

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
A CASE STUDY**

**A minor dissertation presented  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN ADULT EDUCATION**

**BY**

**DAVID BLEAZARD**

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## ABSTRACT

The dissertation, "Institutional Change in Higher Education: A Case Study" examines efforts to bring about fundamental institutional change at the University of Natal over a period of some 10 years, 1988 to 1997. The case study is characterised as being of an embedded single case design. It is an instrumental rather than an intrinsic study. It attempts to extend understanding of the complex social phenomenon of institutional change in higher education, through analytic generalization. The two sub-units of the case study relate to different attempts by the executive of the University of Natal to bring about consensus on the need for fundamental change and the nature of the change: through a more-or-less conventional strategic planning process; and by the adoption – as a strategic initiative – of the notion of becoming a learning organization. The two sub units are examined on the strength of University documents and interviews with past and present University office bearers and staff, within a conceptual framework of organizational theory derived mainly from Mintzberg, McGregor, and Senge.

Both the strategic planning approach and the learning organization approach are seen to have failed as means of engineering consensual change and in the latter half of 1997 the University experiences a restructuring crisis as a result of financial pressures. A puzzle around restructuring, viz. why the University should pursue structural change which goes beyond the needs of simple cost-cutting and efficiency, is addressed first in terms of a perceived need for innovation, within the foregoing organizational theoretical framework. The analysis is then extended (effectively recontextualised) within a more pedagogic, social and political theoretical framework which is dependent largely on Bernstein. This analysis sees the changes being pursued at the University of Natal as being consistent with a shift in higher education generally to a market-dominated, competitive discourse in which University lecturers become knowledge entrepreneurs, competing within the institution and between institutions for scarce resources in response to perceived market needs. In this process, the narcissistic and introjected identities of academic departments, in which professionals in bounded disciplines determine priorities themselves, are replaced by projected identities and priorities are determined outside the discipline and the University. This cannot happen overnight. However, plans at the University of Natal to remove their administrative authority from academic departments are seen as a step in this direction.

# A NOTE ON STYLE

## 1. REPORTED SPEECH

The main sources of information for this case study are interviews and documents. To assist in distinguishing between the two in the text, the convention has been adopted of reporting the interviews in the past tense (e.g. "she said") while references to documents or books are reported in the continuous present (e.g. "Mintzberg says").

## 2. SPELLING

English spelling has normally been followed, in preference to American. A notable exception to this rule is "organization", which is preferred to "organisation" throughout on the basis that the "learning organization" is virtually unknown (at least on the World Wide Web) under the other spelling. In direct quotation, the spelling of the source is followed.

## 3. EMPHASIS

In general, emphasis in quotations is the emphasis of the original text. Where emphasis has been added to the text, this is indicated.

## 4. NAMES OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES

The names of books are in italic type. The names of journal articles are in roman type, enclosed in quotation marks. Documents emanating from the University of Natal are in roman type, without quotation marks. For convenience, the University of Natal documents (whether official University publications or not) are numbered according to date and grouped together in the References section.

## 5. UPPER CASE AND LOWER CASE

The practice has been to restrict the use of the upper case to a minimum. Some exceptions to this rule include terms like "Professional Bureaucracy", where the practice of the source document has been followed; and "university", which is lower case when referring to universities in general, but upper case when referring to the University of Natal (although this has not always been consistently followed in direct quotations, where the practice of the source document is followed).

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

"What all of us want is more effective organizations."

This innocent-looking observation by Henry Mintzberg comes near the end of his work, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (1994:381). It is an observation which very few people engaged in an organization of any description would be inclined to argue against. Within the higher education sector in South Africa, it would be difficult to find a senior administrator who did not share the sentiment.

All universities and technikons in South Africa today are feeling enormous pressures to change, with the underlying assumption that such change will make them more "effective" organizations in some sense or another. Some of these pressures pre-date the first democratic elections in 1994, but they have certainly been more keenly felt since then. They include pressures to "transform" the institutions, by making their governance more open to students and more representative of the wider community; to bring their expenditure under control in a scenario of declining government subsidies; to be more accountable to the government and ultimately the taxpayers for those funds which they do receive; to be more competitive, in an environment in which a role is recognized in higher education for private institutions and in which foreign-based universities are establishing themselves in South Africa; to become more responsive to the needs of the market and an economy which must be re-built to post-apartheid specifications; to revise their admission and teaching practices to meet the political and economic need for mass (rather than elite) higher education; and to reconfigure the courses they teach to coincide with the programme-based and outcomes-based approach which the national Department of Education is adopting.

What this research is concerned with is the question of how one complex institution of higher education, the University of Natal, has responded to pressures for change over a period of roughly 10 years, from 1988 to 1997. It is not a history of change over that period, but a *case study*: its aim is to try to understand the complex social phenomenon of institutional change in higher education, as reflected in the University of Natal.

The study does not attempt to do this from a common-sense or supposedly a-theoretical standpoint. It is based on theory, including theory concerning the nature of case study research; theory on the structuring of organizations, and universities in particular; theory on strategic planning and the learning organization; and, finally, more sociological

theory related to general trends in higher education. To a limited extent, as argued in Chapter Two, the case study may be considered experimental in nature: an opportunity to take the theory and to test it in a real-world setting. The result of such experimentation is not any kind of statistical generalization, but – hopefully – an extension of our understanding of the complex social phenomenon being studied, through what has been termed “analytic generalization”.

It is the work of Chapter Two, then, to locate the present study within the broad field of case study research in the social sciences and to spell out the methodology of the study, including a consideration of the relationship between case study research and journalism.

In Chapter Three, the theoretical framework relating to organizational change is developed. With the clear exception of Peter Senge, it is not suggested that the authors referred to in developing this framework are authors whom the main players at the University of Natal would necessarily have been familiar with. But the authors, and most notably Mintzberg, provide a framework which is consistent with the theoretical foundations of the actors involved in the unfolding developments.

The first step here is to locate the university as an organization within a broad account of organizational structure. In this process, the university is characterized as a “Professional Bureaucracy” and some of the inherent difficulties of effecting change in such a bureaucracy are identified. Chapter Three then looks at the theory behind two different approaches to overcoming resistance to change in complex organizations, including universities – strategic planning and the learning organization. These two approaches are followed in the course of the University of Natal’s efforts to bring about institutional change in the period studied and are different enough, it is argued, to characterize two distinct phases, or units, in the study.

An argument is made that conventional strategic planning (to the extent that one can identify such an animal) is fundamentally Fordist in conception, seeking to meet the need of managers who hold a cynical view of human nature (those inclined towards Theory X in terms of Douglas McGregor’s distinction between Theory X and Theory Y) for a machine-like mechanism for effecting change. The learning organization theory of Senge, more recently adopted by the University of Natal, on the other hand, is more of a Theory Y conception. The learning organization and its predecessors seem to offer the manager who is more optimistic about human nature (leaning more towards Theory Y) a different means to the same end – viz. overcoming resistance to change.

In Chapter Four, the strategic planning process at the University of Natal is examined. The account of the case in both Chapter Four and Chapter Five is based on a reading of key documents and on interviews with some present and past University employees or office bearers. Chapter Four portrays the strategic planning process at the University of Natal as being consistent with a conventional strategic planning process as described by Mintzberg. Difficulties with the process – as a means of bringing about institutional change – are variously characterised by key participants as a failure of implementation, or an absence of sufficient specificity. It is argued that these difficulties are partly attributable to the nature of the strategic planning process itself and its inability to deliver on its promises; and partly attributable to a mismatch between the process and the professional bureaucratic nature of the University.

In Chapter Five, the introduction to the University of Natal of Senge's ideas regarding the learning organization is examined. Although clearly intended as a means of promoting consensual change within the University community, it has become clear by the end of the case study period (September 1997) that in the short term at least, the learning organization has also been unable to deliver on its promises in this regard. The learning organization and the University's corps of facilitators (or change agents) have been sidelined and there is a general retreat from the rhetoric of the learning organization on the part of the University executive. Chapter Five also examines the efforts of the executive to run downsizing and fundamental restructuring processes together in response to a financial crisis.

At the end of Chapter Five, the study is left with a conundrum which, it is argued, cannot be adequately resolved in terms of the theoretical foundations employed to that point. The puzzle addressed in Chapter Six is this: Why does the University of Natal, in responding to the financial crisis it faces, pursue a restructuring programme which goes far beyond the needs of fiscal discipline?

In an attempt to provide an answer, the case study is recontextualised at a more sociological and philosophical level than that of the preceding organizational theory. The work of Basil Bernstein is drawn upon in order to explicate the social and political implications of developments at the University of Natal and within the wider context of South African higher education. Whereas the organizational theorists, focusing on the requirements of effectiveness and efficiency, permit a view of pedagogy as a commodity like any other, Bernstein focuses attention on pedagogy as a code for a form of social and political control.

The basic argument advanced is that restructuring the University cannot be seen simply in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, or of delivering new forms of commodities in

better ways, as the organizational theory approach suggests. Restructuring changes relations of knowledge and power in ways which have profound symbolic implications, socially and politically. Those implications are obscured by the language of organizational theory, but have to be uncovered to permit a fuller understanding of the case being studied.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY: CASE STUDY THEORY AND ANALYTIC GENERALIZATION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This research takes the form of a case study. Some consideration should therefore be given to the nature of the case study method itself.

In broad terms, this report adopts the position that case study is a naturalistic research method, the main purpose of which is to increase our understanding of complex social phenomena. It is not the business of case study in the social sciences, whether or not the researcher considers what he or she is doing to be "scientific", to extrapolate from the case study and to make generalizations about the occurrence of phenomena. It is argued in this chapter, however, that case study lends itself to what has been called "analytic generalization" in which the study is employed to explore the implications of social theory in a "real life" situation.

In this chapter, then, consideration will be given to the nature of case study research. The account is based largely on two recent works on case study research, Robert E. Stake's *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995) and Robert K. Yin's *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (1989). Although the authors are in broad agreement on the nature of case study research, there are significant differences in their approaches, which are useful in locating more clearly the nature of the present study.

As will become evident, an earlier text on case study in educational research and evaluation, *Towards a Science of the Singular* (Edited by Helen Simons, 1980), has also been enlisted – particularly the essay by Stephen Kemmis, "The Imagination of the Case and the Invention of the Study". Although it is not considered critical for purposes of this study whether case study research is dubbed "science" or not, Kemmis puts forward a valuable argument for the scientific nature of case studies and also contributes to discussion in this chapter on analytic generalization and the quasi-experimental nature of case study research.

Yin and others have remarked on parallels between the methodology of case study research and the methodology of journalism (to the extent that the broad range of journalistic endeavour may be said to have any common methodology). This link is of more than academic interest in the present study, as the author has a history which includes eight years working as a journalist on a daily newspaper and 10 years teaching

others to be journalists, and this history contributes in significant ways to the conduct and character of the study.

