibilities. They felt that the Management should be seen to be active and should engage all stakeholders in consultations. Respondents believe that management should tackle issues and give direction to the institution.

4.4.9 **Question 9:** A passive student body would mean less conflict. Do you agree?

*Aim of the question:* To establish if the respondents felt there would be less conflict if the students were passive.

The general feeling was that students should question things, they should engage the management and they must challenge decisions that affect their lives at the institutions. The respondents even went further to state that if the student body was passive, steps should be taken to activate it.

4.4.10 **Question 10:** Conflict sometimes results in time losses, financial losses and poor learning and/or teaching. Are these losses justifiable?

*Aim of the question:* To find out what the respondents’ attitudes to the losses usually associated with conflict are.

The responses pointed overwhelmingly to the fact that the losses are not justifiable but mainly inevitable, with the respondents referring to "casualties" being an inescapable part of any conflict.
The feeling was that if steps could be taken to minimize such losses the institutions would benefit even more. Conflict should not be allowed to go on for lengthy periods of time. If the losses signal a more permanent solution to conflict, then the losses can be considered as justifiable.

4.5. Conclusion

In this Chapter the researcher has analysed the empirical data collected by means of the semi-structured interviews. The data has been collated in table format. The chapter has also provided an interpretation of the analysed empirical data.

Chapter 5 will concentrate on the elucidation of the findings of the research as well as making recommendations for the study.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 has dealt with the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. Arising from these, Chapter 5 consists of the findings of the research. The researcher also makes recommendations that are informed by the research.

5.2. Findings

With special reference to what has been observed, studied from the documented sources and obtained from the interviews conducted, the major findings of the study are presented in line with the dilemma of the research project and the questions as posed in Chapter 1.

5.2.1 What is conflict?

Conflict is understood as an undesirable and unhealthy situation in which the stakeholders strive to achieve mutually incompatible goals within the same institution. It is the outward manifestation of the existence of disagreement, tensions, disillusionment and the lack of a common vision. It may also be regarded as the reflection of the perceptions held by the various stakeholders about each other and
about each other’s intentions. It is generally accepted, however, that conflict is an inevitable component of life, and that it will be there in varying degrees of intensity. There is also a large measure of agreement that conflict should not be unduly suppressed, and that it should be encouraged. While conflict has negative results, it is also true that it has a lot of positive results. From both these results the institution and the stakeholders stand to learn and gain a lot.

5.2.2 What are the sources of conflict at tertiary institutions?

Perceptions play a large role as a source of conflict that is experienced in tertiary institutions. There are perceptual problems between the various stakeholders as each views the other with suspicion and sometimes contempt. Management is of the view that students, and some academics, are bent on making the running of the institution virtually impossible. They sometimes believe there is a ‘third force’ behind the grievances and demands of the students. Academics are of the opinion that the management does not exercise enough authority over the students especially. They also believe to a large extent that management are too willing to accede to student demands. Academics also feel, however, that some of the demands made by students are quite legitimate. Administrators and the lower levels of management on the other hand are of the opinion that the executive management does not learn from the past, and this leads to the recurrence of conflict over the years. The students regard Management as arrogant, adamant and bent merely on excluding students who express themselves from the institution by employing academic and financial exclusion rules. They also feel that Management is not doing enough for transformation and that it is largely out of touch with the sentiments of the other stakeholders.

There are also problems with the relations between the stakeholders
which lead to conflict. Perhaps of greatest significance is poor or even total lack of communication. This lack of communication permeates all levels and is found between Management and students, students and academics, management and academics, administrators and academics, and even between the student representative councils and the larger student body. This leads to the breaking down of relations as suspicion and distrust set in, and as people begin to believe that they are being marginalized.

Some conflict is blamed on the perceived lack of management skills by the executive managements, too much flexibility in bending rules and regulations, the creation of too many precedents, the poor definition of responsibilities for the stakeholders, the lack of foresight and the pace of the changes taking place across the country that reflects unfavourably at times when compared to that of the institution. It is also held that too much time passes between the initial indications of a conflict situation and the resolution thereof. With the passage of time more issues get carried into the conflict situation, and emotions keep heightening.

