

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and problem statement

With the demise of apartheid the higher education landscape of South Africa (SA) had to change as well. As a guiding document, the *Restructuring of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (RSA 1997)* sets out the programme for the envisioned new higher education system. Among some of the changes envisaged by this Act was that higher education needed to be responsive to the broader process of SA's socio-economic and political transition. Of note is that, by virtue of the history of the higher educational landscape in SA, the changes were experienced in two phases. The first phase just after 1994 was characterised by debates on the restructuring centred on the changed political environment. This was a period where issues such as equal access to higher education institutions and opportunities for staff and students across race and gender lines, unequal funding, appropriateness of curriculum, shortages of graduates in the fields of science, and inefficiency and ineffectiveness of university management were attempted to be addressed.

The second (current) phase is the “globalisation of education” – market principles are introduced into education, with a resultant rise in study fees; academic training is being steered more by market forces than by government; and incorporations and mergers of higher education institutions are being enforced to ensure efficiency, amongst other things.

My intention to undertake a study on the restructuring of higher education was because the subject has raised different views and different reactions from different stakeholders. There are authors who are against the manner in which the restructuring of higher education is being formulated and implemented, especially in this second phase, i.e. the globalisation of higher education. Such authors include Komane (2002:7), Goedegebuure, Kaiser, Maassen and De Weert (1994:3), Berstelsen (1998:130), Kgaphola (1999:19) and Clark (1998:5).

These authors are of the view that the restructuring of higher education is leading towards the higher educational system taking the shape and characteristics of corporate institutions.

They believe that the introduction of neo-liberal methods of operation into higher education is going to have led to a process where only an elite group will benefit, while systematically marginalizing the participation of the working class. The introduction of neo-liberal systems into higher education such as subsidy cuts by government, has also led to protests from students who can no longer afford to pay their fees. On the other hand, there are those like Harvey and Knight (1996:vii) and Teeple (in Komane 2002:5), who believe the restructuring of higher education to be good because of its responsive nature to the socio-economic challenges posed by neo-liberalism.

With regard to the current form of restructuring – mergers between historically disadvantaged and historically advantaged institutions – different views and reactions are also held. For example, there are those who criticise the mergers, such as the Association of Vice-Chancellors of historically disadvantaged institutions referring to the mergers as “an educational catastrophe”, because they foresee themselves being swallowed up by former white institutions (Kotecha and Harman 2001). There is also strong criticism from students who believe their institutional cultures will fade away once the mergers are in place. Contrary to these views, are those held by some student organisations and by government that the mergers will redress wrongs of the past, ensure greater efficiency, lead to massification of higher education and produce better graduates for the needs of the economy.

As part of the restructuring process of higher education, in 2003 the government announced their planned mergers and incorporations of higher education organisations. One of the ten restructuring processes decided on by government was the incorporation in 2004 of the two Vista-campus on the East Rand and in Soweto into what was then the Rand Afrikaans

University (RAU), and in 2005 the merger of the RAU and the Technikon Witwatersrand (TWR) into the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

My research into higher education restructuring focused on the former RAU, now referred to as the Aucklandpark-Kingsway (APK) campus of UJ.¹ The rationale for undertaking this inquiry is that RAU has experienced many challenges as a result of the radical changes it has undergone since 1994. But there is hardly any research about the nature of the changes and the challenges of the restructuring at the former RAU.

I furthermore focused on the views and reactions of student organisations at the APK campus on the restructuring. The debates on the restructuring of higher education in SA, especially on mergers, have generally excluded students' perspectives. The focus on the student organisations is particularly pertinent, because students are one of the primary 'recipients' of the implications of restructuring. For example, a heavy bias towards the natural sciences by the current economic discourse affects students in the arts and social sciences negatively. The students also directly experience the curriculum changes and increased tuition fees, while the multiracialisation or wider access for black students to historically white institutions is also important to students.

The exclusion of students from the restructuring debates is evident from the many student protests on the mergers and especially on the rising study fees. TWR students, for example, threatened to halt the merger of the former RAU and TWR if their demands were not met (Krige 2004). But at the same time, there seems to be a relative lack of public protest, or any other form of engagement, by APK students regarding the merger and incorporation process. These seemingly very different reactions require analysis and explanation. This study was thus unique in a way, since it afforded student organisations the opportunity to air their views on the issues and the challenges of the restructuring.

¹ Apart from for the former RAU being called the APK campus of UJ, the two campuses of the former TWR are now called Aucklandpark-Bunting Road and Doornfontein campuses respectfully, while the former Vistas are now referred to as Soweto and East Rand campuses.

1.2 Research questions

My main research question is: What are the views and reactions of various student organisations at the APK of the University of Johannesburg on the restructuring of higher education?

The key research sub-questions investigated by this study include:

- What changes have the different student organisations at APK campus experienced?
- How do the different student organisations feel about these changes?
- What are the hopes and fears of student organisations on the restructuring? For example, how are these changes impacting on their notion of the quality of their education?
- How do we explain the reactions and views of these student organisations?

1.3 Research methodology



The research design I have employed is of a qualitative nature and involves a case study focused on the APK campus of UJ (the former RAU). As part of the research process, my methods included a literature study and face-to-face interviews.

In terms of the literature study, I first looked at the historical background of higher education in SA. By demonstrating the broader historical context of higher education, the motivations for restructuring of tertiary education would become clearer. This information also helps to contextualise the former RAU and the circumstances from which it derived its philosophy. To gather information on the afore-mentioned, I relied on books, journal articles, Internet sources and higher education acts. Secondly, I looked into the historical background of the former RAU specifically, from its inception until 1994. 1994 saw the beginning of a paradigm shift in SA with significant trickling down effects on the former RAU. The period until 1994 I call Time1 (T1).

With regard to this period, I look at specific facets such as the size of the university, its racial profile, its organisational structure, average cost of a three-year degree, the language policy, and the nature of the curriculum, among other things.

The period after 1994 I call Time2 (T2) wherein changes have occurred at the former RAU as a result of the wider changes in society and the restructuring of higher education in SA. For both periods I used policy documents of the former RAU, the university's annual reports, its intranet and other available literary texts on the subject. For the latter period I also relied on some of my own observations from 1999-2004, when I was a student on the APK campus.

To get the perspectives of student organisations regarding the changes and resultant challenges from the restructuring, I did face-to-face interviews. My respondents were student leaders from different student organisations at the APK campus. In total twenty-seven student organisations, ranging in nature from political to religious to social to academic, existed on the APK campus when I started my research in September 2004. I conducted interviews with the representatives of thirteen of these organisations. Some of them took part in the activities of the SRC Transformation Committee and others did not, even though every student organisation was allowed representation on the SRC Transformation Committee. My assumption was that representatives sitting on the transformation committee would have first-hand information on the restructuring and that such organisations would want to play a part in the restructuring. Those not on the committee would feel a lesser need to be part of, and have different views on restructuring. I therefore ensured that both were included in my research.

I clustered my respondents into four categories, namely those from political, academic, religious and social organisations as these were the categories used by the SRC. I ensured that organisations from each category took part in my research by interviewing either the chairperson or the representative on the SRC Transformation Committee.

The total numbers of respondents under the four categories of student organisations were as follows: three political organisations; four religious organisations; five social organisations and one academic society. The total numbers of these organisations according to the list of each category I had at the time were as follows: five political organisations, fourteen religious organizations, eight social organisations and five academic societies.

I did not necessarily have representivity in mind, but rather a broad view of what different student organisations felt about the restructuring process. The fact that I did not aim for a broader representation of all student organisations, was influenced by the fact that the former RAU SRC had many lists of student organisations which grouped all the organisations differently under the four categories. Secondly, some of the organisations on the lists existed only on paper and were not active. However, the organisations interviewed were somewhat different. For example, these organisations are to some degree racially different – the South African Student Congress (SASCO) and the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) do not have active white student members, the South African University Jewish Student Organisation does not have any black members, while other student organisations had mixed membership in terms of race.

The motivation for focusing on different student organisations rather than individual students was as follows. Student organisations are organised around student issues and would have a better chance of a broad based understanding of issues concerning the restructuring, fostered by their activism amongst students. Secondly, student organisations, as opposed to non-organised students, have better access to meetings and discussions with the authorities of the university since they represent specific views.

For the individual face-to-face interviews I used a mix of semi-structured and open-ended questions in my interview guidelines. This strategy was useful in that it afforded the respondents the space to respond in their own way, and they provided unexpected data.

These interviews were on average about an hour long so as to give the respondents sufficient time to explore the questions and to give well thought-out responses.

The RAU SRC and specifically the SRC president displayed a high level of enthusiasm for this study and wrote a supportive letter encouraging participation by student leaders in the research. For all interviews with student leaders, permission was granted to use a voice-recording machine to prevent the possible inaccurate representation of views and to prevent wastage of time in taking detailed notes during the interviews.

In terms of adhering to ethical principles, I have made sure that the results in this paper are a true reflection of the students' views without any form of manipulation of the truth. As a student and student activist at the former RAU, I have to ensure that my own political or ideological convictions do not derail the authenticity of this research. Through critical self-reflection and continuous interaction with other students and study supervisors I attempted to ensure this.

I have attempted to plan this study well in advance, keeping in mind possible challenges and risks. Regarding the challenges and risks in this study, the first challenge I had to deal with was to logistically arrange for participation of the respondents in this study. This was largely due to the fact that most of the fieldwork was done during exam times. The second challenge was to get a reliable list of all student organisations at the former RAU. This was difficult because different lists of student organisations grouped the organisations differently under the four categories. This became a challenge because at some stage I had to use my own judgement to categorise the organisations.

The third challenge was regarding the issues surrounding the restructuring of higher education in general. Issues on the restructuring of higher education are complex and sophisticated, because they are very much interrelated and intertwined, making it rather difficult at times to single out or separate issues from each other (Komane 2002:7).

In that respect it became a challenge at times to keep focus on the topic. Another challenge of this research is that other students know me as a student activist, and respondents could therefore have responded with this in mind. I thus had to ensure no bias during the research. I attempted to overcome this challenge by explaining to the respondents that this research was merely for academic reasons and pleaded that they speak their minds without any fear. I feel that the respondents did speak openly to me.

1.4 Conceptualisation

At this stage I will present the explanations or definitions of some key terms that are central to this study. These concepts are neo-liberalism, massification of higher education, merger and student organisations. The explanation and definition of these terms will enable the reader to attach the author's meaning to and have a clearer understanding of the broader content of this research so as to prevent the possibility of misinterpretations.

1.4.1 Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism is a socio-economic order based on a philosophy and set of economic policies in which the market regulates all the economic interactions. It leads to a belief in the need to cut public expenditure on social services like education, to reduce government regulation of everything that could diminish profits, to privatise state-owned enterprises, to reduce barriers to trade and investment, amongst other things. (Martinez and Garcia 1995) The rise of neo-liberalism is associated with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan's leaderships in the 1980s. Understanding neo-liberalism is key to an understanding of the second phase of higher education restructuring in South Africa, namely the "globalisation of education" referred to above, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.4.2 Massification of higher education

According to Scott (1995:1) massification of higher education is a transition in the higher education system from one in which access is for the elite, to one in which access is opened to the masses.

1.4.3 Merger

A merger in higher education is the combination of two or more separate institutions into a single new organisational entity, over which control rests with a single governing body and a single chief executive body, and whereby all assets, liabilities, and responsibilities of the former institutions are transferred to the single new institution (Goedegebuure in Hall, Symes & Luescher 2004:9). In the South African higher educational landscape one should distinguish mergers from incorporations. The former refers to two or more institutions of similar size coming together to form a new institution, while the latter is a 'take over' of a small institution by a large institution. Daniel Lang (in Hall *et al.* 2004:9) uses the notion of "transformative acquisition" in which "one partner absorbs the other but changes substantially as a result".

1.4.4 Student organisations

Student organisations are referred to here as organisations that are voluntary, i.e. where students voluntarily join to become members of particular organisations based on the advancement of common aspirations. A student organisation can be distinguished from a student movement. Student organisations function in isolation from each other, often with members of these particular organisations working together. A student movement, on the other hand, mobilises various student organisations – usually organisations with diverse objectives in the broader community – to function together for a specific purpose over a specific time period.

1.5. Structure of this research

The composition and sequence of chapters in this paper will be as follows. The second chapter will deal with the literature review. To start with, I will provide a general outline of the history of higher education in SA, so as to have a clear picture of the context in which RAU functioned. This will assist me in portraying the changes that have occurred since the demise of

apartheid, the paradigm giving effect to the origin and character of the former RAU for a very long time.