It would be satisfying, in an Aristotelean kind of way, to be able to report that the methodology of case study research in the social sciences has been largely agreed and mapped out and that the study in question conscientiously follows the agreed route. But the literature on case study seems to be in agreement that there is no one way of undertaking case study research. In the last part of this chapter, then, an account is given of the conduct of the present study in the light of the discussion to that point.

## 2.2 THE NATURE OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

"As a research endeavour," Yin says, "the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena." He continues:

Not surprisingly, the case study has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, and planning. Case studies are even found in economics, where the structure of a given industry, or the economy of a city or a region, may be investigated by using a case study design. In all of these situations, the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (1989:14)

In the introduction to *The Art of Case Study Research*, Stake makes a similar point in a somewhat more artistic way:

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. A single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities – but rarely will we care enough to submit it to case study. We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. (1995:xi)

Stake makes a few references in footnotes to the second edition of Yin's work, indicating ways in which they differ. He says, for instance, that Yin provides "an excellent guide for a more quantitative approach" (1995:xii); and, later, that Yin and others "concentrate on instrumental case study, particularly the use of case study for development of theory, leaving the intrinsic case researcher inadequately helped." (1995:77)

This is useful in providing us with two broad categorizations of case study research within which to locate the present study: quantitative versus qualitative, and intrinsic

versus instrumental. The position adopted in this study largely follows Yin rather than Stake, particularly with regard to the instrumental nature of the study. With regard to the quantitative/qualitative distinction, however, it leans more in the qualitative direction than the quantitative; but not to the extent that Stake would take it.

"The qualitative researcher," says Stake, "emphasizes episodes of nuance, the sequentiality of happenings in context, the wholeness of the individual", whereas quantitative case studies would "emphasize a battery of measurements of the case, a collection of descriptive variables...." (1995:xi-xii) An intrinsic case study, he says in circular fashion, is one where we have an intrinsic interest in the case; for example: "It happens when a teacher decides to study a student having difficulty, when we get curious about a particular agency, or when we take the responsibility of evaluating a program. The case is given. We are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case." On the other hand, in an instrumental case study, "we will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case.... This use of case study is to understand something else." (1995:3)

Referring to Louis Smith's definition of the case as "a bounded system", Stake observes that people and programs are clearly prospective cases, but that events and processes fit the definition less well. (1995:2) Case study research, he emphasises, is not sampling research. "We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case. In intrinsic case study, the case is pre-selected. In instrumental case study, some cases would do a better job than others." (1995:4)

A problem for Stake, it could be argued, is that the notion of a purely intrinsic case study is difficult to sustain. It suggests a *tabula rasa* approach to a situation which is incompatible with his own account of how case study research can advance our understanding of the social whole which is being studied. To take one of his own examples: *why* does the teacher decide to study a particular student having difficulty? Presumably, Stake would say, because certain *issues* arise in the mind of the teacher regarding the student. But how do those issues arise? What theories, implicit or explicit, which the teacher holds about the world and the classroom do the issues arise from? How will the teacher, writing a report on the case study, advance the understanding of the readers without locating the study within some at least of the theories he or she holds? The argument against the intrinsic case study would say that all case studies

arise from "a research question, a puzzlement, [or] a need for general understanding". Because some case studies are given, for example when a funder commissions a study of a particular programme, it does not follow that they are therefore intrinsic in the sense which Stake is proposing. On the other hand, to argue that all case study is more or less instrumental is not inconsistent with saying, as Stake does, that in qualitative case study research the aim is to "thoroughly understand" the case. (1995:9)

One of the problems which Stake's views on intrinsic case study lead to is illustrated in his example of an observer's assertions which go well beyond the reported observation of a fourth-grade classroom situation (where Stake understands "assertion" as a form of generalization, but generalization within the case rather than to other cases).

Says Stake:

The logical path to assertions often is apparent neither to reader nor to the researchers themselves. What we describe happening in the classroom and what we assert do not have to be closely tied together. For assertions, we draw from understandings deep within us, understandings whose derivation may be some hidden mix of personal experience, scholarship, assertions of other researchers. (1995:12)

Although Stake distinguishes between such assertions and "strictly determined findings", and although he says it would be useful if researchers labeled the leaps to conclusion which assertions represent as speculation or theory, he concedes that they often do not. (1995:12)

While Stake is no doubt correct in saying that assertions are often made on grounds which are not always immediately apparent to the researcher, it should surely be required – if the reader is to put any weight at all on such assertions – that they should at least *in principle* have an explicable logical path. That logical path, it is suggested, could (at least in principle) be discerned from the theories which the researcher holds and, ideally, the theories which he or she is concerned to test in some way in the case study. But for Stake, such theories lurk only in instrumental case studies and not in the intrinsic studies with which he is primarily concerned. The readers of such an intrinsic study, it would seem, have only the assertion: take it or leave it.

Stake recommends a "noninterventive and empathetic" approach to case study, trying "not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case, not to test, not even to interview, if we can get the information we want by discrete observation or examination of records". (1995:12) That is a valid approach, although not one which has been followed in this case study, which relies heavily on interviews. But although he concludes that, ultimately, "the conclusions of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those people studied" (1995:12), there is again implied in the

approach being recommended by Stake the notion that the researcher can somehow approach a case study as a *tabula rasa*, ready for noninterventive observations to write upon. Again, this would seem to misrepresent the reality of the situation and to weaken considerably the validity of the resulting case study report.

Stake's treatment of "issues" as a conceptual structure for case study research and "issue questions" as his primary research questions goes some way towards resolving the difficulty. Stake says he uses issues "in order to force attention to complexity and contextuality" and he uses them "because identification of issues draws attention to problems and concerns". (1995:16) This goes some way towards solving the problem because the search for issues is much more interventionist, as opposed to the *tabula rasa* model which is otherwise implied, and it is difficult to see issues being identified in a theory-free environment. But unfortunately, Stake then tries to push issues out of the intrinsic case study and into the instrumental. Using  $\Theta$  (theta) to stand for the case and  $\iota$  (iota) to stand for an issue or issues, he says: "One of the most important things to remember is that for intrinsic case study,  $\Theta$  is dominant; the case is of the highest importance. For instrumental case study,  $\iota$  is dominant; we start and end with issues dominant." (1995:16)

Noting the difficulty raised with regard to Stake's approach and the argument that there may be no such thing as a purely intrinsic case study, we may say with confidence that the present case study is instrumental (in Stake's terms). In a sense, using Stake's words, it is "case study for development of theory" (1995:77), rather than case study for the understanding of the case itself. But it would not be correct to say that the present study is *pre-theoretical* work, as case study research is sometimes seen to be.

As will become clear later, the role of theory in the case study was not clearly set out at the beginning of the case study, nor were the "issues", in Stake's terms. Like so many other case studies, it would seem, the role of theory and the issues in the study became clearer as time passed, in the kind of "progressive focusing" of Parlett and Hamilton, which Stake refers to. (1995:9, 22) "If early questions are not working, if new issues become apparent, the design is changed," Stake says. And he quotes Parlett and Hamilton on the three stages of observation, renewed inquiry, and explanation through which researchers move:

Obviously the three stages overlap and functionally interrelate. The transition from stage to stage, as the investigation unfolds, occurs as the problem areas become progressively clarified and re-defined. The course of the study cannot be charted in advance. Beginning with an extensive data base, the researchers systematically reduce the breadth of their inquiry to give more concentrated attention to the emerging issues. (Quoted in Stake, 1995:22)

To further specify the nature of the present case study, it is useful to turn now to Yin. In *Case Study Research*, Yin makes the observation that "the case study has long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods" (1989:10); but he argues that this stereotyping is based on a misunderstanding of what the case study can deliver.

To begin with, Yin says, the case study as a research tool needs to be distinguished from "(a) the case study as a teaching tool, (b) ethnographies and participant observation, and (c) 'qualitative' methods." (1989:11) As a research tool, the greatest concern has perhaps been over "the lack of rigor of case study research". "Too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction or the findings and conclusions." But it is often forgotten, he says, "that bias can also enter into the conduct of experiments... and in using other research strategies, such as designing questionnaires for surveys..., or in conducting historical research.... The problems are not different, but in case study research, they have been less frequently documented and addressed." (1989:21)

Yin makes the point that the case study, the experiment, the survey, a history, are all different ways of "collecting and analyzing empirical evidence. And each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages." (1989:15) The boundaries between the strategies are not clear and sharp, and there are "large areas of overlap among them". (1989:16) They do not form a hierarchy, as often held, with case studies being appropriate for "the exploratory phase of an investigation", surveys and histories for the descriptive phase, and experiments only for explanatory or causal inquiries. (1989:15)

"The more appropriate view of these different strategies is a pluralistic one. Each strategy can be used for all three purposes – exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory...." (1989:16) The appropriate strategy will depend on three conditions, says Yin: "(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events." (1989:16)

Looking at the type of research question, Yin says that, "in general, 'what' questions may either be exploratory (in which case any of the strategies could be used) or about prevalence (in which surveys or the analysis of archival records would be favored). 'How' and 'why' questions are likely to favor the use of case studies, experiments, or histories." (1989:19) The case study has a distinct advantage, Yin argues, when: "A 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control." (1989:20)

Experiments are more appropriate "when an investigator can manipulate behavior directly, precisely, and systematically", as in a laboratory setting (1989:20). The distinctive contribution of the historical method, he says, "is in dealing with the 'dead' past – that is, when no relevant persons are alive to report, even retrospectively, what occurred, and when an investigator must rely on primary documents, secondary documents, and cultural and physical artifacts as the main sources of evidence." (1989:19)

Yin argues:

The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. Thus, the case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing. Again, although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations. (1989:19-20)

As will become evident later, the present case study does not call on the full range of evidence which might be called upon: the main sources for this case study are documents and interviews. There do not appear to be any significant artifacts (apart from documents); and personal observation, although not entirely excluded, has been limited given the distance separating the investigator (based at Peninsula Technikon in the Western Cape) and the University of Natal.

Nevertheless, the present study would seem to fall squarely within Yin's definition of the case study:

*A case study is an empirical inquiry that:*

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used. (1989:23)

The definition, says Yin, "not only helps us to understand case studies, but also distinguishes them from other research strategies that have been discussed":

An experiment, for instance, deliberately divorces a phenomenon from its context, so that attention can be focused on a few variables (typically, the context is 'controlled' by the laboratory environment). A history, by comparison, does deal with the entangled situation between phenomenon and context, but usually with *non*contemporary events. Finally, surveys can try to deal with phenomenon and context, but their ability to investigate the context is extremely limited. The survey designer, for instance, constantly struggles to limit the number of variables to be analyzed (and hence the number of questions that can be asked), to fall safely within the number of respondents that can be surveyed. (1989:23)

In terms of Yin's classification of case studies, this is clearly a single-case study, rather than a multiple-case study. Although there are some passing references to the

Peninsula Technikon (as in this chapter), these are peripheral and there is no attempt to study any other institution than Natal University. In terms of Yin's distinction between "holistic" single-case design, with only one unit of analysis, and "embedded" single-case design, with multiple units of analysis, it is submitted that the present case study is an example of an embedded single-case design. While the overall focus of the study is "institutional change in higher education", it is submitted that the nature of the case admits of two sub-units, viz. conventional strategic planning and learning organization theory.