5.2.3 What are the forms of conflict prevalent at tertiary institutions?

For the sake of easier categorization, the researcher has sub-divided the forms of conflict as levels of intensity as follows:

5.2.3.1 The Prelude

This is the level at which what later turns out to be full-blown conflict emerges. The main characteristic of the beginning of conflict is the need to come together to discuss and talk about issues. During such discussions differences of opinion may occur, sometimes because the various stakeholders within the institution
feel their interests are in jeopardy, or because there are suspicions about the interests of the other stakeholders. The opposing parties proceed with the deliberations each with a view of securing maximum advantage for themselves even at the expense of the others. As meetings and discussions are necessary, unavoidable and are actually an essential and integral part of any institution’s communication and decision-making strategy, it may be difficult to note that conflict is emerging at this stage.

5.2.3.2 Low Intensity Conflict

Perhaps the declaration of, or even the mere perception the stakeholders have reached deadlock on an issue is one of the major signs that conflict has taken root. The parties seem to declare their unwillingness to move away from or compromise their positions. As one interviewee stated it becomes clear that the stakeholders no longer want to communicate with each other. There is withdrawal from the discussions. The more active members of one party, in this research project especially the students, begin resorting to appeals to the emotions of their colleagues. This ushers in the singing, the chanting and the toyi-toying. The researcher chose to include littering in this stage as it is not regarded as a non-threatening action.

Paragraphs 5.2.3.1 and 5.2.3.2 may therefore be regarded as the vocal stages of the forms of conflict.

5.2.3.3 Medium Intensity Conflict

If the conflict is not resolved, it escalates even further. The conflict becomes more physically expressive as students begin to stay away from lectures and embark on class boycotts. At this stage there
may be a few members of the group who may be viewed as uncooperative because they may not, for example, want to boycott the lectures. Some debate may ensue within the group. Usually this group which wants to go on with lectures is threatened with violence or exclusion if it breaks away from the main body. Intimidation becomes rife.

5.2.3.4 High Intensity Conflict

If the debate referred to in paragraph 5.2.3.3 goes on, and the threats and intimidation remain, confrontation may even take place within the group. This confrontation may become violent. Outside the group, the confrontation may lead to the vandalism and damage of property. Windows may be smashed, furniture broken or destroyed. In some instances buildings are burnt down as well. Whatever the action there usually is great financial loss attached.

5.2.3.5 The Eruption

The continuation of the conflict beyond the stage described in paragraph 5.2.3.4 above leads to the further deterioration of the conflict. It reaches the stage where the violence is so intense, and the damages so high that the intervention of the police or the shutting down of the institution becomes inevitable. This is the stage at which the most "casualties" as referred to by many of the interviewees occur.

Having exhausted itself by reaching the climax, emotions begin to subside once again, parties begin to compromise, and they begin to descend to discussions and negotiations once again.

5.2.4 Who are affected by conflict at tertiary institutions?
All stakeholders, and other interested parties, are affected by conflict in tertiary institutions. The researcher found that the following instances are affected:

5.2.4.1 Management

They lose a lot of valuable time as they get involved in conflict situations which make demands on their time, especially if the conflict is a recurrence of the past events. Coupled to this they lose the respect of the academics who feel they are being sacrificed, or feel that the Management is not doing enough to run the institution.

5.2.4.2 The Academics

Academics feel marginalized because they are not being adequately consulted and they are unhappy with the situation in which their schedules have to be revised because of conflict which they believe could have been avoided if the Management had been more proactive.

5.2.4.3 Administrators

They are of the opinion that they have to bear the brunt of events of which they are not the initiators. Administrators generally feel that if rules and regulations are adhered to strictly, a task which they believe they are doing their utmost best to perform, conflict could be minimized extensively.

5.2.4.4 Students

Students feel they have the right to be heard, and to make demands which may be followed up by other actions if nothing happens.
Their feeling is that the changes and transformation that they want to see taking place are coming too slowly.