Chapter Two will also explain the changes that the higher educational landscape has experienced since the demise of apartheid and specifically during the second phase of restructuring with the mergers and incorporations.

Chapter Three will be dedicated to the case study at RAU. This chapter will serve as a rudimentary exploration of the history of the former RAU from the time of its inception up until 2004. This chapter will also demonstrate the changes that the former RAU underwent between the two time frames, i.e. the apartheid era and the democratic dispensation including the neo-liberal programme introduced into the higher educational landscape in SA since the mid-1990s.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the views of student organisations at the former RAU concerning the restructuring. This chapter analyses the data gathered from the interviews with representatives of student organisations from the former RAU. Also, this chapter attempts to explore the character of student organisations in general in SA and the changes that they have undergone, especially since 1994. This section will give reasons why student organisations have either failed to assert themselves or were not reasonably consulted in the merger debate.

In the concluding chapter I highlight some findings. Firstly, that student organisations at the former RAU did not have a meaningful contribution in the mergers process given the institutional culture of the former RAU. Secondly, despite this, the student organisations at the former RAU believed the restructuring of higher education was a good endeavour in general. Thirdly, different student organisations operate in isolation from each other thereby making their interaction suffer and lastly, there is scanty student political activity at the former RAU campus given the anti-politics culture of the former RAU.

CHAPTER TWO

HIGHER EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the general historical overview of the higher educational system in South Africa. This overview will assist the reader to have an idea of the context in which RAU assumed its character and to further rudimentarily demonstrate the pressures that led to its restructuring. This chapter will further explore the changes that have taken shape in the higher educational landscape since 1994 including the recent mergers initiated by the state. In that respect there will be indications of the international experience on mergers to highlight the globalisation of education and to allow for some reflection. Furthermore, as tools of analysis, there will also be mention of various institutions in South Africa that have already been merged to indicate challenges they faced.

2.2 Brief historical background of higher education institutions in SA

Higher education in SA came under the control of the state with the proclamation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and in 1916 the former colonial University of Good Hope was reorganised into the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Voogt 2002:3). According to Voogt UNISA incorporated six other university colleges, these being Rhodes University College, Transvaal University College, Natal University College, the Kimberly School of Mines and Technology, Huguenot University College and Grey University College. All these used to cater only for students from white communities, which UNISA continued to do.

By 1921 there were three Afrikaans colleges in South Africa in Bloemfontein, Pretoria and Stellenbosch (Ajayi in Voogt 2002:3). According to Voogt the first South African university or college for non-white students was the Inter-State Native College that was opened in 1918. In 1951 the running of the college was taken away from the missionaries who started it.

The college was affiliated to Rhodes University and renamed the University College of Fort Hare, which produced some of Africa's most prominent leaders (Ajayi in Voogt 2002:4).

After the National Party government came to power in 1948 the overarching ideology of apartheid was instituted, which affected every sector of society. Under this policy, higher education institutions were further structured along racial and cultural lines as enforced by the *Extension of University Education Act* (No 45) of 1959 (Republic of SA 1959; Sedgwick 2004:1).

For non-white² students the government opened several new universities and colleges, separately for black, coloured and Indian students. The University of the North, established in 1959, for example, admitted students of Tsonga, Sotho, Venda, or Tswana descent only (Anon n.a.(a)). The 1959 Act went even further to forge cultural divisions within the white community, where Afrikaans-speaking students were to study at Afrikaans-medium institutions such as the RAU, University of Pretoria, University of Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom University. English-speaking students went to universities such as Rhodes University, University of Cape Town, Wits University and the University of Natal. This act also prohibited established universities from accepting non-white students, except with the special permission of a cabinet minister. Non-white students could ask for permission to attend a 'white' university only if their 'own' institutions became too overcrowded. Peter Vale (2004) therefore identifies three waves of university making in SA, namely: liberal/English, Afrikaner/nationalist, black/homeland.

Overall, opportunities for university education for blacks was restricted in other universities when black universities were overcrowded, and by 1978 only 20 percent of all university students in South Africa were black (Anon n.a.(a)). Previously white institutions also enjoyed more government funding than black institutions (Linda 2001:52).

² Here I use the racial language as used by the Act.

During apartheid the higher educational system was seen as a creation of the state, and the state therefore determined its objectives and fields of activity. The state could specify that an educational institution, whether university or technikon, should serve the interests of one specific population or race group (Bolsmann and Uys 2001:175; Sehoole 2002:61). The above arrangement was enforced by the overarching ideology of separate development, where each and every cultural group was meant to focus on developing their 'own'. It should be clear that all universities, including the RAU, existed within that specific political context, and they were the instruments used to foster the government's apartheid policy. But the end of apartheid brought about a different political context which meant changes in the higher educational landscape.

In the following section I explore the debates around the restructuring of higher education from 1994 onwards. This will help the reader to have a clear understanding of the broader changes and challenges posed by the restructuring, so that the changes at the former RAU can be contextualised.

2.3 The restructuring of higher education

The restructuring of higher education in SA in the main comes as a result of the end of apartheid. This transformation was envisioned to be responsive to the broader process of South Africa's political, social and economic transition (Department of Education 2003; Waghid 2003:91-97;). That broader process includes political democratisation, economic development and reconstruction, and social policies aimed at redistributive equity (Kraak in Komane 2002:3; Department of Education 1997). It is therefore fitting to invoke Carnoy and Samoff's claim (in Jansen 2002:157) that "in developing countries, radical changes in education (including higher education) are often invoked by dramatic changes in political regimes".

The first government proposal on transformation in higher education post-1994 was the 1996 *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation*, (Department of Education, 1996) followed by the *White Paper on Higher Education: Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (Department of Education 1996). The 1997 *White Paper* (Department of Education 1997:33) identified the problems in the higher education system in the mid-1990s as:

- There was inequality of access for students and staff in higher education institutions along race and gender lines, and disparities between historically black and historically white institutions.
- Higher education was not responding to the needs of the modern economy, i.e. producing graduates in the fields of science, engineering and technology.
- Higher education failed to foster a critical civil society conscious of the democratic ethos and the sense of common citizenship and commitment to a common good.
- The teaching and research policies favoured academic insularity with insufficient attention to local, regional and national needs of SA's society.
- The governance of higher education was fragmented, ineffective and inefficient, with no common goals.

Both papers also recommended that some concerted efforts needed to be made to implement system-wide institutional reforms to reduce wasteful expenditure, improve efficiency and enhance quality. Among many of these the recommendations include:

- Regional rationalisation to reduce duplication and overlap in programme provision (not excluding the possibility of institutional mergers and closures).
- Restructuring and, where necessary, closing programmes that do not achieve economies of scale.

- Introducing new teaching and learning strategies, including open and resource-based learning, which are less labour-intensive. This would lead to significant changes to traditional modes of programme delivery and associated student: staff ratios.
- In addition to measures designed to effect greater efficiency, institutions also need to broaden their funding base through, for example, a selective increase in fee income by introducing differential fee pricing policies; developing contract research and consultancy services; and developing new funding partnerships with industry, commerce and international funding agencies.

Regarding the transformation of the public funding of higher education, which was previously racially determined, both the Green and the White Papers (Department of Education 1996; 1997) provided that:

The new public higher education funding framework should require goal-oriented planning at the institutional as well as at system levels. That the Ministry should progressively devise and introduce a new formula for block operating grants to institutions to support their teaching and related recurrent costs. That these block grants should be payable to institutions on the basis of their planned (full-time equivalent or FTE) enrolments in different fields and levels of study which will be related to their institutional missions and plans, where these institutional plans should include the institutional mission, indicate enrolment targets by programme, race and gender equity goals and measures, human resource development plans, and plans for new programme development, academic development, research development and infrastructure development.

What this restructured funding method meant was that institutions were going to be funded based on various variables, i.e. the number of students the institution has, infrastructure, academic and research development plans, instead of being funded by race, language or religion as was done in the past.

All these proposed changes can be attributed to the challenges posed by the changing socio-economic, political and international forces discharged into higher education in general, aided by the willing embracement of the neo-liberal agenda on the part of the South African government (Komane 2002:7). However, there are dissenting views on the restructuring /transformation of higher education as a response to globalisation; these views hold that such transformation must rather address and challenge the ideological tenets and philosophical contradictions that have historically structured the academic environment to benefit an elite group, while systematically marginalizing the participation of the “other”, i.e. the working class (Goduka in Bitzer 1996:25), because the current global discourse favours a neo-liberal approach in higher education, leading to subsidy cuts and increased costs for students, making access to higher education by the working class virtually impossible.

This means that the primary purposes of restructuring, namely response to globalisation and increasing access, are inimical. Maassen and Cloete (2002:17) justify this claim further, by pointing out that in many higher educational reform programmes, national authorities transform their public higher educational systems from national organisations with multiple social roles into global players mainly operating on the basis of economic considerations.

My argument here is that the restructuring of higher education in SA is partly aimed at getting higher education to catch up with global trends. International higher educational restructuring developed, according to Scott (1995:33), as a response to: firstly, the rapidly rising social demand for university-level education; and secondly, the increasing demand for a more highly skilled labour force. These global trends of restructuring are dominated by a neo-liberal agenda; Breier (2001:1) states that universities all over the world are affected in similar ways, leading to similar changes in the higher education systems. The neo-liberal agenda sees the market economy as the only medium through which social and economic problems facing humanity can be solved (Teeple in Komane 2002:5).

The higher educational landscape that has taken shape is characteristic of corporate institutions (Goedegebuure *et al* 1994:3; Berstelsen 1998:130; Komane 2002:6). This is, in Clark's words (1998:5), a move towards creating entrepreneurial universities, where "universities are now meant to be self-regulated institutions that actively seek to shift substantially in organisational character".

For Lategan (1999:5) this introduces the "supermarket model of higher education", where students are customers who can buy the appropriate information they need to empower them for a specific employment situation. In this system knowledge becomes a commodity. And as a commodity, 'consumers' (students) have to pay the full cost of that commodity. The neo-liberal agenda thus promotes a cut in subsidies to higher education institutions by government. In SA, for example, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NASFAS) has seen a reduction in funding (Kgaphola 1999:17), resulting in student exclusions based on financial means and subsequent protests regarding fees (*This Day* 27 June 2004).

Thus, the restructuring of higher education has led to many debates. These debates range from conservative classical and neo-liberal economic views, which entail views of university education being a private commodity to be bought or sold in the market, to more progressive and leftist radical views that regard universities and knowledge production as central to the functioning of society and therefore see higher education as a public essential (Komane 2002:12).

Adding to these views are general criticisms around efficiency in the restructuring, and lack of democratic decision making about the restructuring process. Breier (2001:2) poses some of these criticisms. Among these is a question concerning the extent to which the curriculum should be responsive to the 'outside world' – primarily the needs of the economy but also to the needs of the wider society or a particular community.

Also, as a direct response to the prescription of the *White Paper* higher education should be more responsive to market needs, such as the needs of employment or career demands of individual students. Higher education institutions have reacted by introducing a plethora of short certificate courses in almost all faculties to meet those needs, generating more revenue for profit in the process. Although the more market-driven curriculum formats could be responsive to the market needs, Kgaphola (1999:19) warns us about the limitations of this approach.

He claims that if the market-driven approach is embraced blindly, it could lead to the creation of a society devoid of a soul, blinded to aesthetics in general, and incapable of any spiritual arousal. This runs counter to the objectives of higher education.

As a result of the second phase of the restructuring of higher education, the educational landscape has experienced a swift turn from the way the academic community has traditionally interpreted internal principles such as intellectual progression, disciplinary coherence and so on (Wright 1987:185).

From this vantage point, we can already see that the current form of restructuring of higher education embraces the ultimate envisioned neo-liberal systems. Such an educational system seeks to provide more technical skills than before for the working environment along with the integration of academic programmes in a curriculum. Ensor (2001:112) refers to this as vertically and horizontally coherent higher education training. This reconfiguration of academic programmes is said to be in the pursuit of providing practical skills to enable the students to be ready to enter the job markets since they would be acquainted with a variety of other skills from other disciplines necessary to solve problems. The provision of technical skills for the working environment along with the integration of academic programmes in a curriculum is according to Scott (in Cloete *et al* 1997:64) marking the erosion of the dominance of elite academic cultures on the one hand and the incorporation of more communitarian and work-based knowledge on the other.

It is also argued that this system further makes interdisciplinary degree structuring (programme-based training) more possible (Ensor 2001:91). A programme-based curriculum is where a student chooses a degree programme rather than choosing a variety of courses themselves. For example, courses such as political science, economics, sociology and development studies would be inseparable, meaning that a student would be forced to take them as a package.