Finally, it may be said that the present case study is "naturalistic", as argued by Kemmis in "The Imagination of the Case and the Invention of the Study" (in Simons (Ed.) 1980). Important points are made in the course of Kemmis' account with regard to the intervention implied by case study research; and the degree of intervention is one of the points on which this case study may be distinguished from the model Stake is proposing, even though Stake would also argue that his intrinsic case study is naturalistic.

Kemmis says that case study work is naturalistic in three senses:

- (1) It is as much a search for phenomena in the social world as it is an attempt to develop coherent theories about given social phenomena.
- (2) It is a quest to articulate the (social) world by creating descriptions of particular (social) contexts.
- (3) The 'objects' of case study work are 'given' situations. What is 'given' is a particular issue arising in a particular social situation or a particular social context.... In general, the case study worker cannot 'create' the situation he is to observe, nor can he artificially simplify it by manipulation of its context. He must study the situation as a whole. (1980:107)

He adds:

It is sometimes thought that naturalistic science is 'naturalistic' in the sense that the appearance of phenomena is 'left to nature'. Under such a view, it might be said that the observer merely waits for phenomena to present themselves to him – it is as if he could discover the real world outside by waiting for it to manifest itself. Observation is a far more interventive process than this..., but this view of 'naturalistic' science accounts for the prevalence of the view that case study is simply a 'method' (comparable, for example, with the use of questionnaires or psychometric tests). (1980:107)

In social science, observation is only rarely unobtrusive with respect to the observed and it is **never unobtrusive with respect to the theoretical, ethical and ideological commitments of the observer**. The observation process unavoidably calls into play the frameworks of the observer just as the process of communication unavoidably calls into play the frameworks of the hearer. (1980:108, my emphasis)

However, the interventions of naturalistic research go beyond the theory- and value-ladenness of observation. Says Kemmis:

Case study rarely proceeds by observation in the sense of merely watching: observation also entails such interventions as interviewing, recording and participation (which may amount to manipulation of conditions within the situation), let alone data analysis, interpretation, and selection of participants to observe or interview. In these respects, case study (and naturalistic research in general) resembles other forms of research as interventive, not passive. (1980:109)

Within the range of case study researchers which Stake and Kemmis represent then, who all characterise their research as "naturalistic", the present study falls clearly on the interventive rather than the passive side.

### 2.3 CASE STUDY: ART OR SCIENCE?

It would seem to be the almost inevitable fate of the case study researcher to have to justify this research method in the face of criticisms with regard to its scientific status. However, an attempt will be made here to sidestep the question, at least in part. To engage in a thoroughgoing debate on how scientific case study research is (or is not) would require more general questions to be addressed about how scientific the social sciences are (or are not). While fascinating, the debate would delay the arrival of the case study indefinitely. The sleight of hand proposed here, is to take the argument which Kemmis adduces for case study indeed being a science and then to turn part of it against him.

"Those who expect to follow the progress of science in brilliant light," Kemmis says, "will be ill at ease following the case study worker stumbling from lamplight to lamplight in the fog." (1980:100)

Those who do expect to follow the progress of science in brilliant light, Kemmis would argue, include those who are given over to "scientism", or are adherents of the tradition of logical positivism. Scientism, Kemmis says, appeals to the authority of a particular view of science (1980:98) and "invites faith in the results of scientific investigations as if research workers could somehow 'guarantee' the truth of their findings". (1980:97)

Kemmis continues:

In scientific debate, scientism is evident when one school of scientists claims to hold the keys to truth. Upon examination, it almost always turns out that such a group will demand justification from other schools in forms which cannot be satisfied. These scientists may be asking their colleagues in other schools to provide 'guarantees' which will reassure everyone that the conclusions reached in a particular study are not merely sound but certain; they appeal for their authority

to 'transcendental' forms of justification – logical or metatheoretical forms which are meant to be a priori truth-justifying. (1980:97)

Because case studies speak about a world we know at a commonsense level, they often leave readers in doubt about how much the truths they tell are commonsense and how much scientific. Because case studies are usually the product of an intense involvement by one or a few individuals with their subject-matter, they are sometimes dismissed as purely 'subjective' and are regarded with suspicion, even hostility, by some social scientists. And because questions of social science theory and practice (and matters of truth in science in general) are always controversial, case studies are sometimes rejected on purely doctrinaire grounds. (1980:99)

"The ascendancy of the view of science inspired by logical positivism," Kemmis says, "was so complete in social science that case study research today is still frequently judged and damned by truth tests which, though they may make sense in the philosopher's library, make little sense in and of the social world outside. Such doctrines as that of verifiability seem to cast a cold light on the progress of social science and created expectations which the work of social science could not satisfy." (1980:100)

Kemmis argues that case study work may lay claim to being scientific on the following grounds:

- (1) Case study, like all science, is a process of truth-seeking. (1980:101)
- (2) Case study, like all science, is a social and cultural process. (1980:102)
- (3) At the root of case study research, as in all science, lies the problem of "justified true belief". (1980:102)

Case study, says Kemmis, "is not a purely mechanical process by which truth is 'discovered'.... Equally, it is not just story-telling or word-spinning – it is an empirical exercise. Truth is not to be found entirely within language, nor is it to be found entirely outside language – it relates to propositions, not to experience alone. The problem, 'how do we decide if a thing is true?' depends upon the way we use language, which in turn depends upon our having forms of life sufficiently comprehensible to one another to support communication." (1980:101)

After an explicit nod to Wittgenstein, Kemmis adds:

Case study is empirical – it refers to the real world. The truth or falsity of statements made in a case study, as in all science, is judged by reference to a world accessible to the experience of any observer (though such judgements can be made in some forms of science only by trained observers – ones with the appropriate forms of life – or ones who are at the right place at the right time). But the comprehensibility of the statements themselves is as important as 'verification' through experience. To be comprehensible they must encapsulate our 'agreements' about how language is to be used, negotiated and established through ways of acting, working and living in particular cultures and subcultures. (1980:101)

Referring to case study as a social and cultural process, Kemmis says that case study in the social sciences may be more like art than other forms of science in being especially

historically and contextually sensitive. But he adds: "Like all social science, case study is a social and cultural process in the senses that its 'objects' are the phenomena of social life, its prosecution is a social act, and its products are absorbed into social life. Moreover, case study workers are, like all scientists, participants in social life in general as well as that part of social life which is the research act." (1980:102)

Turning to the problem of justified true belief, Kemmis argues that it is really a double problem:

On the one hand, it concerns the nature of justification, and on the other, the nature of belief. As it turns out, the two are profoundly related in practice. In the work of science, whole worlds of assumptions about the nature of justification and the nature of belief are made in reporting research: the scientist assumes them to be part of the taken-for-granted knowledge of the scientific community within which he works and as necessary prerequisites for intelligent reading of the reports. The double problem of justified true belief is one of reconciling the beliefs (the private knowledge) of researcher and reader with the forms of knowledge of public discourse. The form of the justification will depend on how these two aspects are reconciled to one another. (1980:103-104)

The two aspects of the problem of justified true belief, Kemmis says, are always jointly resolved in the practice of science:

Because institutional science is an attempt to share justified true belief, it reaches across the boundary between cognition and culture. Particular scientific truths always emerge in contexts of rules governing the use of justificatory language; particular circumstances for action (for example, research settings) which make the rules reasonable and believable; and particular cultural, historical, and contemporary problem-contexts for a study (for example, definitions of a phenomenon and shared beliefs concerning what is problematic about it.) (1980:105)

The burden of this argument for Kemmis, clearly, is that case study research is "scientific" in the way that he is defining "science". In the process, he has (it is submitted) issued timely warnings about "scientism" and operating within a too simplistic positivist paradigm, which would *a priori* exclude much of the work of the social sciences from "science" and hence from serious consideration..

But at the end of the day, how much turns on the name, provided one is not led down the kind of intellectual *cul de sac* Kemmis is warning against? Even Ernest Nagel, in unfavourably comparing the social sciences to the natural sciences in *The Structure of Science* (1971) observes:

The propriety of designating any extant branch of social inquiry as a 'real science' has been repeatedly challenged – commonly on the ground that, although such inquiries have contributed large quantities of frequently reliable information about social matters, these contributions are primarily descriptive studies of special social facts in certain historically situated human groups, and supply no strictly universal laws about social phenomena. It would not be profitable to discuss at any length an issue framed in this manner, particularly since the requirements for being a genuine science tacitly assumed in most of the challenges lead to the

unenlightening result that apparently none but a few branches of physical science merit the honorific designation....

The important task, surely, is to achieve some clarity in fundamental methodological issues and the structure of explanations in the social sciences, rather than to award or withhold honorific titles. (1971:449)

And returning to Stake for a moment, is it an accident that he called his text *The Art of Case Study Research*? Or that he discusses the paintings of René Magritte in the context of the case researcher as interpreter? "Research," says Stake, "is not just the domain of scientists, it is the domain of craftspersons and artists as well, all who would study and interpret." (1995:97)

In the course of Kemmis' own argument, he refers to an argument made by Koestler (1976) in "The Vision that Links the Poet, the Painter and the Scientist" that art and science share many significant features, although science "builds rather more narrowly than art, taking more of its problems from what has gone before and recognising more explicitly the historical growth of understanding about them. Art seems more 'volatile' historically – its problems are more contemporaneous, more contextually-embedded (style and taste, by contrast, are historically-developed). Case study research in the social sciences may be more like art than other forms of science in being especially historically- and contextually-sensitive." (Kemmis, in Simons (Ed.) 1980:102)

Questions of "scientism" aside, if case study research can be more like art than other forms of science, perhaps it can be more like "art" than "science", depending on the definitions one employs. The important point, following Kemmis, is that case study research is an especially context-sensitive process of truth-seeking in the world of social phenomena.

## **2.4 CASE STUDY AND ANALYTIC GENERALIZATION**

A common concern raised against case study research, Yin says, is that case studies "provide very little basis for scientific generalization. 'How can you generalize from a single case?' is a frequently heard question." (1989:21)

"The short answer," says Yin, "is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)." (1989:21)

This is a crucial point which needs to be borne in mind in what follows. The case study is not undertaken with a view to extrapolating from the one case to others in the same universe. It is of no use as a sampling strategy and should not be confused with one. The appropriate analogy, as Yin points out, is to the experiment. The case study, like the experiment, is an opportunity to test a theory in the real world. And to the extent that any generalization may be made as a result of the case study, it is an internal generalization relating to the theory which is made, and not a generalization outwards to the frequency of occurrence in a particular universe.