5.2.4.5 Other Interested Parties

The government invests substantial financial and human resources into the tertiary institutions and is therefore directly affected by the conflict that occurs there, especially if it is on-going and repetitive. The tax-payer is also directly affected if buildings are burnt down as they have to come up with more money for repairs and reconstruction. It also affects the private and public sector in that the students do not adequately go through their academic programmes as a result of the time lost during conflict situations.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research and on the literature study conducted, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

5.3.1 Conflict at tertiary institutions should be regarded as inevitable and necessary for the development of the institutions and its stakeholders. It should be encouraged, and indeed provoked, amongst all stakeholders. Positive conflict is important for the debating of issues, and for the ushering in of new ideas. Negative conflict should, however, be minimized as much as possible. Conflict helps the institution to learn more about itself and therefore to improve itself (see Table 4.7).

5.3.2 All stakeholders must learn from past conflict. Conflict must not be allowed to repeat itself around the same issues and the same methods of handling them as in the past. While conflict is necessary, it should
not be encouraged just for the sake of having some form of conflict in the institution. Especially in the present times where transformation is at the fore-front of everything, conflict should be a learning process and should result in forward movement (see Table 4.4).

5.3.3 Communication must be improved between the stakeholders in an institution. In some cases it is apparent that conflict arose out of misconceptions, unfounded perceptions, rumours, misinformation and misunderstandings. Information must be disseminated efficiently to all, and within all parties concerned in an unambiguous way (see Table 4.1).

5.3.4 All stakeholders must be fully briefed of the way in which the institution operates, how it is funded, and where it is headed. The creation of a common vision and mission must be a joint effort of all the stakeholders, so that they can also see themselves as owning it. The vision and mission of the institution should be constantly reviewed to ensure that it is still relevant as times come and go (see Tables 4.1, 4.8 and 4.9).

5.3.5 All discussions and negotiations must be conducted in absolute good faith. No party should feel suspicious of "hidden agendas" (see Tables 4.8 and 4.9).

5.3.6 Issues must be treated immediately. The tendency to wait until the last minute before a matter is raised smacks of dishonesty. The same can be said of unnecessary delays in the tackling of issues which have been brought to the fore (see Table 4.8).

5.3.7 Although conflict may escalate, all parties involved in the situation should strive to obtain a resolution sooner rather that later. In the final analysis, none of the parties gain if the conflict is allowed to go on for
protracted periods of time (see Table 4.11).

5.3.8 All stakeholders should be in good contact with each other and must seek ways to agreeing on how conflict should be addressed. There must be no confusion as soon as an issue emerges (see Table 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10).

5.3.9 All stakeholders must be made aware of the intensity of the damages caused by arson and violence during conflict situations. The academic time lost and the money lost due to damages may be explained but cannot be fully justified country regardless of the depth of its resources. Property must be protected by all the stakeholders. After the conflict the institution must continue operating without hindrance (see Table 4.11).

5.4 Further research

The study has brought out some interesting issues which may require further research regarding conflict at tertiary institutions.

(i) Most conflict in tertiary institutions repeats itself every year around the same issues. The researcher is of the feeling that some investigation into the reasons and motives for the recurrence must be conducted as no institution can afford these repeated instances.

(ii) Students feel they are not understood by the Management or the academics. They are of the understanding that their genuine grievances are treated indifferently. A study of student beliefs, ideas, principles, perceptions and methods of doing things might be helpful to both the Management and the student body.
(iii) It would also be interesting to see a study conducted on building or re-building the bridges between all the stakeholders in a tertiary institution. Once the bridges are firmly in place the institutions may be in a better position to proceed with their intended business of teaching, learning and research.

Finally, although the overwhelming majority of the interviewees is of the opinion that conflict is necessary and is an inevitable aspect of life, it is also agreed that negative conflict should not be allowed to take root. During the interviews it became apparent that the respondents tended to dissociate themselves from each other, using pronouns like "we" and "they". The researcher could not help but get the feeling that the one stakeholder feels the other stakeholders are the ones who are at fault. This is a sign that there are problems simmering.

5.5 Conclusion

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations in this research will contribute to the improvement of education management.
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