However, when following that logic it is also fitting to argue that these same interdisciplinary market-relevant degrees and certificate course structures will necessarily touch on other non-market related disciplines such as theology and philosophy.

The fact that the *White Paper* acknowledges that the national agenda of transformation has to be pursued within a distinctive set of pressures and demands of globalisation means that the higher educational landscape should indeed be responsive to neo-liberalism.

As a result, we are beginning to observe the higher educational landscape in SA fitting into the government's broader macro-economic framework (GEAR). This is, as neo-liberalism dictates, because the government has cut its funding to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NASFAS) (Kgaphola 1999:17), although the government has recently made announcements that it will increase its funding as a result of students protest about high fees. Secondly, the introduction of vocational training in higher education is now meant to provide a labour force skilled for the neo-liberal economy and thirdly, we are also observing the faculties of the natural sciences being more prioritised compared to the social sciences. This is so, because there is plenty of research funding for the natural sciences from the National Research Foundation (NRF) as compared to funds allocated for the social sciences.

Part of the attempt of the neo-liberal agenda to greater efficiency, or use of resources meaningfully in higher education, duplication and overlap in

programme provisions, not excluding the possibility of institutional mergers and closures, came under discussion. It is thus obvious that the decision by government to merge some tertiary institutions was also in pursuit of cutting significantly on the duplication of programmes in higher education and providing space for vocational training to bring higher education closer to the neo-liberal model. The current merging and incorporation of tertiary institutions has also added some challenges to the current changes experienced in the higher educational landscape – these will be explored in the next section.

2.4. Mergers and incorporations in higher education

Up to now, the restructuring of higher education in SA has ‘obediently’ followed the merger options as proposed in both the *Green* and the *White Papers* (Department of Education 2003; 1996; 1997). As tools of exploration and analysis, I will be using literature on both international and domestic case studies to reflect on the mergers already in place. Here the context in which the terms mergers and incorporations are used are as defined in Chapter One.



2.4.1 International experiences of higher education mergers

Kotecha and Harman (2001:9) state that mergers and strategic collaboration have played a significant role in restructuring higher education systems around the globe. But as policy goals and socio-economic contexts differ from country to country, the forms of mergers, collaborations and incorporations within all these models vary (Kotecha and Harman 2001:9).

One such form, informal collaboration is widely practiced in South Africa. It includes teaching and research in joint research projects, sharing of guest lecturers, assistance in supervising higher degree students, and even joint presentation of courses. The sharing of expensive or highly specialised research equipment or major campus facilities can also be part of such informal collaboration (Kotecha and Harman 2001:9).

In most cases such informal collaboration is organised by individual staff or their departments largely on the initiative and goodwill of the staff concerned. On the other hand, formal types of collaboration, including affiliation agreements, are often designed to allow non-university organisations to award university degrees or gain other forms of academic recognition, and sometimes, to allow consortia to handle particular collaborative functions, and in some cases to provide for joint owned facilities or departments, or university companies (Kotecha and Harman 2001:9). Such formal collaborations can be stepping stones for voluntary mergers between the collaborating institutions.

International experiences of mergers indicate that, to reshape higher education to meet new demands, two strategies were pursued. First, existing universities were expanded and new ones created, and second, greater emphasis was placed on less traditional forms of higher education (Scott 1995:33; Meek in Goedegebuure *et al* 1994:5). In the 1960s and recent 1990s, for example, access to Europe's most selective university systems had been widened; new universities were established and polytechnics created. In Germany, the universities were also expanded and made more comprehensive, and in Sweden a unified system of universities and colleges was established (Scott 1995:34). The SA Department of Education seems to have learnt from the restructuring processes of higher education in the UK (one of the leading neo-liberal economies) about bringing neo-liberal systems into higher education in SA.

Based on international experiences Kotecha and Harman (2001:9) identify the following forms of mergers:

- **Voluntary and involuntary mergers:** where there is a distinction regarding the extent to which the initiative of the merger comes from the participating institutions themselves (voluntary) as opposed to coming from external pressure, particularly government (involuntary). This distinction is relevant to the mergers in SA, as they were involuntary with government placing pressure on the institutions to merge with partners designated by the minister of education.

- **Consolidation and take-overs:** two or more institutions of similar size coming together to form a new institution is consolidation, while a 'take-over' is typically of a small institution by a large one. Daniel Lang (in Hall *et al* 2004) uses the notion of "transformative acquisition" in which "the bigger partner absorbs the other but changes substantially as a result". Hall's definition for transformative acquisition corresponds to proposals by the Department of Education in South Africa for incorporations of some higher education institutions like RAU and the two Vistas.
- **Single sector and cross-sectoral mergers:** mergers may involve institutions from one higher education sector e.g. two universities or two technikons or they may involve institutions from different sectors e.g. a university and a technikon. A single sector merger can be seen in SA in the mergers between the University of Potchefstroom, the University of North West and the Sebokeng campus of Vista University, becoming the North West University. An example of a cross-sectoral merger is that between the former RAU and TWR, which became the University of Johannesburg.

Also to be noted is that although the decisions to merge institutions usually depends on unique reasons in different countries, the most fundamental reason for mergers is similar in almost all instances. Harvey and Knight (1996:vii) believe the most fundamental reason for mergers is the competitive advantage in the global economy, seen as being dependent upon having a well-educated workforce. Harvey and Knight (1996:vii) further mention that as technology, competition and social upheaval transforms the world at an accelerating pace, higher education is also seen as crucial in producing an adequately educated population.

Among the more diverse motivations for mergers are reasons ranging from finance, curriculum and logistical implications to racial integration. For example, in the USA, one among many motivations for mergers was to build stronger institutions and also to avoid closure of financially weaker institutions

(Kotecha and Harman 2001:18). In Europe the motivation for the mergers was to eradicate unnecessary duplications (Kotecha and Harman 2001:18).

There are also some differences regarding matters that were taken into consideration for implementing mergers. For instance, geographical location of institutions was not really considered in South Africa, whereas in the former Soviet Union countries and Vietnam geographic position of institutions determined the mergers (Kotecha and Harman 2001:18).

In the following sections the mergers and incorporations that have already taken shape in SA are briefly explored.

2.4.2. Mergers and incorporations in higher education in SA

Under the leadership of the first Minister of Education in South Africa after apartheid, Professor Bengu, little was done to explicitly pursue mergers in higher education (Jansen 2002:160). Jansen (2002:161) explain the reason as being in part, that during the early transition there were high expectations of the massification of education and the logic of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) moved government into a mode of large-scale investment in social and educational programmes. Four years later when the second post-apartheid Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal was appointed, the RDP had already been replaced with a stringent macro-economic policy called the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR). The efficiency, reduction in government expenditure and a general climate of austerity heralded by GEAR, had huge implications for higher education restructuring (Donaldson in Jansen 2002:160), as already hinted at in section 2.3. To add to this brew was the fact that historically black universities and technikons had become a political embarrassment to government, because of a series of very public upheavals, including violence and killings on campuses, and the financial challenges of high deficits at some of these institutions running into tens of millions of rands (Jansen 2002:160).

It was into this climate that Professor Kader Asmal assumed his position as Minister of Education and sparked a strong interventionist policy seeking

mergers of post-secondary institutions like universities, technikons, colleges of education and technical colleges.

With mergers already under way in various countries (Scott 1995:34) and SA being an active part of the global community, Cloete *et al* (in Jansen 2002:159) mention that this motivated the call for mergers through reference to the apartheid system whose higher education institutions, according to the Minister of Education, reflected “the geo-political imagination of apartheid planners” (Department of Education 1999). The mergers were necessary out of the belief that:

- Mergers create new organisational forms, which facilitate greater equity, and the development of new institutional cultures and the revitalisation of the higher education sector, thereby making it more likely that institutions will better serve the goals of higher education.
- The apartheid-era divergent and deeply embedded institutional cultures will be dismantled to form new identities, which are not based on historical differences. This is important especially in the context of SA given its history of racial and ethnic divergence fostered by apartheid and the multi-cultural diversity that exists in SA.
- The system of higher education, at least in its post-1994 form, is not affordable given the size of the South African economy; also the maintenance costs of some institutions cannot be justified in terms of cost per successful learner.
- There is a shortage of management capacity in South African higher education institutions and rationalizing the number of institutions will mean that existing capacity can be shared between institutions.
- Institutions which are not financially viable (due to declining student numbers or inadequate financial management) will be saved from total closure.
- Merging institutions will encourage efficiency in terms of economies of scale, through eliminating unnecessary duplication of course offerings and through ending unproductive competition.

- Perceptions about differences in academic quality between higher education institutions will be addressed or reduced through mergers, so that there would be one perception of quality higher education in SA.

It is thus anticipated that the benefits of restructuring can be grouped broadly into desired technical outcomes such as enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, and desired social and political outcomes such as improved equity and access. From these motivations we can already trace similarities to the rationale for mergers in various other countries, as indicated in the previous sub-section, especially efficiency arguments in the context of neo-liberal globalisation.

The form of restructuring in South Africa is not uniform or of one type, but comprises different types (Sedgwick 2004:2). They range from mergers to incorporations to the creation of new institutional forms – such as comprehensive institutions (mergers of universities and technikons) and unitary institutions with widely dispersed delivery sites (multi-campus institutions) (Hall *et al* 2004).



For example, the merger between the University of Potchefstroom, the University of the North West and the Sebokeng campus of Vista University to form the North West University, can be classified as a consolidation merger. On the other hand, the merger between RAU (after the incorporation of the Soweto and East Rand campuses of Vista University in 2004) and Technikon Witwatersrand can be classified as a cross-sectoral and multi-partner merger. The merger between Medunsa and the University of the North to form the University of Limpopo, has taken the form of a different academic profile merger. An example of a similar academic profile merger is the merger of ML Sultan Technikon (MLST) and the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT). As a result of the mergers, in broad terms, there are now three types of public higher education institutions in SA: traditional universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities (Sedgwick 2004:2).

The many forms that restructuring of higher education in SA has taken is of critical importance to my case study, as the University of Johannesburg has been involved in different forms of restructuring.

Such multi-form restructuring will inevitably pose some challenges, as experience elsewhere in the world and in SA has shown. Some of these challenges are now explored.³

For starters, it is fitting to mention that the restructuring of higher education in South Africa, specifically most of the mergers, was and currently is an involuntary process. Even though the government placed strong pressure on the merging of institutions, some institutions did respond negatively to the proposals. For example, the University of Fort Hare immediately rejected the proposal that it was to merge with Rhodes University. Macfarlane (2002) mentions that formerly black universities were the strongest voices of opposition, with the chairperson of the Association of Vice-Chancellors of historically disadvantaged institutions referring to mergers as “an educational catastrophe”.

Drawing from lessons learnt elsewhere on involuntary mergers, we can already anticipate future challenges to the restructuring in SA. Kotecha and Harman (2001:13) mention:

Generally, as opposed to involuntary, voluntary mergers are easier to organise and more successful, largely because it is possible to achieve a substantial degree of staff involvement in negotiations and implementation, leading usually to a strong sense of ownership.

Kotecha and Harman (2001:13) gave the merger between the University of Surrey and Roehampton Institute as an example of a voluntary merger with unique features such as the exceptional and careful accommodation of separate identities. The South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (Sauvca) also realises that “for the mergers to be successful,

³ In Chapter Three I consider some of these challenges for my case study, at the former RAU.

there must be a strong support...from the participating institutions” (Kotecha and Harman 2001:13).

Furthermore, other potential challenges regarding the restructuring, specifically on the take-over merger type, are according to Meek (1994:318) issues of institutional ambitions and systematic differentiation, i.e. identity. Kotecha and Harman (2001:13), mention that take-overs tend to be far simpler, often with smaller institutions being absorbed as a department, school or faculty into a bigger institution. This reality is eminent in some comprehensive institutions.

Although take-overs could have been easier to form elsewhere, the historical and political experience of higher education in SA has the potential to pose serious challenges in this regard. For example, in most cases historically disadvantaged institutions are being incorporated into previously advantaged institutions, obliterating the existence of these in the process. The incorporation of Vista campuses into other previously advantaged institutions is an example of this; various Vista campuses have been incorporated into the University of Pretoria, University of the Free State, Technikon Free State and the former RAU. MEDUNSA's faculty of veterinary science has also been incorporated into the faculty of VETERINARY SCIENCE at the University of Pretoria (Anon 2003; Jansen 2002:170). These incorporations of historically disadvantaged into the historically advantaged institutions, and the domination of the former, create an undesirable second-class status on the latter.

But it is not only incorporations that are resented. Jansen (2002:169) is quite correct in his claim that the outcome of the mergers, i.e. curriculum changes, organisational integration, etc. of the merged institutions is largely influenced by the bargaining power and leadership of the institutions involved. They refer to this as the micro-political arena, i.e. politics at the institutional level.