Clearly, some care needs to be taken not to push the analogy with the experiment in the physical sciences too far. But one should also be careful not to hold too simplistic a notion of the experiment.

As Kemmis points out:

Naturalistic research shares a number of characteristics with experimental research which are often mistakenly thought to be missing from the latter. This is partly because experimental research is often discussed in terms of the design and analysis of single experiments, so that some features of experimental science are obscured. An isolated experiment shows little: only when it is part of a research programme may it advance understanding. One might say that the critical thing in experimental research is what happens between experiments. Case study is certainly comparable to a programme of experimental research involving a series of controlled interventions and replications with variation. Processes of disconfirmation and triangulation within a case study or other naturalistic research parallel the use of hypothesis-testing and replication with variation in experimental research programmes....

Of course, differences between case study research and programmes of experimental research remain. The most important difference is in the way control is understood, and the implications of control in conceptualising the nature of a phenomenon.

In experimental research, control is attained through the manipulation of experimental arrangements. The conditions of the experiment provide a context of production for the phenomenon to be studied. The experiment is designed to 'produce' the phenomenon under conditions suitable for observation: the direct intervention of control standardises the conditions of production so that measurements (observations) will be comparable from condition to condition and study to study....

In naturalistic research, the situation is analogous to that in astronomy: the processes of observation and interpretation are controlled (as for experimental research) but control is not exercised over the context of production of the phenomenon. The phrase 'context of production' is replaceable for naturalistic research by the generic phrase context of occurrence: the observer must be there in the situation to identify the phenomenon. This is why it is sometimes said that in naturalistic research the occurrence of the phenomenon is 'left to nature'. For the naturalistic researcher, the only hold on the phenomenon is through the processes of observation and interpretation; in general, the naturalistic researcher will not intervene in order to produce the phenomenon to be observed but, rather, will treat the context of occurrence as problematic just because it appears to produce the phenomenon....

The problem of the independence of the phenomenon is real within both approaches. In both cases the researcher must try to disentangle the phenomenon from its context of occurrence. In the case of naturalistic research, the process of disentangling is what 'creates' the phenomenon as phenomenon; in experimental research, the context of the occurrence is 'designed' or 'artificial' (that is, it becomes a context of production) so that the phenomenon is distinguishable from the experimental arrangements in terms of both context of production (experimental design) and context of observation (measurement). Theories of experimentation and instrumentation lay the foundations upon which the experiment and thus the phenomenon will be understood. When we speak about experiments, we often idealise our descriptions of them so that these foundations are taken for granted; they provide the backcloth against which the phenomenon appears distinct and independent. If the experimentalist, given certain assumptions about the production and observation of a phenomenon may be said to treat it as distinct and independent, then it might be said of the naturalistic researcher that he attempts to prise a phenomenon off the backcloth, as it were, picking it out by finding perspectives which distinguish it from its surroundings. (1980:109-112)

To this extent, then, the case study may be said to be experimental: it can result in "valid modification of generalization", to borrow a phrase from Stake (1995:8). It can validly be applied in the development and testing of social theory. To the degree that it results in generalization, the generalization is internal to the theory, or analytical. It cannot validly be applied to generalization about the occurrence of phenomena within a universe, or across universes.

Before leaving this point, it may be useful to distinguish the analytic generalization argued for here from Stake's "naturalistic generalization", which has a number of improbable features. Stake says that "people can learn much that is general from single cases. They do that partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations." (1995:85)

Stake distinguishes between "explicated (or propositional) generalizations" and what he and Deborah Trumbull called "naturalistic generalizations" (in a 1982 paper by that name). "Naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves." He adds, rather lamely: "It is not clear that generalizations arrived at in two quite different ways are kept apart in any way in the mind. One set of generalizations through two doors." (Stake, 1995:85)

Clearly, given the kind of Wittgensteinean position developed by Kemmis, as outlined above, one would have to respond to Stake that there are not two doors, but only one. The notion of a "naturalistic generalization" which is not propositional but is still somehow communicable and able to add to our knowledge of social phenomena is

difficult to sustain, René Magritte notwithstanding. It must surely be impossible to sustain if, as Stake is suggesting, the necessary vicarious experience is to be conveyed through a case study report.

One can see where Stake is coming from, for his model of case study research is that of his (problematic) intrinsic research, which is non-interventionist to the extent that the researcher is reduced to a (problematic) tabula rasa, and pure (but problematic) observation takes place. Some of this observation is then conveyed to the reader through narrative description, while some of it is conveyed through assertions. And it is the narrative description which is (in a very problematic way) meant to carry the vicarious experience which results in "naturalistic generalization". "The reader," Stake says, "will take both our narrative descriptions and our assertions: narrative descriptions to form vicarious experience and naturalistic generalizations, assertions to work with existing propositional knowledge to modify existing generalizations." (1995:86)

Such a duality is not sustainable. At the very least, "naturalistic generalization" as described by Stake must rob the word "generalization" of any meaning. But what can we make of naturalistic generalization when Stake says "that such generalization loses its experiential privateness even when made conscious to that same person" (1995:86)? How can it make sense for such generalization to be conveyed, *communicated*, to others in a research report?

Certainly, the analytic generalization which is sought in the present case study bears no relationship to Stake's naturalistic generalization. To the extent that analytic generalization can be communicated, it is propositional in nature; it relates to theory, and the theory needs to be expressed in propositional language. It is only in the area of what Stake has called "existing propositional knowledge" that we see any useful discussion taking place.

## 2.5 CASE STUDY AND JOURNALISM

Comparisons between case study research and the work (or at least some of the work) of journalists are commonly encountered in the literature. Yin, to take one example, says that "certain journalistic efforts can qualify as case studies". And he adds, referring to *All the President's Men* (1974), that "one of the best written and most interesting case studies is about the Watergate scandal, by two reporters from *The Washington Post*." (1989:24)

This is significant, in that an ongoing tension in the production of the present case study has been between a journalistic approach and a more academic approach. (This might of course, following Yin, simply be a tension between a mediocre and an outstanding journalistic effort.) The author of this case study, after four years of study at the University of the Witwatersrand and two years as a graduate assistant and then junior lecturer in the Philosophy Department at the University of Cape Town, spent eight years as a reporter on The Argus and then taught journalism as a Senior Lecturer at the Peninsula Technikon for 10 years, before taking up a newly-created post of Strategic Planning Facilitator at the Technikon in June 1995.

The habits of such a working life die hard. Indeed, apart from the suitability - following Yin's account - of the case study method for the study in hand, there was no doubt an intuitive sense of convergence between the journalistic endeavour and the case study method which made the present study attractive to the author. While on the one hand, the subject matter speaks directly to the present role of the author within the Technikon (as Strategic Planning Facilitator), the method would be the more or less familiar one with which he had worked for many years as a journalist.

It is unnecessary here to take issue with Yin on the inclusion of "journalistic efforts", or to draw fine distinctions within the category of journalistic case studies, or – even more ambitiously – to try to define just what the journalistic endeavour or the academic endeavour entails. But the author believes it is worth noting that the case study method, at least as practised here, does differ significantly from common or garden journalistic practice (although it might not differ that much from the example which Yin has chosen).

The difference would seem to lie in a number of areas:

- The explicit statement of a theoretical position;
- The experimental nature of the case study;
- The explicit analysis of the case in order to draw conclusions.

A journalist will not usually begin an article, even an in-depth investigative one, with any account of the theoretical framework within which he or she is working. However deeply the journalist might think about such matters, the theoretical framework is largely taken for granted; after all, writer and readers all live in the same real world of middle-sized lumpy objects.

Nor will the journalist generally think of himself or herself as conducting any sort of experiment or test in writing an article, still less engaging in "analytic generalization" as

discussed above. An in-depth article, or series of articles, might indeed strive to provide the reader with an understanding of some complex aspect of social reality, but the journalist would not usually see this as a test for some theory. The aim is an informative one, in the public interest.

Nor will there generally be explicit analysis or interpretation of the social phenomena reported on, with a view to the development or expansion of theory. It is true that the traditional journalistic distinction between fact and opinion is one which is often blurred, and deliberately so on some newspapers which strive to interpret events rather than simply report them. But by and large, the ingrained approach of the journalist is to present the facts, as best he or she has been able to ascertain them, and to let the readers make up their minds about them. It has been one of the difficulties faced by the author of the present study to move beyond the "tell it like it is" approach of the journalist to the more theoretically based, experimental, and interpretative approach of the case study investigator (and the reader will no doubt make up his or her mind as to how far he has succeeded).

Despite the differences noted above, it is clear that there is a significant degree of overlap in the work of the case study researcher in the social sciences and the work (or some of the work) of the journalist. And both the case study researcher and the journalist, if they do their jobs properly, may contribute to a better understanding of complex social phenomena. In this context, the kind of position adopted by Peter Wilby in "Illumination of the Relevant Particular" (in Simons (Ed.) 1980) does not seem very helpful.

Wilby argues that there is no methodology of journalism. "Each journalist has his own working rules, methods of collecting data, ways of dealing with informants – and he may well use different rules and methods in different situations." (1980:213) However, Wilby adopts Nicholas Tomalin's definition of the journalist's task (in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, 26 October, 1969) as the creation of interest, and adds: "Within that consideration of creating interest, the journalist may have a variety of other aims: to transmit information, to amuse, to impress with fine phrases, to convert, to expose a scandal. But interest must remain paramount." (1980:213-214)

Journalists can achieve relevance and accuracy, argues Wilby, but not truth – where he defines truth as "the relevant whole":

In other words, while I am defining truth as the relevant whole (to which an educational researcher might legitimately aspire), I am defining journalism as the illumination of the relevant particular. Journalistic pretensions to 'truth' in the way I have defined it are dangerous and misleading. They either sacrifice brevity and readability (and, thus, the reader's interest) or they sacrifice accuracy (and, thus, the writer's credibility.) (1980:214)

In response to Wilby, one might say either that journalists do not necessarily aspire to "truth" as he has defined it (so that the danger falls away), or alternatively that the really dangerous thing is his definition of truth as "the relevant whole" – to which an educational researcher might aspire, but not a journalist. Why, *a priori*, should the journalist be confined to "relevant particulars", while the educational researcher can lay claim to "relevant wholes"? Quite apart from the difficulty of reaching agreement on "relevance" in either case, what case study researcher is likely to claim to have captured the truth, in Wilby's sense of the relevant whole, of a complex social phenomenon?