Because of historical access to resources, historically advantaged institutions have been able to better prepare and anticipate issues in the restructuring

process.⁴ It is perhaps in the light of all this that the historically disadvantaged institutions reacted so negatively to the proposed mergers and incorporations (Hayward 2002).

Among many tests that can be used to assess the outcomes of the mergers already in place, Jansen (2002:165) uses seven focal questions among some of those identified by the *Guidelines for Mergers and Incorporations* (Department of Education 2003). These are equity effects, efficiency effects, curriculum effects, organisational effects, student effects, staffing effects and physical effects.

I will at this stage explore some of these questions, namely the equity, efficiency and student effects. This is because issues that influence curriculum, organisational, staffing and physical effects are, as reflected in case studies earlier, dependent on the size and leadership qualities of merging institutions.



Equity Effects

Although one of the focal points and strategic objectives for the restructuring of higher education is equity, as explicitly referred to by the Department of Education (1997:9), Jansen (2002:165) claims that this objective is not realised; none of the mergers he analysed achieved greater equity in terms of either students or staff. None of the mergers, according to him, either intended or achieved greater representation of black and women students in the new institutions.

⁴ This is not generally applicable to all historically disadvantaged institutions. Bargaining power and leadership qualities can enable a 'smaller' institute. The incorporation of the Johannesburg College of Education (JCE) into the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) is a classical example in this regard. In this case, Jansen (2002:163) claims that JCE enjoyed strong leadership that directed, from beginning to end, favourable terms for its-incorporation into the large and influential Wits. The college ensured that it remained physically intact as a unit, now calling itself the College of Education at WITS. Furthermore, the College negotiated professorships for its senior staff, the College leadership reported to the Dean of Humanities, not to the Head of the School of Education, thereby elevating the Head of the College to the same status as the Head of the School in terms of the university hierarchy. But no other college-into-university incorporation achieved such a feat (Jansen 2002:163).

What has happened, Jansen (2002:165) claims, was simply a combination of what each institution brought to the merger, i.e. a simple addition of staff and students from both entities. The reality of the post-1994 restructuring is thus that it simply did not address the issue of equity in higher education.

Efficiency Effects

It is also asserted by Jansen (2002:167) that efficiency gains were not clearly evident in any of the five mergers he investigated. There was no evidence at various stages in the mergers that money was saved as a result of the merger process. He mentions that this could be explained by the fact that case studies captured mergers in various stages of their evolution. But even so, no evidence in the positive forecasts, predicts marginal savings (Jansen 2002: 167).

Student Effects

Especially important for this study, are the student effects of mergers. In each and every merger in the case studies Jansen mentions, the students complained about the lack of consultation, the problem of being absorbed into a new institutional culture, the loss of identity and 'special-ness' of the original institution, and the lack of clarity about their future (Murphy in Jansen 2002: 171). It is further mentioned that student politics was ignored during the deliberations on the content and the process of each merger.

Among the reasons why the students were not part of the discussions in the merger process, according to Jansen (2002:171), is the lack of student organisation to contest the merger; the students most severely affected were physically at a distance from the immediate merger (as in the case of SACTE's distance education students); the students affected were a small minority within the large student body; the students enjoyed protection in the insulated organisational arrangements provided, as in the JCE case, and therefore thought they had little to be concerned about; the lack of a strong tradition of student politics in the college sector, contrasted with the universities and the technikons; and the students from colleges might in fact have anticipated benefits from the upgrading of their status from lesser

institutions to more established institutions e.g. college diplomas becoming degrees over time.

In Chapter Four I elaborate on the extent to which these reasons were valid for student organisations' reactions to the merger between the former RAU and TWR. But before discussing the views of student organisations at the former RAU on the merger, I contextualise such views by indicating the historical background of and restructuring process at the former RAU in the next chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter indicated that the higher educational landscape in SA was, in the main, given character by the state's overarching ideology of apartheid. It is also evident, that with the regime change from apartheid to a democratic dispensation, higher education went through a process of restructuring, which has translated into the merging of higher education institutions. The current merger phase of the restructuring of higher education in SA has also been shown in some cases to have followed the merger trends internationally. These trends have translated into consolidations, take-overs, and protests in the case of involuntary mergers.

Although the current phase of the restructuring of higher education under the democratic dispensation is desirable, this chapter has also established that such changes have come with ironies and challenges. Among the ironies dealt with is the bringing in of neo-liberal practices into higher education. The introduction of neo-liberal practices into higher education has restricted funding, whereas ironically, the *Higher Education Act* is said to be in pursuit of trying to create more access for students.

In the following chapter, the historical background of the former RAU is explored. I investigate the changes that have taken place since its inception and especially trace changes brought about by the *Higher Education Act* 101 of 1997, as the guiding blueprint of higher education in SA.

CHAPTER THREE

RESTRUCTURING AT THE FORMER RAU

3.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as a rudimentary exploration of the history of the former RAU from the time of its inception up until 2004. This chapter will also demonstrate the changes that the former RAU underwent under two time frames, i.e. the apartheid discourse and the democratic dispensation including the neo-liberal programme introduced into the higher educational landscape in SA since the mid-1990s.

3.2 Historical background of the RAU⁵: Under apartheid

According to Voogt (2002:4) the RAU was a fairly young university in the context of African universities. The RAU had a history dating back to the early sixties when the idea of an Afrikaans university in Johannesburg was first mooted. The establishment of such a university was endorsed in 1963 when 468 delegates at a conference unanimously accepted a motion to establish an Afrikaans university. This decision culminated in the acceptance of an act of parliament on 4 August 1965 that an independent Afrikaans university was to be started on the Witwatersrand (RAU in Voogt 2002:5; Von Staden 2004:1).

Based on the spirit of Afrikaner solidarity and the separate development agenda referred to in Chapter Two, RAU was officially opened on the 24th of February 1968, with prof GN Viljoen as the university's first rector (RAU in Voogt 2002). RAU operated from a temporary campus in Braamfontein until 1972 after which the permanent campus was established in Aucklandpark, where it is currently located (RAU in Voogt 2002:5; Von Staden 2004:1).

⁵ In this section I will refer to the RAU, and not the former RAU, simply for the purpose of simpler communication. The former RAU ceased to exist on 31 December 2004 when it was merged with the former TWR to form the University of Johannesburg.

The philosophy governing RAU was to be theoretically and practically consistent with the pursuit of the government's ideology of apartheid. The preamble to the act on the RAU read:

'The university shall be Afrikaans in spirit and character' and 'maintain the principles set out in the preamble to the constitution of the Republic'. Among others, these principles expressed 'humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and the history of peoples'. Accordingly, RAU will also have a God-fearing spirit and character. (RAU in Voogt 2002:4)

The university's appointment policy under section 21 of the Act on the RAU also stipulated that:

'A student, research worker, professor, lecturer or other teacher or member of the administrative or library staff shall be admitted to the university on the grounds of his [*sic*] academic and administrative qualifications and abilities.' In addition to this, the staff are expected, in the performance of their duties, to accept the Afrikaans spirit and character of the university, and follow the broad formulation of religious belief set out in the preamble of the constitution. (RAU in Voogt 2002: 4)

The university declared its language policy and medium of tuition to be Afrikaans, except in the case of modern languages, where the language concerned was used. The language policy was later adjusted (Von Staden 2004:3), such that English-speaking students would be welcomed and allowed to do their oral or written work in English. However, RAU was a university established primarily for the Afrikaans community (Schepers 2004:11; Van Biljon 2004:85) furthering the philosophy of separate development entrenched in the then constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

With the commencement of its first academic year, the university registered 780 students in total, with 29 registrations for doctorates, 134 for masters and honours degrees and 617 fulltime first year students. The first years consisted of 250 students in the arts faculty, 150 in the sciences faculty and 217 in the commerce and administration faculties (RAU 1969:5). Of the 340 part-time

students, 223 studied commerce, 99 law and 18 education. In percentage terms, part-time students constituted 37 percent of the total number of students.

In spite of Afrikaans being the medium of instruction, the first generation of RAU students of 1968 represented six different language groups, 25 different religious denominations and came from all then four provinces (RAU 1969:5). The university staff totalled 167 in January 1969, with 77 academic staff, of whom 38 were professors. The academic staff and student numbers were such that the lecturer-student ratio was 1:8 in 1969 (RAU 1969:5).

According to Voogt 1969 was quite an important year for RAU, for it was the year wherein its coat of arms was unveiled and it held its first graduation ceremony where 21 students were awarded degrees. Although it was also in the same year in which student unrest became part of the South African tertiary landscape, this did not affect RAU. The first RAU Student Representative Committee (SRC) accepted a motion in 1969 that supported the *Extension of University Education Act* of 1959 that created separate universities for different ethnic groups (RAU in Voogt 2002:5).

From the university's inception it continued to grow and by 1971 student numbers had grown to 1500, and in that year the university had conferred 239 degrees, of which 101 were first degrees (Voogt 2002:6). By then the personnel corps had grown to 330. The development of infrastructure also progressed further with the building of a sports complex (RAU in Voogt 2002:6). By 1972 the RAU had put in place student support structures including career guidance, the office of the dean of students, academic advisors and welcoming programmes for first year students (RAU in Voogt 2002:6).

The 'terrorism' threat of the eighties brought within the campus building RAUME, the RAU military unit, which was formed for the purpose of creating a civil defence unit through which the male students could fulfil their national military service duty without affecting their studies (RAU in Voogt 2002:6).

RAU continuously grew in student numbers such that in 1986 7000 students were enrolled (RAU in Voogt 2002:6). In 1987 the total number of RAU students reached the 10 000 mark for the first time.

Although inconceivable, in the very same year, Voogt (2002:7) mentions that more than one non-white student was part of the 'democratically' elected students representative council.

Van Rensburg (2004:9) mentions that since 1987 a growing number of English-speaking students opted to study in Afrikaans at the RAU in order to escape the spiralling political unrest on English university campuses. Racially the university also started to change in the late 1980s. According to Hendry and Bunting (in Voogt 2002:7), a comparison of the statistics for the years 1985 and 1990, shows that the Coloured, Indian and Black student head count at the RAU increased from 103 to 568. These two changes meant that by 1991 15 percent of students registered at the RAU did not use Afrikaans as a home language (RAU in Voogt 2002:7).

The growth of the RAU in student numbers was such that the university extended its faculties. The RAU comprised six faculties, being law, engineering, economics and management sciences, arts, sciences, and education and nursing. The academic functions of the RAU were supported by five sections, namely student services, public relations, central administration, library and security services (RAU in Voogt 2002:14). From the early 1990s, it was clear that RAU was beginning to change, and the changes that the university had undergone are discussed in the following section.

3.3 RAU since 1994 in a democratic SA

With the collapse of the apartheid hegemony and the first democratic elections, SA undertook a paradigm shift to democracy. As a result, institutional transformation was necessary to ensure that all institutions and practises within the state and civil society were parallel with the national goal

of a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic South Africa, as referred to in the preamble of new South Africa's Constitution.

Accordingly, the 1995 *White Paper on Education* was a guiding document for the envisioned transformation in education. According to Koorts (2002:382) the White Paper reflected five transformation principles, and these were:

- The creation of an integrated national framework for learning achievement;
- The facilitation of access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training, and career paths;
- The enhancement of quality education;
- The acceleration of the redress of results of past unjust discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and
- The full personal development of each learner and social and economic development at large.

It is thus largely through the state's democratic transition that in 1995, under the induction of Prof JC van der Walt as the rector, RAU symbolically and formally started its transformation process to a truly South African university that provided education for all. In trying to achieve the principles laid out in the *Higher Education Act* of 1997, the RAU Transformation Forum was established as a base for consultation through which transformation could be fostered by the participation of all parties concerned (RAU in Voogt 2002:7). This dedication towards transformation was further qualified by the registrar of academics in 1997 who wrote that:

The RAU needed to foster democracy even further by maintaining the universal institutional university norms with an important place for the Afrikaans language, an orderly evolution of change, as well as the protection of the position of the personnel corps (Von Staden in Voogt 2002:8).

In order to achieve the new objectives, the university set the following goals:

- Obtaining a student corps that would be more representative of the different ethnic and cultural groups in South Africa, who are accepted to the university on merit and who are supported through special programmes;
- A representative personnel corps appointed on merit through equal opportunities for all;
- More accommodating measures in respect of non-Afrikaans speaking students, including parallel medium instruction (as far as is practicable) in Afrikaans and English; and
- Financial support for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. (Von Staden in Voogt 2002:8)

In further demonstration of RAU's transformation, the RAU's changed mission statement read:

In its capacity as a member of the international community of universities, RAU strives for excellence in the fields of teaching, research, community service, and that the university serves the South African community in its entirety and continually attempts to identify the special needs of certain sectors of the community and to address these by way of applied teaching, research and community development and that the university nurtures and promotes its historical relationship with the Afrikaans speaking community. (Voogt 2002:8)

Furthermore, already in 1992 the RAU Community Service division began to be involved in numerous projects for black communities. Among these was the Rand Afrikaans University College (RAUCALL) for the advancement of learnership and leadership (Schepers 2004:13; Crouse 2004:18). In 1999 the RAU Equal Opportunities Committee came into being, in terms of new labour legislation, with the view to create equal opportunities for all staff in the university. The Institutional Forum was also established in terms of law to broaden consultation and participation of stakeholders at RAU. Even during the restructuring process this Institutional Forum continued to play an important role in the transformation of the RAU. With RAU's incremental

growth, the number of students enrolled at RAU reached 21 400 in 1998. Regarding the language preference, the RAU had transformed itself completely to provide tuition in both Afrikaans and English in nearly all programmes (RAU in Voogt 2002:8).

In 1998 45 percent of contact students indicated their language preference as Afrikaans, whilst 55 percent chose English as their medium of instruction (RAU in Voogt 2002:8). All these changes meant that from 1990 onwards, and especially after 1994, the composition of the student body started to change to show the face of a truly African university, although the composition of the personnel corps of the RAU had not yet changed dramatically.

In terms of the student population one can say that RAU was realigning itself with the changing political environment, i.e. multiracialisation of RAU, access for all and no racial discrimination. However, prior to the announcement of the incorporation of the two Vista-campuses and the merger with TWR, the multiracialisation of RAU had posed some serious racial challenges.

Although the multiracialisation of RAU looked fluid and appealing from the outside, that was superficial – there were serious challenges of racial, and cultural differences on the RAU campus, which were not given the time and attention they needed. I have witnessed some of these tensions both as a student and a student activist at RAU in the past five years. Among some of the more overt indicators of these racial and cultural discomforts were slogans such as “Praat Afrikaans of Folk Off” written on the back of t-shirts of white students from the day houses; derogatory terms such as “Kaffirs” written in graffiti-style on the walls of some residences and in the toilets; reported cases of racially motivated attacks and the general racist hate speech pronounced by students to each other during conflicts; nonconformity to the cultures and practices in the residences by some students due to cultural differences and interpretations, and so on. As Schneider (in Breier 2001:4) mentioned, the changing experiences by the students are a potential area for brewing racism in the absence of any agency to deal with their racial and cultural differences.

From these experiences, it is perhaps correct to concur with Goduka (in Bitzer 1996:1) that among many other things to be done, “to make meaningful and successful inroads to reconstructing education, to affirm unity, and diversity, self-examination and assessment, i.e. conducting workshops on the healing process is necessary.” This is so because the massification of higher education and especially the introduction of neo-liberal practices into higher education have entrenched cultural diversity in the higher educational landscape, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four.

As a direct influence of the neo-liberal thinking in higher education, the RAU chose to operate and react within that thinking. This is in the light of the new higher educational landscape which is meant to have one common objective of being responsive to the socio-economic challenges posed by globalisation (Department of Education 1996; 1997). With regard to the RAU’s response to the changing economy, “a move towards a neo-liberal economic system as dictated by the state”, RAU had successfully realigned itself. This is due to its success in becoming a modern university operating with caution to maintain and manage the university financially within the broader context of the neo-liberal economic system. RAU devised strategies for generating revenue for the university in the absence of meaningful subsidies from the government.

Among some of the RAU’s revenue generating activities was the development of a 3000 square metre area on the campus grounds as a shopping centre. This centre houses fast food outlets, bookshops, medical facilities and other independent traders who pay rent directly to the university. As Moodie (2001:14) reported, the university is also leasing the RAU Island in the Vaal River for private use.

In addition RAU’s commercialisation of intellectual property enabled the formation of the RAU Intellectual Property Holding Company (Pty) Ltd (RIPHC) with the RAU as the sole shareholder to commercialise patents, trademarks and models developed by its staff and students. These led Clark (1998:5) to describe South African universities, including RAU, as entrepreneurial in character. Another aspect of this was the university’s

stringent approach when dealing with students owing tuition fees. This approach ranges from radical to moderate, where the former refers to the attachment of property owned by the guardian of the students to recover the debt, and the latter refers to legal action taken by the university or the general freezing of students' accounts.

Judging by the manner in which RAU operates in terms of its finances, we can conclude that its operation is consistent with neo-liberal thinking in terms of full cost-recovery.

Also, despite the revenue that the university generates from yearly tuition fees, causing a huge burden on poor students, the state's subsidy cuts on higher education have also influenced cuts on expenses that the RAU previously incurred for the recreational comfort of its students. These expenditure cuts in the name of cost-recovery involved the demolition of a recreational/sports facility where the Campus Square is currently located as well as the discontinuation of free printing for students, among other things. These changes, especially the last mentioned, had undeniably devastating effects on the quality of work that the students produced and worse, led to some students dropping their studies, especially those from low-income households. However, what becomes paradoxical is that although the *Higher Education Act* is rigorous in terms of its provisions for access, equity and redress in all higher education institutions, the economic conditions which poor students are faced with deny them access to higher education.

As a direct response to the prescription for higher education to be responsive to the broader process of SA's socio-economic and political transition, (Department of Education 1997), RAU reacted by introducing a plethora of short certificate courses in almost all of its faculties, thus generating more revenue for profit in the process. Among some of the certificate courses offered by RAU, for example in the Arts faculty, were a Masters certificate in social research and also in social impact assessment from the Sociology department. Fourteen such certificates were offered in the Faculty of

Education and Nursing, and many others were spread across all the faculties of the RAU.

As mentioned earlier, in the section on the current (merger) phase of restructuring taking place in the higher educational landscape in SA, RAU has been involuntarily merged with other institutions. RAU incorporated the two Vista campuses of Soweto and the East Rand in 2004, and then on 1st January 2005 merged with Technikon Witwatersrand. This merger meant that the RAU ceased to exist, having definite implications for operations at the former RAU.

The new university offers both academic and vocational programmes across the full qualification spectrum as dictated by the market. This will, according to Asmal (2002), allow increased student access and mobility, but will according to Kgaphola (1999:9), introduce mechanical instrumentalism into programmes that will be offered.

With all the lessons learnt from the experiences of earlier case studies, we can already anticipate similar experiences with the restructuring taking place at RAU. For starters, the initial rejection by RAU of the merger (Botha 2004:89) proves that involuntary mergers are, in most cases, received with resistance as in case of the merger between the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University (Macfarlane 2002).

It is also clear from the experiences of other mergers that the size and the resource base play a major role in the final outcome of the mergers (Jansen 2002:9). For instance the size and resource base of RAU played a major role in the decision to incorporate the two Vista campuses into RAU. Institutional size and power influenced the outcome of the merger at RAU as follows. Naturally in conventional terms of higher education, it would have made sense for a merger between RAU and Vista, rather than RAU with TWR, given the commonality between universities. Instead, the merger is between RAU and TWR. It is further conceivable, if power dynamics decide who the influential partner is, for RAU to have a greater influence in the merger with TWR,

because RAU would arguably be representing the interests of two institutions, both RAU and Vista.

With the merger in place, the new UJ is far bigger than all its component institutions before the incorporation and the merger. This is so, because the UJ now has the two Vista and TWR-campuses including the RAU campus, and the numbers of students have increased. Also important to note, is that UJ has more black students than white students although white students are more concentrated at the APK (former RAU) campus.

3.4. Conclusion

From Chapter Three it is evident that RAU was given character by the two time frames the university was exposed to, i.e. the apartheid influence and the current democratic dispensation. This is justified by the fact that RAU was originally established by and for the Afrikaner community, with no intention of accommodating other races as prescribed by the apartheid ideology. This chapter has also demonstrated how RAU grew in size and in the numbers of students and lecturers from the time it was established.

With the transition to democracy, it is also evident in this chapter that RAU has indeed realigned itself and arguably developed in the process some attributes of the democratic dispensation. For example, RAU started accepting students from other races, introducing the English language as a medium of instruction. It is also clear that the restructuring process at RAU came with challenges. For example, the multiracialisation of RAU had, and might still, pose some challenges that need serious interventions to foster a cohesive culture of tolerance for differences at the RAU. Another challenge is the massification of education in a sphere where the costs are very steep, along with other challenges that it is the intention of this research to explore further. These challenges will inevitably become much more severe with the merger. Also, as both the international experience and the current mergers in SA have shown, it is conceivable that the merger at RAU may experience similar challenges.

Since the higher educational landscape is now functioning within neo-liberal principles, we have also observed RAU functioning within that framework. The university building a shopping complex to generate profits from the land that was used for student recreation, the moratorium on free printing, and the high and rising student fees, have demonstrated.

The next chapter focuses on the views of RAU student organisations on the second phase of restructuring of higher education institutions in SA, namely the incorporation of two Vista-campuses into the RAU in 2004 and in 2005 the merger with the TWR.



CHAPTER FOUR

VIEWS OF RAU STUDENT ORGANISATIONS ON THE RESTRUCTURING

4.1 Introduction

This chapter pursues analysis of the data gathered from the interviews with representatives of student organisations from the former RAU. Firstly, I will identify the main themes that emerged from the interviews. Secondly, I will then analyse the data bringing into perspective the literature as well as the responses from the respondents to explain some of the claims that I have made and the conclusions that I have arrived at. However, before I follow the chronology of items set out above, I will attempt to explore the character of student organisations in general in SA and the changes that they have undergone, especially since 1994. This section will explain why student organisations have either failed to assert themselves or were not reasonably consulted in the merger debate.

4.2 Student organisations

Student movements in their character have been, according to Fever (1969: 3), historical forces that are at odds with the 'social system'. Both Fever (1969:3) and Liepset (1971:15) identify this problem as the conflict of generations, where the students believe that the older generation is failing them. It is thus on that basis that Freudian analysis suggests that student movements occur whenever "the elder generation, through some presumable historical failure, has become de-authoritised in the eyes of the young. They arise whenever social and historical circumstances combine to cause a crisis in loss of generational confidence, which impels the young to resentment and uprising." (Liepset 1971:5).

Fever further claims that student uprising or revolt against the system is always eminent because no society ever altogether succeeds in moulding the various psychological types that comprise it to conform to its material, economic requirements.

If there were a genuine correspondence between the material, economic base and the psychological superstructure, then society would be a static social system, and basic social change would not take place (Fever 1969:4).

Fever (1969) and Liepset (1971:14) both claim that throughout history student movements have always been the bearers of a higher ethic than the surrounding society.

Their claims are supported by historical facts that throughout the world, perhaps by virtue of ethical consciousness among students, they (students) have demonstrated a high degree of selflessness. For example, the Russian Revolutionary Student Movement led by the youth from aristocratic families embarked on the “back-to-the-people” movement in the mid-1870s (Fever 1969:4). The children of the nobility were the largest group among those arrested from this movement, demonstrating their selfless nature. The United States of America (USA) owed much to the students of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, and SA to the black consciousness movement (BCM) of the 1970s and 1980s, as bearers of the ethical vocation in history. Further, governments in Korea, Japan, and Sudan have fallen because of massive student protests (Fever 1969:10).

Student movements have by their character thus advocated the ‘embetterment’ of the general society. However, this does not also mean that all student organisations are progressive in nature or that there was no student organisation in support of the apartheid government in SA. It is also certainly perceivable that student movements have always been outward looking, i.e. primarily seeking to address issues in the broader society rather than matters of the student environment per se. This was shown by the students from the University of California who protested for equality and jobs for blacks in early 1964 and supported local civil rights organisations (Anon n.a (b)).

This was also the case in SA where student movements such as the BCM linked with national liberation movements. The fact that student movements in SA also identified themselves with national liberation movements was demonstrated by the South African Students Organisation (SASO), because SASO also declared that their oppression as blacks took priority over their status as students.

Furthermore, Danziger (in Dreijmanis 1988:34) reports on a 1956 survey of African, Indian, and white university students in introductory psychology and sociology courses when asked the question: “What two things would you like to have that you don’t have”. The responses were almost diametrically opposed between black and white students (see Table 1).

What this study also found was that social reality was being defined essentially in political terms, and that for black students socio-political aspirations received more attention than personal ones at that specific time in SA.