Wilby is no doubt correct in criticising Woodward and Bernstein for introducing speculative material presented as factual material in *The Final Days*, their sequel to *All The President's Men*. For as Wilby says: "The journalist's job is to report what he knows, to describe what he sees, to analyse what he understands and to state what he suspects." (1980:215) But it is one thing to rap Woodward and Bernstein over the knuckles for deviating from good journalistic practice by presenting speculation as fact; it is quite another to conclude from this, as Wilby does, that truth is not the proper preserve of journalists:

The lesson for journalists is that, if 'truth' can be achieved, the subject is too small and insignificant to be interesting; if the subject is interesting, it is too large and complex for the 'truth' to be established. The selection of journalistic material is arbitrary and distorting. Unless this is recognised and the constraints are acknowledged, both reader and writer are led into false and confusing expectations. (1980:215)

The difficulties of dealing with size and complexity are in principle no different for the researcher or the journalist. They are both labouring in the same vineyard: the world of complex social phenomena.

A similar confusion attends Wilby's comment on the comparison by (in his view) "a muddled reviewer" of Hunter Davies' journalistic account of a comprehensive school in *The Creighton Report* to Elizabeth Richardson's *Authority and Organisation in the Secondary School*. Comments Wilby: "It would be as absurd for a journalist to devote a chapter to 'the school as a bounded institution' as for a researcher to devote a chapter to 'Sally and the petition'". (1980:217)

Wilby adds:

Another comment on Davies's book suggested that he could have revealed more about the school if he had not named it. But that would have implied a purpose that Davies did not have: to tell the 'truth' about comprehensives. The best journalism is particular about names and places precisely because anonymity implies generality. (1980:217)

Wilby is moving, inappropriately, from a consideration of what *form of presentation* is appropriate in certain social contexts (or markets) to conclusions about the truth status of the studies presented. This does not seem very helpful. What might be much more helpful, is to borrow and slightly amend a phrase which Wilby uses and to say that both journalists and case study researchers in the social sciences are engaged in "illumination of the particular". That the degree of complexity of the particulars illuminated might differ does not make the task different in principle.

## 2.6 CONDUCT OF THE CASE STUDY

Moving now from theory to practice, what should be said about the conduct of the present study?

The fact that the study suffered from problems of time and resources seems to put it in the company of most other such studies. The case study was undertaken by a single researcher, the author of this thesis, with input upon request from his supervisor. The study included two weeks of fieldwork at the University of Natal: one week in January 1996 and a second week in September 1997. It was not the intention for the study to stretch over a period of almost two years, but this was the almost inevitable result of the author's attempts to fit the study in with his new responsibilities as Strategic Planning Facilitator at Peninsula Technikon (from June 1995). The level of contact which the author was able to maintain with sources at the University of Natal between the two fieldwork sessions was negligible.

What did take place between the two fieldwork sessions was an uneven learning process on the part of the author: both on the nature of case study work in the social sciences in general and on the nature of the particular case. Louis Smith has written of "collapsing outlines" (in Simons (Ed.) 1980:191); Parlett and Hamilton (as quoted in Stake 1995:9) have written of "progressive focusing": both were experienced in the present study.

It must be admitted that when the first fieldwork began, the author had a very different project in mind from the one which has since developed, although the "foreshadowed problem" may be said to have remained fairly constant if broadly stated as an attempt to understand the process of institutional change at the University of Natal within the context of strategic planning and the learning organization.

The University of Natal was selected for the case study because of the extensive work which it had done in strategic planning over a number of years and the new "strategic initiative" which it had recently adopted of becoming a learning organization, in terms of Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* (1994). The author visited the University of Natal and conducted a series of interviews, equipped mainly with a recent reading of *The Fifth Discipline* and a review of Henry Mintzberg's *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (1994), and experience as a journalist and lecturer. The concept of analytic generalization, which has since become a key element in the author's understanding of the case study, was unknown to him at the time.

Much initial effort went into transcribing interviews from shorthand notes of the first fieldwork interviews and into a close reading of documents provided by the University on its strategic planning efforts since the 1989 Mission Statement. Among the "collapsing outlines" was an early one – and a difficult one to shake off – which saw the task as the largely journalistic one of "telling it like it is". Analysis, or analytic generalization, was elusive.

Mintzberg's *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* provided valuable conceptual tools for characterising and analysing the conventional strategic planning process as reflected in the documents and interviews. A need for a more fundamental account of organizational change led to Mintzberg's *The Structuring of Organizations* (1979), works by Argyris and Schön, and various others, including Gideon Kunda's *Engineering Culture* (1992). Through the entire period of the study, there has been an interplay of evolving theory development, empirical data gathering, and case study theory. Although this must weaken the experimental nature of the case study, at least in terms of a conventional understanding of experimentation derived from the physical sciences, something along these lines appears to be common in case study research.

Skrtic, for example, refers to "new directions" which evolved in a study which investigated the impact of educational service agencies on rural school district implementation of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in the United States. "Change occurred as the direct result of new insights that had developed from studying the problem at hand," says Skrtic, as well as from refinement or evolution of the design. ("Doing Naturalistic Research into Educational Organizations", in Yvonna S. Lincoln (Ed.) *Organizational Theory and Inquiry*, 1985:186,187)

Louis Smith, in "Some Not so Random Thoughts on Doing Field Work: The Interplay of Values" (in Simons (Ed.) 1980:184), says of participant observation studies that one typically does not have "a specific hypothesis or set of hypotheses to be tested as 'the problem'. One has an educational setting in which a teacher, a pupil, a class, a

curriculum, a school, or complex of educational organizations are going about their activities for their own good purposes." Quoting Diesing (1971), he says that the problem becomes one of "studying a whole human system in its natural setting". This may seem to work against the notion of analytical generalization and to lean too heavily towards the view of Stake which we have tried to distance ourselves from; but Smith adds: "For us, that has come to mean a descriptive narrative of life in that setting and the development or generation of a conceptualization or theory which makes more general sense, explains, the set of events." (1980:185; my emphasis)

Referring to arguments about the degree to which one theorizes before going into the field, Smith adopts a stance which he describes as being in between the "tabula rasa of no (or minimal) theoretical presuppositions before the project begins versus having some well worked out point of view that one is trying to test." (1980:186) He talks of "foreshadowed problems" which, he says, were found "to be quite productive in guiding the initial observations, making tentative procedural decisions (where to be in the field, when to be in the field, and who to talk to) and beginning the analysis." (1980:186-187)

This is closer to what happened in the present study than the process which Smith says, "in long retrospect", was being followed in *Anatomy of Educational Innovation* (1971): "We were implicitly running several general theories against each other, that is, putting them in competition. In a sense we were unwittingly initiating an ethnographic paradigm for falsification." (1980:190)

Smith's characterisation of "collapsing outlines", however, is particularly apposite in the present case:

As we have begun analyzing the data usually in terms of the foreshadowed problems which initially guided our entry and data collection we have come upon interpretative asides and latent theoretical issues which seem a vital part of the setting and our understanding of the setting. As pieces are developed we keep making tentative outlines that put some meaningful and logical order into the interpretation. Invariably the tentative outlines collapse in the face of more complex data and ideas. (1980:191)

Smith also puts neatly the "core ethical problem in any social science research", which problem needs to be touched on in rounding off this account of the conduct of the case study. Social science research, says Smith, acts "in the context of two conflicting values – the pursuit of truth through scientific procedures and the maintenance of respect for the individuals whose lives are being lived, focally or peripherally, in the context of one's research project." (1980:192)

Leaning in the direction of respect for the individual will lead to written contracts between researcher and those researched, perhaps to the maintenance of anonymity

through coding or disguise of location and participants, and perhaps to negotiation on publication of the research observations. Leaning in the other direction, I would argue, is to take a position closer to that of the journalist, although the journalist is more likely to appeal to notions of "truth in the public interest" than "truth through scientific procedures".

In the present case, there are no written contracts. There is no agreement on anonymity; nor any agreement on gatekeeping as far as publication is concerned. The original entry to the University of Natal was negotiated by the author's supervisor with Vice-Chancellor Brenda Gourley and followed up by telephone calls and E-mails by the author. The authority of Professor Gourley's agreement to participate in the study facilitated further contacts on the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses. The author was acting, in the field, very much as he would have done if instructed by his news editor to visit the University of Natal and to find out what they were doing about institutional change.

The news editor would naturally have been concerned that the reporter in the field should check his facts before publication; and this might, if the issue was considered contentious enough, have included giving the interviewees sight of the copy for a check on the accuracy of the facts (but not for purposes of re-writing the piece). This is, of course, not far from what Stake (1995:107ff) and others have called "triangulation"; although, it is submitted, there is a considerable difference between the journalist triangulating facts in a universe assumed to be atheoretical, or at least theoretically neutral, and the case study researcher who is triangulating theoretically interpreted social reality.

Stake says that case study researchers have ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding, which require "deliberative effort to find the validity of data observed". (1995:109) These include triangulation and a process called "member checking" in which "the actor is requested to examine rough drafts of writing where the actions or words of the actor are featured, sometimes when first written up but usually when no further data will be collected from him or her". (Stake, 1995:115)

In the present study, the second field study trip to the University of Natal was undertaken – at least in part – to undertake member checking and triangulation of the arguments (assertions, in Stake's terms) of the study to that point; although it was mainly concerned with the assimilation of further empirical data.

In concluding this chapter, it is probably advisable to remind ourselves that the truth claims of case study research are modest; and that case study research can be well or

badly done. We quoted earlier Kemmis' characterisation of the case study researcher as "stumbling from lamplight to lamplight in the fog". (1980:100) At another point, he says: "Despite its ambiguities, its imperfections and its simplifying interpretations, case study can create conceptual stabilities which are platforms for understanding and for action." (1980:131)

It is hoped that the present study is some small contribution to creating such "conceptual stability" in a small corner of a vineyard which has been labelled "institutional change in higher education".

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE LITERATURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

As argued in the previous chapter, this study can be characterised as a case study of an embedded single case design. It arises from a "desire to understand complex social phenomena"; it asks "how" and "why" questions "about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control"; and its aim is not statistical generalization, but analytic generalization. Using the term "experiment" loosely, it is an experiment which aims to test theory in the real world.

Broadly speaking, the "real world" in which the study is located is the world of institutional change in higher education in South Africa. More particularly, the case study looks at the process of institutional change at the University of Natal from the so-called Walker Report of 1988 (University of Natal 2, 1988) and the drawing up of a Mission Statement in 1988-89 (University of Natal 3, 1989), to the financial and structural crisis being experienced at the University in September 1997.