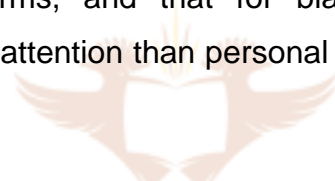


Table1: Interview responses students

GOALS	WHITES (%)	BLACKS (%)
Political goals	0	62,9
Educational opportunities	3,8	15,5
Familial goals	31,1	5,2
Personal qualities and achievements	65,1	16,5

(Dreijmanis 1988:34)

Like the Russian, Korean, Japanese, and Sudanese students’ opposition to their respective political power structures, the SA students were also opposed to and needed to overthrow the governments’ overarching ideology of Apartheid. If we are to follow the Freudian analysis I mentioned earlier on, on how student organisations occur, it was inevitable that South African students would eventually form student structures.

As the South African students' attempted to strategise around changing the apartheid system, black university students, according to Hugon (n.a.), tried to make progress through the multiracial National Union of South African Students (NUSAS).

NUSAS was outspoken in its criticism of government actions, especially at English-speaking universities where NUSAS membership was strong. But as a result of the media coverage of dissident activities of NUSAS and parental pressure on several young liberal white student leaders of NUSAS, many white students disaffiliated themselves from NUSAS (Hugon n.a.).

With the white students disaffiliating from NUSAS, the black students no longer had an open multiracial channel to express their anti-apartheid feelings. The disaffiliation of white students from NUSAS resulted in an intensified dissatisfaction among black students with the apartheid system (Hugon n.a.). Among the dissatisfied students was Stephen Biko who, through the University Christian Movement (UCM), advocated for an exclusively black students movement (Dreijmanis 1988:33). Biko's support for an exclusively black student movement came after black students at the NUSAS conference at Rhodes were affronted when the host university prohibited mixed accommodation and eating facilities at the conference. That incident sparked the 1969 formation of the Blacks-only student union, the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which made clear its common allegiance to the philosophy of black consciousness. Biko was elected the first president of SASO (Hugon n.a.).

The banning of SASO in October 1977 by the white apartheid government thus deprived black higher education students of a national political student organisation (Badat 1999:206). As a result, the University of the North (UNIN) became the focal point of student-administered conflict in 1979. There, Badat (1999:210) mentions, student protests occurred around the expulsion of the students organising a Sharpsville commemoration meeting and around plans for the anniversary of the Soweto uprising.

Finally, there was a march by some 100 students through a nearby township protesting against the forced removal and relocation of the Makgatho community. These examples reinforce the claim I made earlier, that student organisations of the 1960s were 'movements' since they saw themselves then as part of the broader society, not firstly as students or insular organisations.

With the banning of SASO the formation of another national student body came about from an Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) conference of September 1979. The interim committee whose task was to prepare the ground for the launching of a national student organisation was formed. This led in the same year to the formation of a new national student organisation called the Azanian Student Organisation (Badat, 1999:211). The organisation was in 1986 renamed the South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO) and became the dominant force in black student life until 1991 when it amalgamated with NUSAS. In 1988 a wide range of organisations including the United Democratic Front (UDF) and SANSCO were banned, and student advocacy suffered (SASCO n.a).

In February 1990 the banned liberation movements were unbanned and leaders were freed from prisons. This new political dispensation in the country led to SANSCO and NUSAS engaging in talks about the formation of one non-racial student organisation (SASCO n.a). Also influential was opposition to De Klerk's Education Bill that was intended to reduce subsidies to 'politically active' universities. At a congress on the 1st to the 6th of September 1991 the South African Student Congress (SASCO) was finally launched as a single non-racial student organization and became the biggest in the country (SASCO online).

Since South Africa's entry into a democratic dispensation, there have been some interesting changes in the character of student organisations. Firstly, whereas there was more cooperation and 'will' amongst different student organisations to work together, student organisations have started to display some independence from each other.

This change in the student organisations can be attributed to the massification of higher education because the massification provided access to higher education to a variety of people whom through their differences neutralised the unity amongst students. This claim is in view of the fact that student organisations of the 1960s managed to organise themselves and to work together as a result of their sharing common aspirations, given that access to higher education was historically for the elite.

The fact that student organisations of the 1990s have become insular, i.e. operating independently from other organisations, is demonstrated by the politically-oriented organisations launching and re-launching a range of student organisations on university campuses with clear political agendas and acquaintances to political parties.

This reality is taking shape even though SASCO was meant to be the biggest multiracial student body in SA. Among the political organisations that have been launched at university campuses, are the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), the Young Communist League (YCL), the Democratic Alliance (DA), the South African Liberal Student Association (SALSA), the Pan African Student Movement Association (PASMA) and the Freedom Front (FF), to name just a few.

The political student organisations have thus begun to correspond to political groupings in South African society. In Lenin's view, the existence of these groups is not accidental, but inevitable:

Students as the most responsive section of the intelligentsia...most resolutely and most accurately reflect and express the development of class interests and political groupings in society as a whole. The students would not be what they are if their political groupings did not correspond to the political groupings of society as a whole (Lenin 1961:44).

The religious student organisations have, similarly to political student organisations, evolved with religion in society.

This is due to the fact that religious organisations have also experienced the launching on campuses of many student organisations of various religious dominations. These religious organisations range from Muslim, Christian, Protestant and Jewish influences, and have in some of them different organisations emerging. At the former RAU, there are examples of this, as will be seen later in this chapter.

Regarding other forms of student organisations, non-political and non-religious student organisations (as they would now like to be referred to) are organised around different issues such as academic matters, community development, volunteerism, entertainment, sports and business, to name just a few.

Also interesting to note is the changed cooperation between student organisations in SA. Whereas there was much synergy among student organisations, i.e. religious, political, etc. in the 1970s and 1980s, student organisations of the 1990s have somehow begun to display a character of being issue-based and sectoral in their mobilisation. This is where all the different types of organisations would have no interest in the agendas of other organisations regardless of relevance, i.e. where a religious organisation would not be interested in political issues at campuses and vice-versa. This is a drastic change in the role played for example by the University Christian Movement (UCM), as a platform for Biko to lobby for an exclusively black movement.

Such changes in the character of student organisations are partially owing to social-political factors. For example, both the apartheid system and the subsequent democratic regime could have influenced the changes in character of student organisations, as Badat (1999:24) implies. The discriminatory policies of the apartheid regime unconsciously compelled all the oppressed and their sympathisers in their different student organisations to assume a common role in fighting the system. The democratic dispensation, on the contrary, seems to have eroded the interactive cohesion among student organisations.

This could perhaps also be because of the introduction of neo-liberalism into higher education, where individual interests come before those of the community and thereby depoliticise the students in the process.

The following section will present the data gathered from student organisations at the former RAU, followed by an indication of whether the changes discussed above were happening at the former RAU as well.

4.3 A glance at the responses from student organisations at the former RAU

In 2004 the former RAU had about thirty-two student organisations, which were categorised as political, social, religious or academic by the SRC. All these societies reported to their respective structures that were part of the SRC sub-structures. Some of these student organisations were multiracial whereas some remained racially homogenous, i.e. either black or white. The total numbers of respondents under the four categories of student organisations were as follows: three political organisations; four religious organisations; five social organisations and one academic society. The total numbers of these organisations under each category were as follows: five political organisations, fourteen religious organizations, eight social organisations and five academic societies. Only those respondents who had the time and were willing to participate in this study at the time were interviewed.

I gathered the views of student organisations on the restructuring by having interviews with students representing their organisations as chairpersons, and in the absence of these, with representatives of the organisations in the Student Transformation Committee. The first sets of interviews were conducted during October, November and December of 2004. The respondents were Mr X Shabalala from AISEC, Mr N Msweli from the South African Student Congress (SASCO), Mr K Bonola from the South African Liberal Student Association (SALSA), Mr F Misi from the Church of Christ Campus Ministries (CCCM), Mr Tsambo from the Community Development

Society (CDS), Miss Xavier from the RAU International Students Organisation, Miss Z Mlangeni from the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS), Miss Gloria from the Students with Disabilities, and Mr F Botipe from the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL). Another set of interviews was conducted during February 2005. The respondents in the second set of interviews were Miss K Curtis from the Golden Key Academic Society, Mr R Mohope from the Black Management Forum (BMF), Mr F Khan from the Muslim Students Association (MSA), and Mr G Kanarek from the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) (see Appendix 1 for the interview guidelines).

The following themes were explored with the representatives from the student organisations:

- Their understanding of the aim of the restructuring of higher education according to government
- The views of the organisations on the restructuring process in general and at the former RAU (or the Aucklandpark-Kingsway (APK) campus of UJ) specifically
- The factors that influenced the need for restructuring in general, and specifically at the APK
- The challenges facing restructuring in general as well as at the APK
- The changes that the restructuring brought to the APK
- How the government, management and the SRC could have handled the restructuring at APK differently
- The level of participation by the organisations during the restructuring process.

The responses on these themes are discussed below.

We can say with certainty, that the responses and views of the students on the restructuring process are somewhat similar to, as well as different from those of the Department of Education (1999) discussed in 2.4.2. However, some of the changes foreseen in 2.4.2 with the mergers were challenges that the student organisations would need to deal with later.

The responses regarding the aim of government with the restructuring of higher education were quite similar and are in line with some of those of the Department of Education (1999) listed in 2.4.2. This is so, because as much as the Department of Education believed, the respondents also believed that the whole aim of the restructuring by government was to ensure equilibrium in resources between historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions and to foster a process of broader multiracialisation and cultural integration in the higher education institutions. These responses thus run parallel with the views of Waghid (2003:91-97), referred to in Chapter Two, that the transformation of higher education was envisioned to be responsive to the broader process of South Africa's political, social and economic transition.

The student organisations had some similar views, but also differences, concerning the actual restructuring process. The similarities were that all the organisations believed that the restructuring was in general a good endeavour for addressing the historical imbalances and for cultural integration in higher education. AISEC, ACTS, CDS, SALSA and the International Students Organisation believed that for the purpose of racial integration, the restructuring at APK was good. Despite this opinion, ACTS, BMF, Students with Disabilities and SALSA were of the opinion that the manner in which the restructuring process at APK was handled by government was bad. They saw specifically the mergers in general as a bad decision, with ACTS and BMF especially denouncing the comprehensive institution type merger. This view is contrary to the one held by the Department of Education (1999). They criticised this type of merger by claiming that university entry should be selective and control-led against an influx of non-academically deserving students; exactly the opposite would happen with comprehensive institutions, they believed.

SALSA mentioned a view contrary to that of the Department of Education, in that the merger would instead of bringing quality higher education to SA, lead to a drop in academic standards and that their status as university students would be negatively affected by being merged with TWR, a technikon.

Concerning the form of the merger the SALSA chairperson felt that it was a “rushed decision-making process”. He explained how at one stage there was a co-operation agreement between RAU, TWR and Wits University. Then suddenly it was decided that RAU was to merge with TWR. Contrary to the view of the form of merger being bad, ANCYL, MSA and Golden Key Academic Society hold similar views with the Department of Education in their belief that the form of restructuring was good as the new institution would allow a variety of choices for certificate, diploma and degree programmes, thereby allowing access for all and better qualified students. Although the Golden Key Academic Society viewed the merger as a positive step, it criticised the outcome of the merger with reference to the student protests that took place in February 2005.

All respondents thought that the historical background of SA and of higher education specifically, influenced the need to reform the higher education system in general. However, SALSA, ANCYL, SASCO, MSA, SAUJS and the International Students Organisation saw additional influences. For instance, SALSA and the ANCYL believed that pressure from the employment sector for skilled graduates also contributed in terms of the need for curriculum changes and vocational training.

The International Students Organisation, MSA, SAUJS and SASCO believed that the global trends in the restructuring of higher education also had an influence on the SA restructuring process.

Concerning the factors that influenced the restructuring at the former RAU specifically, different views were held. For instance, the Golden Key Academic Society, BMF, AISEC, CDS, ACTS, International Students Organisations and the CCCM believed that the close proximity and the racial and resource imbalances between TWR and RAU had a major influence. These were also factors influencing mergers in the former Soviet countries and Vietnam, as referred to in Chapter Two (Kotecha and Harman 2001:18). Another factor identified by ACTS, BMF and the CDS was that the merger of RAU and TWR stemmed from curriculum issue.

These organisations believed that the intention was to join together theory-based and practice-based training. Lastly, the view distinctively held by the ANCYL and SASCO was that the slow process of transformation of RAU, its relatively small size and huge resource base influenced the merger decision. But then, the University of Stellenbosch, which found itself in a similar position to the former RAU in terms of slow transformation, relative size and resources, did not have to merge. Cloete explained this difference in that the former RAU did not have a 'spokesperson' high-up (no political clout with new political elite), especially at meetings where mergers were discussed and decided.

The challenges facing the restructuring process in general and at the APK that the respondents identified were:

- The bringing together of unique cultural and political identities of both the merged institutions and their students.
- The proper administration of the new University of Johannesburg (UJ).
- Making sure that quality education is maintained in the new higher educational landscape.
- The market perception of the new institutions. This was, according to SALSA, BMF and CCM, a giant challenge, because the market would have some scepticism about the quality of the new institution, thereby putting the students affected by the mergers under a competitive disadvantage in the employment market as compared to those students not affected.
- Specifically SASCO was concerned about accessibility to higher education, especially for those students who qualify but cannot afford it.
- In the specific case of the RAU-TWR merger, the mobility of students, especially those with disabilities, from one campus to the other, with the relocation of faculties, was a problem.
- Huge student population size on limited resources, including study space.

- A uniform fee structure, access requirements and SRC representation of the different campuses of UJ.

These challenges identified by the student organisations correspond with those noted by Goedegebuure *et al* 1994:318 and Department of Education (2003) discussed in Chapter Two.

Regarding whether the restructuring would bring any changes to the APK campus, the responses were relatively similar. For example, ACTS and the CCCM both agreed that there had already been a lot of physical change on the APK campus since the incorporation of Vista in 2004, with the increase in numbers of the student population and the extension of facilities like computer labs. However, they, together with a host of other organisations, agreed that changes in the dynamics at the APK campus, i.e. the cultural and racial configuration (including the ethos of the university) would only happen in the long run and not immediately. These assertions were supported by the ANCYL and BMF stating that most of the old 'RAU-policies', e.g. on residences, were still maintained, although the merger was now in effect. Adding to this, SAUJS believed that one critical change that was foreseeable was that the APK campus would become more political than before.

The respondents' views on how the government, the former RAU management and the SRC could have handled the merger processes differently, if at all, were as follows. On the government's handling of the merger, views varied widely. For instance the MSA, BMF and ANCYL believed that there was no other way in which the government could have handled the merger issue. Contrary to that, SAUJS, Golden Key Academic Society, International Students Organisation, AISEC, SASCO and SALSA believed that government should have consulted all stakeholders affected by the mergers, especially students, rather than dictating to the institutions. In this regard SASCO believed that the government should have monitored whether students were indeed given a platform to raise their issues within the institutions.

Also of the views that government could have handled the restructuring differently, ACTS believed that the government should have introduced a uniform merger type across the higher educational landscape.

The CCCM and CDS felt that there should have been better planning for the merger process, proposing that the mergers should have happened more incrementally, rather than radical restructuring. They suggested, for example, that one year could have been dedicated to trying to deal with finances, followed by administration, curriculum and so on, until all structures were successfully merged. The view of Students with Disabilities was that historically disadvantaged institutions should have been developed or capacitated to function effectively rather than merging them with other institutions. The majority of student organisations thus felt that government could have, and should have, managed the restructuring differently.

Responses on how the former RAU management could have handled the restructuring process differently were also varied. AISEC, ACTS, CCCM and Students with Disabilities believed that there was nothing much that the former RAU management could have done since the merger was dictated to them; they therefore felt that the management handled the process fairly well. Contrary to this claim, other student organisations felt that RAU management did not handle the merger process well. SAJUS, MSA, ANCYL, SASCO, CDS and the International Students Organisation were of the opinion that the former RAU management should have made sure that there was a platform for all stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the restructuring process, which they felt had not been the case.

Another view from the Golden Key Academic Society and the BMF was that rather than the initial negative response from the former RAU management to the merger, which 'suddenly' changed over the three-week holiday at the end of 2003, the management should have handled the merger process more maturely. These organisations believed that the management should have been seen publicly in support of, rather than in opposition to the merger.

They felt management's initial negative attitude to the merger with the TWR trickled down to the students. On the other hand, SALSA believed that the former RAU management should have been more resistant to being forced into a merger.

Three main responses can be identified on how the former RAU SRC could have handled the restructuring process differently. The view of BMF, CCCM, ANCYL and SASCO was that the SRC could not have handled the merger processes any differently from how it was handled. Both SASCO and ANCYL claimed that the SRC served as a rubberstamp functionary for student approval of the former RAU management. The BMF and CCCM, on the other hand, believed that no matter what the SRC could do, the outcome would have been the same.

This claim is supported by my observation during my tenure as a student at the former RAU, where the SRC never challenged the decisions made by the management even though they affected students negatively. One example of the lack of action from the SRC in challenging the management on issues that affected the students, was their inability to act on the management's decision to discontinue the Spring Day Games at the Milo-park sports facilities; their decision to stop free printing and their decision to end the Spring Day Bashes before mid-night.

The second view was that of Golden Key Academic Society, asserting that the SRC should have assumed a positive approach to the merger – this was similar to their critique of the former RAU management. They felt that the initial reaction of the SRC on the merger set a negative tone for the rest of the student population at the former RAU. All the other organisations held the third view that the SRC should have created a climate of active participation and excitement on the restructuring issues rather than just debriefing organisations on what was already decided.

Regarding the role that the organisations did play in the restructuring process, AISEC, SALSA, CDS, MSA, BMF, International Students Organisation,

Student with Disabilities, ANCYL and SASCO mentioned that they never participated much. Some of them claimed that the internal processes such as suppression of active participation at the APK campus denied them the opportunity to make meaningful contributions.

This was so, because some of the student organisations reported that they only participated in the merger process by submitting written suggestions given that management closed the doors to open discussions. However, SAUJS, Golden Key Academic Society and ACTS felt that they had been involved in the restructuring processes. These organisations felt that through attending the SRC merger meetings, and participating there, they had made significant contributions.

In the next section I analyse the data gathered from the respondents and put into perspective their responses.

4.4 Student organisations' inactivity concerning the restructuring

With the information from the previous section in mind and the evidence provided in this research by the literature, one is ushered to a conclusion that the decision to merge the institutions of higher education was a rushed decision by the government. Government expected some mergers and incorporations to take place in 2004, one year after they proposed the mergers. This seems to be a rushed process because the time given for both the mergers and incorporations was not sufficient for proper planning. This is also justified by the protests that the merged institutions voiced against the decision by government to merge them as referred to in Chapter Two. One can thus claim that the resurgence of these protests was to some degree due to the uncertainty on the part of the institutions, about what would transpire once the mergers were in operation. It is in this light conceivable that merger protests could have been halted had there been enough time for the institutions to engage each other in full and to plan properly for the implementation of mergers.

This is given further weight at the former RAU by the fact that none of the respondents were certain what was to transpire once the merger was official. This view was justified specifically by the AISEC chairperson. In his words, “there are still grey areas in the whole merger process”. There was much uncertainty from the students about what ‘comprehensive institute’ was to mean and thus worries that RAU’s status as a university would be changed. This was a point emphasised mainly by the ACTS chairperson at the former RAU, and could also be attributed to the mergers and incorporations being a rushed process. This is also supported by the fact that the former TWR, RAU and Vista authorities were themselves not sure about what was to happen once the merger was under way. The uncertainty of the authorities on what was to happen also resulted in them not briefing the students fully and satisfactorily. The claim I made above is further justified by the fact that most protests by the UJ-students were on issues that were not resolved during the merger discussions in 2004, i.e. the language policy, fee structures, transportation, etc.



It also seems that the decision to restructure the former RAU was more for political reasons than it was because of government’s desire for academic reforms. This claim is strengthened by *The Restructuring of Higher Education Systems in SA*, a report compiled by the National Working Group. The report recommended that the former RAU not be subjected to restructuring, but rather proceed autonomously, because the university satisfied the review criteria, i.e. equity, efficiency, effectiveness and quality (Botha 2004:89-97).

The merger of RAU-TWR was indeed involuntary, as was the case in other mergers in SA mentioned in Chapter Two. Adding to the problems that go with involuntary mergers as demonstrated by Kotecha and Harman (2001:13) (see Chapter Two), was the former RAU’s initial reaction after the government had proposed the merger with the former TWR. The former RAU’s public denouncement of government’s decision to merge the two institutions spiralled and created an anti-merger stance amongst the students as well.

This problem was so rife that it required the former RAU SRC president in 2004 to plead for the cooperation and support from the students on the merger.

The reality was that the majority of the former RAU student organisations was in support of the general process of higher education restructuring in SA, but was against the specific merger of the former RAU and TWR. From the interviews it became clear that the MSA, Golden Key Academic Society together with the PYA at the former RAU, were the only organisations that supported the merger, with the support for the former being more for academic reasons. This brings to the fore another interesting dynamic about the former RAU student organisations. Although the respondents reported the restructuring process to be a good endeavour for the sake of creating more access for poor students and bringing a balance between historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, as soon as the merger affected them, the APK students seemed to resent it – although they supported the idea of restructuring in general.

What then becomes paradoxical is that the same respondents who disapproved of the merger when it affected them, are people of colour who stood to benefit more from the process, especially in creating more access to the former RAU. There is, therefore a contradiction in the disapproval of the merger by the RAU student organisations. The fact that the former RAU student organisations disapproved of the merger with the former TWR could be attributed to the cultural and perhaps even the class dynamics that may exist between both the former TWR and RAU, which the student organisations may have invariably identified themselves with.

The historical class differences between the former RAU and the former TWR, given character by the apartheid system referred in Chapter Two, could have given the RAU a higher-class status in terms of resources compared to the latter. This, I argue, could have influenced the class composition of their students even post-1994.

However, this does not mean that there are no class differences among the students of RAU. The fact that RAU students could be more from middle class backgrounds is arguably explained by the fact that even the students from disadvantaged backgrounds from the former RAU did not participate in the protest led by the former TWR students around issues of the high costs for academic record printouts and supplementary exams.

The class differentiation that could exist between the students of the various campuses of the UJ explains why the PYA at the former TWR had the students' support, whereas the PYA at the APK campus had miniscule student support. The PYA at the APK campus had in the last four years during which I have been a RAU student, never had more than fifty students actively supporting and participating in the organisation. On the contrary, the student support for the PYA at the former TWR seems to be the opposite. Testifying to this were the hundreds of students from the former TWR that PYA managed to organise for their 22nd February protest.

It is also vital to note that in all interviews conducted, excluding the one with the PYA at the former RAU, the restructuring debate seems not to have been entertained at organisational level by student organisations. Some respondents indicated that they found it difficult to respond on behalf of their organisations since they never entertained restructuring issues in full on their agendas. The lack of student participation in restructuring issues (Jansen 2002), specifically at the former RAU, can then at least be attributed to two factors. First is the former RAU management's initial attitude to the merger and secondly, the changed character of student organisations as reflected in 4.2.

Regarding the first, the former RAU management's public denouncement of the proposed merger set the tone for outright resistance by the students towards the merger, which for some organisations resulted in a closure of the debate and further discussions on the matter. The fact that the former RAU student organisations followed the management's view is due to the culture of the former RAU where active participation was not encouraged.

This culture had thus translated into the former RAU SRC and students thinking that the university management was always acting in their best interests although this might not always have been the case.

With regard to the second factor, as indicated in 4.2, student organisations at the former RAU had become issue- or agenda-based, operating in isolation from each other, in the post-apartheid era. The changed character of student organisations has been influenced by neo-liberalism and the massification of higher education. As argued in section 4.2, the former led to depoliticised students, because the neo-liberal discourse places individual interests before those of the group or community. And the massification of higher education led to breaking the unity amongst students and their organisations given that massification allowed students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse objectives access to higher education. This reality has translated at the former RAU into student organisations being formed for specific objectives i.e. academic, religious, social or political.

The issue-based character of student organisations was also clear at the former RAU – the only organisations that seemed to have discussed the restructuring issues within their organisations, were political organisations. Organisations that considered themselves ‘non-political’ did not entertain political agendas, which was what the merger was for them. I explain this firstly, by what I term “political withdrawals” for non-political student organisations, and secondly, by “political conformity” for political student organisations at the former RAU. What the former term means is that in the absence of direct common goals, “non-political” organisations see no relevance in engaging rigorously on a political platform since their focus is not on political agendas. What the latter term means, is that by virtue of the direct link of student political organisations at campuses with political parties, some student political organisations had to take the mergers as political orders rather than as a matter for robust debate, while others had to oppose the mergers no matter what possible benefits they might have had for students, as was the case at the former RAU.

Relating to the political withdrawal of non-political student organisations, prior to the democratic dispensation, student organisations were outward looking. But student organisations of the 1990s had become inward looking, although they wanted to create an appearance of outward looking as was the case at the former RAU. On the other hand, non-political organisations see themselves as non-political agents and thus refrain from engaging in political issues in their institutions.