It should be said that the study is not directly concerned with issues of "transformation", although pressures for transformation are clearly important among the various pressures for change which the University has experienced. This is partly because efforts to bring about institutional change at the University of Natal began before the relatively recent calls for transformation. But also the "institutional change" referred to in the title of this thesis is seen to be a broader category, taken to refer to change of a fundamental structural or organizational type, whatever its genesis; whereas "transformation" is understood here to relate to change related to political requirements for representivity and transparency. It is largely as a result of this broader focus that the student voice is muted in this study. Although the Broad Transformation Forum established at the University of Natal may still play a role in such structural changes as are made at the University, its concerns are mainly those related to transformation and directly student-related issues like Financial Aid. And the BTF at Natal University has been incorporated as a "parallel structure" alongside other structures and is committed to making decisions by consensus. Although students have other ways of making their wishes felt, the BTF does not have an over-riding authority of veto whereas, arguably, Senate does. (Those interested in the effects upon students of the University's efforts to transform itself in the narrower sense are referred to a 1996 M. Soc. Sci. dissertation by

Gary Phillips: *Social tensions, space and identity at the University of Natal: a study into the effects of transformation on students at the Durban campus, 1989 -1996.*)

As briefly alluded to in Chapter One, the case study can be divided into two sub-units, both in terms of historical development and underlying theory – conventional strategic planning and learning organization theory. Efforts to bring about institutional change at the University of Natal will be examined under those two headings in Chapters Four and Five. It is the task of this chapter to provide the theoretical framework for the presentation of the case and its analysis.

As a case study of institutional change in higher education, the present study is taken to be an instance of the broad category of organizational change – higher educational institutions like the University being understood to be organizations of a particular kind. The first part of the framework, then, requires the location of the University within the broader field of organizations. A general theory of categorizing organizations is adopted, based largely on Henry Mintzberg's *The Structuring of Organizations* (1979). This theory, described in the next section of this chapter, is applied in both sub-units or phases of the study to analyse from an organizational perspective the developments at the University of Natal.

However, more specific theoretical tools are also applied in each of the phases; and these tools are developed in subsequent sections of this chapter. In the earlier phase, examined in Chapter Four, an understanding of the nature of strategic planning is applied which is indebted to Mintzberg's *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (1994). In the later phase, examined in Chapter Five, notions of organizational learning are discussed against a background of work in this area by Argyris and Schön, and by Peter Senge, particularly Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* (1994).

Although an in-depth discussion of the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of the various theories and practical developments referred to is beyond the scope of this case study, the classical distinction in managerial policy and practice developed by McGregor, between Theory X and Theory Y, is used as a shorthand for rough distinctions with regard to such underlying assumptions between conventional strategic planning and the learning organization.

### 3.2 THE UNIVERSITY AS ORGANIZATION

To say that universities are organizations of a particular kind may seem self-evident. However, as Lockwood states (in Fielden & Lockwood, 1973:19), universities can be analysed from many points of view – for instance as organizations, as institutions, or as communities:

Studying them as organisations would imply that they exist to achieve concrete ends which are capable of rational analysis. Looking at them as institutions, as the embodiment of values, would involve a behavioural examination of how their internal processes contribute to the maintenance of those values. If the view of universities as communities is given the primary emphasis, the study would be more concerned with their effects upon the development of groups and individuals. (1973:19)

Lockwood adds: "We recognise that those three, and probably other, concepts coexist in an uneasy balance in each individual university." (1973:19)

Much depends, it would seem, on how one chooses to define these terms and to see their inter-relations. For instance, the links between "organisations" and "concrete ends which are capable of rational analysis", or between "institutions" and "the embodiment of values", are not clear in any *a priori* way. Nor is it clear why a university as institution (however defined) and a university as community (however defined) could not both be subsidiary features of the university as organization (if widely enough defined).

Nevertheless, Lockwood's point is well taken that there are different ways of categorising universities, as also is his point that universities are "extremely difficult to classify as organisations", for example because they contain elements of the firm and the guild. The assumptions which he lists about the university as organization point to some key features, which will be further developed in a wider-ranging organizational context below:

Our assumption is that universities are organisations which have corporate responsibilities, and which possess powers to manage the activities of their members in order to carry out those responsibilities. Members of the academic staff collectively constitute the major element in the government of a university, but individually they are employees by contract. Members of academic staff may be influenced by, and give their prime loyalty to, the national and sometimes international professional groups which cut across all universities; but, in terms of organisation and management, the existence of the university creates a firm boundary. Faculties, colleges, departments and other units are not autonomous units within a guild structure, they are inter-dependent parts of a unitary organisation. We believe that the management of a university should be conducted on a participative basis and that authority and initiative for many activities should be delegated as far as possible to constituent groups and individuals. It nevertheless remains the case that the university statutory bodies are fully responsible constitutionally for the management of the organisation and have powers to exercise this responsibility. (1973:20-21)

Of interest in relation to Fielden and Lockwood's work, but not of major concern for our purposes, is the fact that Fielden was employed as a consultant by the University of Natal, particularly in the early strategic planning phase associated with the Vice-Chancellor's Review and there are some clear echoes, in some cases taken over verbatim, from the Fielden and Lockwood text in the December 1991 Report of the Vice-Chancellor's Review (University of Natal 4, 1991). (This is referred to again in Chapter Four, page 71.) What the coincidence usefully indicates is that this *kind* of "organization-speak" was part of the vocabulary and conceptual framework of the actors at the University of Natal at the time.

The wider-ranging analysis of organizational structure in general, which is relied upon in presenting and interpreting the case of the University of Natal in subsequent chapters, is developed by Henry Mintzberg in *The Structuring of Organizations* (1979). Mintzberg sets out to produce a synthesis of the literature on organizational structure, within which he locates five structural configurations, including one which he believes characterises universities. While we cannot reflect the detail of the undertaking, a sketch will be useful in approaching that structural configuration and two others which – it is argued later – are relevant to the case study.

Mintzberg writes:

Every organized human activity – from the making of pots to the placing of a man on the moon – gives rise to two fundamental and opposing requirements: the *division of labor* into various tasks to be performed and the *coordination* of these tasks to accomplish the activity. **The structure of an organization can be defined simply as the sum total of the ways in which it divides its labor into distinct tasks and then achieves co-ordination among them.** (1979:2, original emphasis.)

(The frequent use of bold type in quotations from Mintzberg follows his usage, intended to facilitate scanning of *The Structuring of Organizations*. Where emphasis differs from the original, this is stated.)

Mintzberg identifies five coordinating mechanisms which, he says, "**seem to explain the fundamental ways in which organizations coordinate their work: mutual adjustment, direct supervision, standardization of work processes, standardization of work outputs, and standardization of worker skills. These should be considered the most basic elements of structure, the glue that holds organizations together.**" (1979:3)

He identifies and discusses the inter-relationships between five basic parts of the contemporary organization: "the operating core, strategic apex, middle line, technostructure, and support staff"; and overlays on this five "systems of flows" which are in effect theories of how the organization functions: "as a system of formal authority, as a system of regulated information flows, as a system of informal communication, as a system of work constellations, and as a system of ad hoc decision processes," each describing part of what goes on inside organizations. (1979:13)

Reproduced below is Mintzberg's diagram showing the five basic parts of organizations (1979:20):

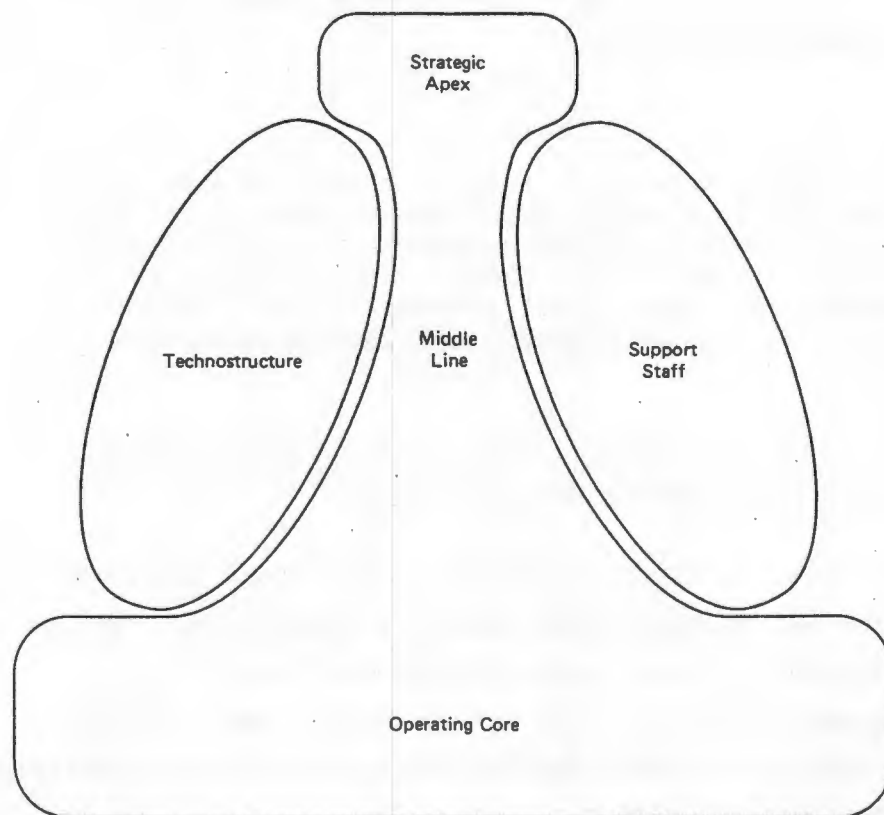


Figure 2-1. *The Five Basic Parts of Organizations*

Nine design parameters are discussed, as well as sixteen hypotheses "which review a good deal of the evidence on the relationship between structure and situation".

(1979:15) The design parameters, described as "the basic elements used in designing organizational structures", are:

Job specialization Behavior formalization Training and indoctrination	Concerned with the design of individual positions
Unit grouping Unit size	Constituting the design of the "superstructure"
Planning and control systems Liaison devices	Concerned with the design of lateral linkages
Vertical decentralization Horizontal decentralization (1979:14-15)	Constituting the design of the decision-making system

Against this background, Mintzberg discusses five structural configurations:

Together with the corresponding design parameter and preeminent part of the organization, the five configurations are: Simple Structure (direct supervision, strategic apex), Machine Bureaucracy (standardization of work processes, technostructure), Professional Bureaucracy (standardization of skills, operating core), Divisionalized Form (standardization of outputs, middle line), and Adhocracy (mutual adjustment, support staff). (1979:15)

The Professional Bureaucracy, says Mintzberg, is "common in universities, general hospitals, school systems, public accounting firms, social work agencies, and craft production firms. All rely on the skills and knowledge of their operating professionals to function; all produce standard products or services." (1979:349)

He adds:

The Professional Bureaucracy relies for coordination on the standardization of skills and its associated design parameter, training and indoctrination. It hires duly trained and indoctrinated specialists – professionals – for the operating core, and then gives them considerable control over their own work....

Control over his own work means that the professional works relatively independently of his colleagues, but closely with the clients he serves....

Most of the necessary coordination between the operating professionals is then handled by the standardization of skills and knowledge, in effect, by what they have learned to expect from their colleagues. (1979:349)

There is a marked difference, says Mintzberg, in the source of standardization between the Professional Bureaucracy and the Machine Bureaucracy:

Whereas the Machine Bureaucracy generates its own standards – its technostructure designing the work standards for its operators and its line

**managers enforcing them – the standards of the Professional Bureaucracy originate largely outside its own structure, in the self-governing associations its operators join with their colleagues from other Professional Bureaucracies. These associations set universal standards which they make sure are taught by the universities and used by all the bureaucracies of the profession. So whereas the Machine Bureaucracy relies on authority of a hierarchical nature – the power of office – the Professional Bureaucracy relies on authority of a professional nature – the power of expertise .... (1979:351)**

The research suggests, says Mintzberg, that the other forms of standardization are difficult to rely on in the Professional Bureaucracy:

The work processes themselves are too complex to be standardized directly by analysts. One need only try to imagine a work study analyst following a cardiologist on his rounds or observing a teacher in a classroom in order to program their work. Similarly, the outputs of professional work cannot easily be measured, and so do not lend themselves to standardization. Imagine a planner trying to define a cure in psychiatry, the amount of learning that takes place in the classroom, or the quality of the accountant's audit. Thus Professional Bureaucracies cannot rely extensively on the formalization of professional work or on systems to plan and control it.

Much the same conclusion can be drawn for the two remaining coordinating mechanisms. Both direct supervision and mutual adjustment impede the professional's close relationships with his clients. That relationship is predicated on a high degree of professional autonomy – freedom from having not only to respond to managerial orders but also to consult extensively with peers. In any event, the use of the other four coordinating mechanisms is precluded by the capacity of standardization of skills to achieve a good deal of the coordination necessary in the operating core. (1979:351-352)

Of course, the analysts and planners are not "precluded" in any strong sense from applying the other coordinating mechanisms, should they feel that the standardization of skills does not provide adequate coordination in the operating core. And from the fact that "the outputs of professional work cannot easily be measured", it does not follow that they **cannot** be measured and standardized. It might be argued, for example, that the current outcomes-based approach to learning which underlies the National Qualifications Framework is a reflection of the zeal of the technocrats and administrators of education to extend the frontiers of coordination. The empirical evidence, Mintzberg is saying, suggests that such efforts are unlikely to be successful.

Mintzberg argues that the Professional Bureaucracy "is unique among the five structural configurations in answering two of the paramount needs of contemporary men and women. It is democratic, disseminating its power directly to its workers (at least those who are professional). And it provides them with extensive autonomy, freeing them even of the need to coordinate closely with their peers, and all of the pressures and politics that entails...." (1979:371)

(It is important to note the sense in which Mintzberg is using "democratic" here. If one were to understand "democratic" in the sense of the joint decision-making of the *polis* of the Greek city state, or the inclusive decision-making processes of transformed institutions in post-apartheid South Africa, one would encounter an immediate contradiction between "democracy" on the one hand and "autonomy" on the other. Mintzberg is using the term not in relation to collective decision making, but in relation to the dissemination of power to individual workers and in contrast to systems which tend to autocracy or oligarchy, where power is centralised in one or few hands. "Egalitarian" might have been a better word to use.)

"As a result," Mintzberg says, "professionals tend to emerge as responsible and highly motivated individuals, dedicated to their work and the clients they serve...."

But in these same characteristics of democracy and autonomy lie all the major problems of the Professional Bureaucracy. For **there is virtually no control of the work outside the profession, no way to correct deficiencies that the professionals themselves choose to overlook.** What they tend to overlook are the major problems of coordination, of discretion, and of innovation that arise in these structures. (1979:371-372)

The standardization of skills, says Mintzberg, **"is a loose coordinating mechanism at best, failing to cope with many of the needs that arise in the Professional Bureaucracy."**

There is, first of all, the need for coordination between the professional and the support staff. To the professional, that is simply resolved: he gives the orders. But that only catches the support staffer between two systems of power pulling in different ways, the vertical power of line authority above him, and the horizontal power of professional expertise to his side.

Perhaps more severe are the coordination problems between the professionals themselves. Unlike Machine Bureaucracies, Professional Bureaucracies are not integrated entities. They are collections of individuals who join to draw on common resources and support services but otherwise want to be left alone. As long as the pigeonholing process works effectively, they can be. But that process can never be so good that contingencies do not fall in the cracks between the standard programs. The world is a continuous intertwined system. Slicing it up, although necessary to comprehend it, inevitably distorts it. Needs that fall at the margin or that overlap two categories tend to get forced – artificially – into one category or another....

**The pigeonholing process, in fact, emerges as the source of a great deal of the conflict of the Professional Bureaucracy. Much political blood is spilled in the continual reassessment of contingencies, imperfectly conceived, in terms of programs, artificially distinguished.** (1979:372-373)

Mintzberg describes the "pigeonholing process" as the application by professionals of a repertoire of standard programs to predetermined situations, called contingencies, also

standardized. "In this regard, the professional has two basic tasks: (1) to categorize the client's need in terms of a contingency, which indicates which standard program to use, a task known as diagnosis, and (2) to apply, or execute, that program." (1979:352)

But even where pigeonholing works, adds Mintzberg, problems arise. "For it focuses all the discretion in the hands of single professionals, whose complex skills, no matter how standardized, require the exercise of considerable judgment. That is, perhaps, appropriate for professionals who are competent and conscientious. Unfortunately not all of them are; and the professional bureaucratic structure cannot easily deal with professionals who are either incompetent or unconscientious." (1979:373)

A common means-end inversion in Professional Bureaucracies occurs, Mintzberg says, when "the professional confuses the needs of his clients with the skills he has to offer them. He simply concentrates on the program that he favors – perhaps because he does it best or simply enjoys doing it most – to the exclusion of all the others...

Dealing with this means-end inversion is impeded by the difficulty of measuring the outputs of professional work.... When no one has been able to measure the learning that takes place in the classroom, how can it be demonstrated with reliability that lectures are better or worse than seminars or, for that matter, than staying home and reading. (1979:374)

But, organizationally speaking, there is a more serious problem related to discretion:

**Discretion not only enables some professionals to ignore the needs of their clients; it also encourages many of them to ignore the needs of the organization.** Professionals in these structures do not generally consider themselves part of a team. To many, the organization is almost incidental, a convenient place to practice their skills. They are loyal to their profession, not to the place where they happen to practice it. But the organization has need for loyalty, too – to support its own strategies, to staff its administrative committees, to see it through conflicts with the professional association. Cooperation ... is crucial to the functioning of the administrative structure. Yet ... professionals resist it furiously. Professors hate to show up for curriculum meetings; they simply do not wish to be dependent on each other. One can say that they know each other only too well! (1979:374)

But it is not only the regular functioning of the administrative structure which requires cooperation. In Professional Bureaucracies, says Mintzberg, major innovation also depends on cooperation:

Existing programs can be perfected by individual specialists. But new ones necessarily cut across existing specialties – in essence, they require a rearrangement of the pigeonholes – and so call for interdisciplinary efforts. As a result, the reluctance of the professionals to work cooperatively with each other translates itself into problems of innovation.

**Like the Machine Bureaucracy, the Professional Bureaucracy is an inflexible structure, well suited to producing its standard outputs but ill-suited to adapting to the production of new ones.** All bureaucracies are geared to stable environments; they are performance structures designed to perfect programs for contingencies that can be predicted, not problem solving ones designed to create new programs for needs that have never before been encountered.

The problems of innovation in the Professional Bureaucracy find their roots in convergent thinking, in the deductive reasoning of the professional who sees the specific situation in terms of the general concept. In the Professional Bureaucracy this means that new problems are forced into old pigeonholes....

The fact is that great art and innovative problem solving require *inductive* reasoning, that is, the induction of new general concepts or programs from particular experiences. That kind of thinking is *divergent* – it breaks away from old routines or standards rather than perfecting existing ones. And that flies in the face of everything the Professional Bureaucracy is designed to do. (1979:374-375)

What are the implications of this for effecting change in a Professional Bureaucracy?

Mintzberg says:

...It should come as no surprise that Professional Bureaucracies and the professional associations that control their procedures tend to be conservative bodies, hesitant to change their well-established ways. Whenever an entrepreneurial member takes up the torch of innovation, great political clashes inevitably ensue. Even in the Machine Bureaucracy, once the managers of the strategic apex finally recognize the need for change, they are able to force it down the hierarchy. In the Professional Bureaucracy, with operator autonomy and bottom-up decision making, and in the professional association with its own democratic procedures, power for strategic change is diffuse. Everybody must agree on the change, not just a few managers or professional representatives. So change comes slowly and painfully, after much political intrigue and shrewd maneuvering by the professional and administrative entrepreneurs.

As long as the environment remains stable, the Professional Bureaucracy encounters no problem. It continues to perfect its skills and the given system of pigeonholes that slots them. But dynamic conditions call for change – new skills, new ways to slot them, and creative cooperative efforts on the part of multidisciplinary teams of professionals. And that calls for another structural configuration.... (1979:375-376)

That configuration, more "organic" than "bureaucratic", Mintzberg calls the Adhocracy.

He notes:

The Simple Structure also retains an organic structure, and so is able to innovate as well. But that innovation is restricted to simple environments, ones that can be easily comprehended by a central leader. Innovation of the sophisticated variety takes place in environments not easily understood. So another kind of organic structure is required, one that relies on the application of sophisticated expertise. The Adhocracy must hire and give power to experts – professionals whose knowledge and skills have been highly developed in training programs....

But unlike the Professional Bureaucracy, the Adhocracy cannot rely on the standardization skills of these experts to achieve coordination, because that would lead to standardization instead of innovation. Rather it must treat existing knowledge and skills merely as bases on which to build new ones.

Moreover, the building of new knowledge and skills requires the combination of different bodies of existing ones. So rather than allowing the specialization of the expert or the differentiation of the functional unit to dominate its behavior, the Adhocracy must instead break through the boundaries of conventional specialization and differentiation.... Thus, whereas each professional of the Professional Bureaucracy can operate on his own, in the Adhocracy the professionals must amalgamate their efforts....

The experts are grouped in functional units for housekeeping purposes – for hiring, professional communication, and the like – but then are deployed in project teams to carry out their basic work of innovation.