On the second aspect of political conformity, the biggest and most influential student political organisations in SA, the ANCYL and SASCO – commonly known as the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) – and the YCL, are under the political mandate of the ANC because of the tripartite alliance. With the mergers being an ANC-cabinet decision, and PYA and YCL's political allegiance to the ANC, in the current context in South Africa there was little political space for the PYA at the former RAU to air different views on the issues of the mergers. Their political mandate was to conform and defend the idea. This means that even the individual PYA member's thoughts on the mergers were suppressed under the unspoken code of obedience and discipline within the ANC cadres.

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The PYA at the former RAU and the YCL's political obedience to the party/government, their strong hold and influence on SRCs in higher education institutions in SA, together with the weak student political opposition, works in the favour of the PYA. This is because there was no strong student political opposition influential enough to demand the political space for debates on the mergers.

What this suggests is that there is no strong and recognisable student political force independent from the thinking of government in SA and at the former RAU. Also to be noted is that the student political organisations at the former RAU did not challenge and engage with student matters in the mainstream political discourse. Instead, student political organisations, at least those meant to have a sizeable influence, have been encouraged by their leadership to volunteer and to add to the administrative apparatus of the state

in the hope that as a reward for being “obedient and disciplined”, they might be absorbed into lucrative administrative posts once they graduate.

Student political organisations in SA, and more specifically the PYA at the former RAU, out of their fear of engaging in the mainstream political discourse, have conveniently misplaced the dialogue. They have shifted their dialogue from centre politics, where it has wide audience and implications, to the institutional level where it has a narrow audience and implications. This is a sphere where institutional politics on fees increments, racism, etc. come into play, whereas the political decision for the current state of higher education, i.e. fee increments is already decided by the government’s GEAR policy. The fact that the ANCYL and SASCO’S chairpersons at the APK campus mentioned on record that they advocate free education, also qualifies the point made earlier about the PYA at the former RAU shifting the discourse from the state (where it matters most) to the institutions where it matters least.

The claim I have made above is supported on the one hand through the words of Mothupi Modiba, the current SASCO national chairperson, trying to criticise the private sector for not assisting government to fund higher education and the student protests from both the Soweto VISTA and TWR campuses of UJ on high fees (*SABC News*, 21 February 2005). On the other hand, the role of the Freedom Front (FF) at the University of Pretoria, in asserting racist Afrikaner nationalism at the university rather than being involved in the mainstream political discourse affirms my claim (Kgosana 2005).

What this suggests is that there is no longer student politics in SA, but campus politics, as is the case at the former RAU. This then gives us the reason why, if at all, student organisations played a role in the mergers only at the institutional level and why they were not consulted in the mainstream political discourse and the merger debates. An example is the protest by former TWR students on 22 February 2005. The claims aired by the former TWR’s two campuses included complaints about the high cost of fees for supplementary exams and academic record printouts; the cancellation of the

intercampus bus service between the Doornfontein and APK campuses, the language policy of Afrikaans used in communication between the campuses, the shortage of academic staff to lecture at the former TWR campuses and unequal representation in all structures of the UJ (Jones 2004:3).

As I have portrayed in Chapter Two, how the bigger and more influential partner in the mergers dominated the other, some of those trends have been observed in the UJ. What is interesting to note in this regard, is the absence of comments by the respondents about RAU's incorporation of the two Vista campuses in 2004. The fact that the respondents never said much about Vista is perhaps due to the insignificant role of Vista in the incorporation, which posed no threat and hardly resulted in any changes at the former RAU. On the one hand, this reality further proves Hall *et al* (2004), referred in Chapter Two, to be correct in their observation on incorporations – that the institution incorporated is usually absorbed by the one it is incorporated into. On the other hand, this fact also proves Kotecha and Harman (2001:13) in Chapter Two to be correct to mention that take-overs tend to be far simpler, often with smaller institutions being absorbed. The SASCO chairperson at the APK campus, for example, had reported the former RAU to be playing a master role and dominating the discourse on student affairs. He gave an example of the former RAU dictating that the former Vista should only have one student representative on the UJ's SRC.

Adding to the trend of the bigger partner's domination in mergers, we have also begun observing the challenges that were foreseen by the respondents, surfacing and causing conflict. Among the challenges raised were:

- The bringing together of unique cultural and political identities of both the merged institutions and students.
- The proper administration of the new University of Johannesburg.
- The mobility of students and especially those with disabilities from one campus to the other, with the relocation of faculties.
- Huge student population size with limited resources including study space.

With regard to the first point, there seem to be startling cultural differences between the former TWR and RAU in terms of how the institutions operated. For example the former TWR was more political whereas the former RAU was not. This is justified by the fact that TWR SRC elections were contested by political organisations and the student environment was characterised by the usage of conventional political methods of persuasion during deadlocks with the management. On the part of the former RAU, the SRC elections were not contested by political organisations, as was the case at the TWR, but by any student standing independently. Secondly, the student environment was under the arbitrary rule of the division of the Dean of Students. This is where the Dean of Students at the former RAU had control of all activities of the SRC, whereas this was not the case at TWR. This was because political methods or processes of doing things were discouraged at the former RAU, as the Rector, Prof Roux Botha, indicated in a meeting: “We do not want RAU to be political” (Botha 2004).

The reality that the former RAU was not overtly political was further expressed by the SASCO chairperson in view of his perception of the benefit of the merger that “the merger will give us an opportunity to bargain politically at the former RAU given the level of student political activity that the former TWR will bring to the new UJ”. The fact that the former RAU was not a ‘political institution’ was also clear from the fear expressed by the SAUJS’s chairperson that “the merger was going to introduce politics to the APK campus”.

The institutional culture of the former RAU was such that political processes were taboo and management made decisions without broad consultation. This also explains why the former RAU had not experienced any serious political unrest to the degree to which other higher education institutions had. As a result, the students had absorbed this culture as a norm. This reality, together with the middle class character of the RAU students, answers some questions regarding the nature of student organisations at the former RAU.

Among these questions, are why its student political organisations did not have as widespread student support as at other universities.

On the second and third challenges student organisations raised, decisions made by the administration of the UJ had already led to a protest by former TWR students on the cancellation of inter-campus bus services, restricted access for students from a different campus of UJ and so on. These challenges could also be due to the merger being a rushed process as mentioned earlier by the SALSA chairperson at the former RAU. Lastly, the population size of the students on the APK campus had indeed increased as observed by the CCCM chairperson, placing strain on the study facilities. This is also noticeable by the long queues the students now have to wait in to get access to the computer lab and the congested space in the library during the day.

The claims by the former TWR students give weight to the fact that the former RAU did indeed play a dominating role in the formation of the UJ. This is because the former TWR because of its relatively weaker power and influence in the merger had to give in to the manner in which RAU operates with regards to e.g. costs for supplementary exams and academic record printouts.

Although the TWR students registered their dissatisfaction, some of their claims affected the APK campus students equally, especially the cost issues. However, that being the case, the RAU students never participated in the TWR-led protests. The fact that the APK campus students never participated in the protest could perhaps also be explained by the class dynamics that are involved between the APK and former TWR campuses and the apolitical culture of the former RAU.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has established that student organisations in SA have changed as a result of neo-liberalism and the massification of higher education. This is

so, because there is no more interaction between different student organisations.

Secondly, student organisations have begun to display some independence from each other, as is the case with student organisations at the former RAU. What this chapter has also found is that the only big student political organisations in SA in the form of PYA are under the control of the ANC government and thus exist to conform to the government's mandate as is also the case with the PYA at the former RAU.

It has been established that the respondents held different views on a number of issues although similar views were held on others. This chapter has also demonstrated that although some respondents had additional views, all the respondents believed the restructuring of higher education was primarily influenced by political reasons. With the exception of the PYA who supported the whole process, it is also evident in this chapter, that the respondents viewed the general restructuring process as a good initiative although they opposed the merger process.

Also, the respondents believed that the merger between RAU and TWR was going to face challenges such as mutual agreements between both merged institutions on cultural, administrative and financial issues, and the maintenance of quality education, etc.

Although some of the challenges are not yet visible, some of them have proven to be true, as foreseen by the respondents. This is supported by the administrative and financial issues between the merged RAU and TWR leading to the TWR-led student protests on 22nd February 2005. It was also further demonstrated that the changed character of the student organisations and the institutional culture of the former RAU have contributed towards student organisations not participating in the merger process.

In the next chapter I present concluding comments for this study, including suggestions for areas that need further inquiry.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research as a whole is brought to a conclusion. This is where broad issues and findings throughout the report are summarised, and suggestions made for areas which need further research.

5.2 Conclusions of the research

This research has indicated that the higher educational landscape in SA prior to 1994 was, in the main, given character by the state's overarching ideology of apartheid. It is also evident that with the regime change from apartheid to a democratic dispensation, higher education went through a process of restructuring, which, in the second phase, has translated into the merging of higher education institutions. The current merger phase of the restructuring of higher education in SA has also shown in some cases to have followed merger trends internationally. These trends have translated into consolidations, take-overs, and protests in the case of involuntary mergers.

Although the current phase of the restructuring of higher education under the democratic dispensation is desirable, this research has also established that such changes have come with ironies and challenges. Among these is the fact that the introduction of neo-liberal practices into higher education has ironically restricted funding, whereas the *Higher Education Act* is said to be in pursuit of trying to create more access for students.

This research has also found that the former RAU was given character by the two time frames the university was exposed to, i.e. the apartheid influence and the current democratic dispensation. This is due to the fact that the former RAU was originally established by and for the Afrikaner community, with no intention of accommodating other races as prescribed by the apartheid ideology. This research has also demonstrated how the former RAU

grew in size and in the numbers of students and lecturers from the time it was established in 1968.

With the transition to democracy, it is also evident in this report that the former RAU had indeed realigned itself and arguably developed in the process some attributes of the democratic dispensation. For example, the former whites only RAU started accepting students from other races and introduced English as a medium of instruction. It is also clear that the transformation process at the former RAU came with challenges. For example, the multiracialisation of the former RAU posed serious challenges that needed serious interventions so as to foster a cohesive culture of tolerance for differences at the former RAU. Another challenge is the massification of education where the costs are very steep.

Since the higher educational landscape is now functioning within a neo-liberal framework, we have equally observed the former RAU functioning within that framework. The university building a shopping complex to generate profits from the land that was used for student recreation, the moratorium on free printing, the high and rising student fees, testify to this.

This research has also established that student organisations in SA have changed in general as a result of neo-liberalism and the massification of higher education. This is also the case at the former RAU because there is no more interaction between different student organisations due the introduction of neo-liberal principles and the massification of higher education referred to earlier. Secondly, the former RAU student organisations have begun to display some independence from each other. What this inquiry has also found is that the only big student political organisations in SA in the form of PYA are under the control of the ANC government and thus exist to conform to the government's mandate as is the case with the PYA at the former RAU.

From the responses of the student organisations, it has also been found that the respondents held different views on a number of issues although similar views were held in others. This was demonstrated by the fact that although

some respondents had additional views, all the respondents believed the restructuring of higher education was primarily influenced by political reasons. With the exception of the PYA at the former RAU who supported the whole process, it is evident that the respondents viewed the general restructuring process as a good initiative although they opposed the merger process.

Also, the respondents believed that the merger between the former RAU and TWR was going to face challenges such as mutual agreements between both merged institutions on cultural, administrative and financial issues, and the maintenance of quality education. Although some of the challenges are not yet visible, some of them have proven to be true, as foreseen by the respondents. This is evidenced by the administrative and financial issues between the merged former RAU and TWR leading to student protests on 22nd February 2005. It is also further demonstrated that the changed character of the student organisations and the institutional culture of the former RAU have contributed towards student organisations not participating meaningfully in the merger process. This claim was further supported by the words of the SASCO chairperson at the former RAU, that “many times decisions do not really involve students. When these things come to the students, they are very ‘well cooked’ and there is nothing that students can do anymore except to accept what they are being given.” The SALSA chairperson further concurred with the above sentiments of the SASCO chairperson regarding the absence of broad consultation in the culture of the former RAU, in his words that “things are being pushed down our throat by the university management”.

5.3 Future research

This research thus hints at changes in the character of student organisations in general and how this is influencing the restructuring of higher education in South Africa. All this needs further research. I thus suggest that my specific case of the former RAU should be extended to the other campuses of UJ, and other university campuses. This will enable us to understand how student organisations work together, or not – what structures are available to them, for future participation in university management and operation.

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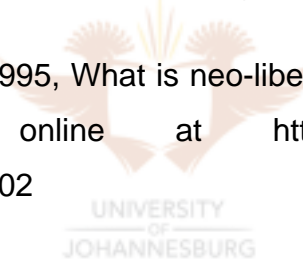
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