And how is coordination effected in and between these project teams? As noted earlier, standardization is precluded as a major coordinating mechanism. The efforts must be innovative, not standardized. So, too, is direct supervision, because of the complexity of the work. Coordination must be effected by those with the knowledge, the experts who actually do the project work. That leaves mutual adjustment, the prime coordinating mechanism of the Adhocracy. As Khandwalla (1976) notes, 'the job of coordination is not left to a few charged with the responsibility, but assumed by most individuals in the organization, much in the way members of a well-knit hockey or cricket team all work spontaneously to keep its activities focused on the goal of winning' .... (Mintzberg, 1979:434-435)

It should be noted that the kind of "sophisticated innovation" which Mintzberg has in mind in discussing the characteristics of the Adhocracy is primarily "the kind required of a space agency, an avant-garde film company, a factory manufacturing complex prototypes, an integrated petrochemicals company". (1979:432) But "even hospitals and universities, described ... as closest to Professional Bureaucracy for their routine clinical and teaching work, are drawn to Adhocracy when they do innovative research. Their orientation to convergent, deductive thinking in their routine work precludes real innovation. So, while their professionals are often able to work alone when they apply their *standard* knowledge and skills, they must typically join in organic multidisciplinary teams to create *new* knowledge and skills." (1979:450)

For purposes of application to the particular case of Natal University, the above discussion has focused on three of Mintzberg's five organizational configurations: Machine Bureaucracy, Professional Bureaucracy, and Adhocracy (the other two being Simple Structure and Divisionalized Form). As the case is presented in Chapters Four and Five, features of these organizational configurations will be called upon to throw light on the University of Natal's situation. In Chapter Six, the question of innovation at the University of Natal – seen as a crucial issue by the University leadership – is brought to the fore and the capacity of Mintzberg's analysis to elucidate the case is tested.

In closing the discussion for the moment, Mintzberg's warnings against treating the configurations as though they were found in idealised form in the real world should be

noted. Mintzberg says the five organizational configurations which he has described "represent a set of five forces that pull organizations in five different structural directions." (1979:469) "Almost every organization experiences these five pulls; what structure it designs depends in large part on how strong each one is." (1979:472)

He asks the question: "Do any of these five structural configurations really exist?" And he answers it:

In one sense the structural configurations do not exist at all. After all, they are just words and pictures on pieces of paper, not reality itself. Real structures in all but the most trivial organizations are enormously complex, far more than any of these five configurations on paper. What they constitute is a theory, and every theory necessarily simplifies and therefore distorts reality. (1979:468)

### 3.3 THEORY X AND THEORY Y

At the risk of simplifying and distorting reality, Douglas McGregor's well-known distinction between Theory X and Theory Y will be used to characterise very broadly two opposing views about human nature, particularly as these views relate to organizational or work-related behaviour. The argument is that the two phases or units of the case study (strategic planning and the learning organization) belong, broadly speaking, within the different views represented by Theory X and Theory Y.

"Behind every managerial decision or action are assumptions about human nature and human behavior," says McGregor. "A few of these are remarkably pervasive. They are implicit in most of the literature of organization and in much current managerial policy and practice." (McGregor, 1960, in DS Pugh (Ed) *Organization Theory*, 1984:317)

McGregor gives the name Theory X to "the traditional view of direction and control", which has the following assumptions:

1. The average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if he can.
2. Because of this human characteristic of dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, threatened with punishment to get them to put forth adequate effort toward the achievement of organizational objectives.
3. The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, wants security above all. (1984:317-318)

Writing in 1960, McGregor says: "Theory X ... materially influences managerial strategy in a wide sector of American industry today. Moreover, the principles of organization

which comprise the bulk of the literature of management *could only have been derived from assumptions such as those of Theory X*. Other beliefs about human nature would have led inevitably to quite different organizational principles." (1984:318, original emphasis.)

Following an account of human motivation which leans heavily (although not explicitly) on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McGregor concludes that Theory X "neither explains nor describes human nature although it purports to. Because its assumptions are so unnecessarily limiting, it prevents our seeing the possibilities inherent in other managerial strategies." (1984:324)

He then turns to Theory Y, saying that "the accumulation of knowledge about human behavior in many specialized fields has made possible the formulation of a number of generalizations which provide a modest beginning for a new theory with respect to the management of human resources." (1984:326) Theory Y, which McGregor applies to "the integration of individual and organizational goals", has the following assumptions:

1. The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
  2. External control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort toward organizational objectives. Man will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which he is committed.
  3. Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
  4. The average human being learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility.
  5. The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
  6. Under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human being are only partially utilized.
- (1984:326-327)

Says McGregor:

These assumptions involve sharply different implications for managerial strategy than do those of Theory X. They are dynamic rather than static: they indicate the possibility of human growth, and development; they stress the necessity for selective adaptation rather than for a single absolute form of control. They are not framed in terms of the least common denominator of the factory hand, but in terms of a resource which has substantial potentialities.

Above all, the assumptions of Theory Y point up the fact that the limits on human collaboration in the organizational setting are not limits of human nature but of management's ingenuity in discovering how to realize the potential represented by its human resources. (1984:327)

Clearly, McGregor is himself a subscriber to Theory Y. "The assumptions of Theory Y are not finally validated," he says. "Nevertheless, they are far more consistent with

existing knowledge in the social sciences than are the assumptions of Theory X".  
(1984:327)

But for present purposes, it is not material whether McGregor is right or wrong in holding to the assumptions of Theory Y. The usefulness of the distinction between Theory X and Theory Y is that it boldly states two opposing (although not necessarily exhaustive) sets of assumptions about human nature; and as such will serve as a kind of shorthand for two broad groupings of ontological and epistemological assumptions.

There will obviously be some loss of precision and detail in the use of such a shorthand. McGregor himself acknowledges in the case of Theory X, for instance, that there are important exceptions "here and there". (1984:325) But, it is submitted, the distinction he draws is nevertheless a useful one in separating the two general approaches which Theory X and Theory Y represent.

Part of the purpose here is simply to draw attention to the fact that underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions are at work, both in conventional strategic planning models and in learning organization works like Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* (1994), but often without being explicitly discussed as such. It is not possible to engage in detailed discussion of the assumptions here. But in the following account of conventional strategic planning and the learning organization, it will become apparent that conventional strategic planning leans more towards Theory X in terms of its ontological assumptions, while the learning organization leans more towards Theory Y. Whereas conventional strategic planning is largely concerned about giving people direction and controlling them, the learning organization is based on a belief that people have vast untapped resources of creativity which can be released for the benefit of the organization.

### 3.4 CONVENTIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

It will be argued in the next chapter that the University of Natal followed a more-or-less conventional approach to strategic planning when it embarked on the process in 1988-89. But what does it mean to talk of "a more-or-less conventional approach to strategic planning"?

After all, strategic planning has grown from fairly humble beginnings as a budget exercise in the United States in the 1950s (Mintzberg, 1994:6) to a massive international industry including publishing, education and training, consultancy, and, of course, planners. And every author, planner, or business school will have their own recommendations on how strategic planning ought to be done.

Nevertheless, it is not unusual to find references in the literature to "conventional strategic planning", whether or not the authors associate their particular brand of strategic planning with such conventional planning, or seek to distance themselves from it in some way or other.

To take one example, *Team-based Strategic Planning* by C. Davis Fogg (1994, published by the American Management Association and sub-titled "A complete Guide to Structuring, Facilitating, and Implementing the Process") opens with this statement: "This book is about how to make the conventional strategic planning process work..." (1994:ix) and the first chapter is entitled "The Traditional Strategic Planning Process".

What one can expect to find in such accounts will depend very largely on where the author is coming from and where he or she is heading. And the discussion can take place at a variety of levels of abstraction.

At a fairly superficial level, one is likely to encounter some discussion of SWOT analysis (for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). This is so much a part of the common parlance of strategic planners that it has become a cliché, however difficult it might actually be to do.

One is also likely to find some debate over the definition of terms, for key terms in the strategic planning lexicon have been used in a bewildering variety of ways. Many people new to strategic planning processes must have been surprised by how much heat can be generated by arguments starting: "But is that a goal or is it an objective?"

In the discussion which follows, an attempt is made to delineate the main features of a conventional approach to strategic planning, relying mainly on Mintzberg's *The Rise*

*and Fall of Strategic Planning* (1994). As the discussion so far suggests, there might be any number of other accounts of "conventional strategic planning"; but it is submitted that Mintzberg's account is sufficiently critical and analytical to provide a useful perspective on the process.

The point should be made that there is no implication here that the main actors at the University of Natal over the 10-year period of the case study were pursuing a strategic planning model quite like any of those referred to in this chapter. Indeed, there is evidence from interviews with some of the major players that they did not see themselves as pursuing any model in particular (see page 70). The point is that, *in practice*, they can be said to have pursued a more-or-less conventional strategic planning model as described by Mintzberg, at least until the notion of the learning organization was introduced.

The key metaphor which helps to distinguish the conventional approach to strategic planning is the "cascade", although the term may or may not be explicitly used by the authors. The basic picture here is of plans emanating from some central point in an organization, typically the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and spilling over to lower and lower levels of the organization for implementation. Fogg, for instance, says that part three of his book, headed *Implementing the Plan*, "covers how to cascade the plan down into the organization..." (1994:xi).

The most important characteristic of conventional strategic planning is its analytical nature. While the stated objective of the process might often be something like "synthesis" or "synergy", the process itself is an analytical one: breaking complex situations down into increasingly discrete parts.

To explicate the significance of the cascade metaphor and the analytical nature of strategic planning, it is useful to examine Mintzberg's account of conventional strategic planning.

Curiously, given the title of his book, Mintzberg tends to talk mostly of "planning", rather than "strategic planning". This is the result of a basic distinction he draws between "planning" (as in conventional strategic planning) and "strategy formation".

For Mintzberg, strategy formation is concerned with the broad direction of a business or organization, which other theorists might try to capture under "vision" or "goal" or "objective". Contrast this with Fogg, for example, who says that "strategies are the means, the ways, the hows, the devilishly detailed methods by which organizations accomplish their objectives." (1994:12) Granted, Fogg immediately confuses the issue,

including something of what Mintzberg is trying to capture, when he says: "Note that strategies can be as broad as 'grow by acquisition and joint venture' and as narrow as 'expand distribution into three additional cities.'" (1994:13)

Mintzberg's paradigm of successful strategy formation is that of Steinberg Inc, a privately owned chain of supermarkets in Canada (1994:111). The company had a highly successful strategy of expansion by building shopping centres, which strategy existed only in the mind of the CEO, Sam Steinberg. Not until Steinberg needed to raise money on the capital market did he find any need for a plan, as opposed to his strategy.

Mintzberg's basic argument is that strategy formation is necessary and desirable, but planning very often discourages or inhibits the formation of strategy. The extreme case which Mintzberg alludes to in this regard (1994: 114-115) is the Canadian armed forces, which planned when it had no fighting to do, and threw away the plans when it did.

Mintzberg identifies 10 different schools of thought on strategy formation: Design, Planning, Positioning, Cognitive, Entrepreneurial, Learning, Political, Cultural, Environmental, and Configurational (1994:3); but his discussion is restricted mainly to the Design and Planning Schools.

Beginning perhaps in 1962, if not earlier, he says, "the literature of planning has offered literally hundreds of models of a process by which strategy could supposedly be formally developed and operationalized." A few specific exceptions aside, these all "built on a single conceptual framework, or basic model, differing less in fundamentals than in levels of detail." (1994:35)

According to this basic model, which he calls the Core "Design School" Model:

...Strategy is created at the intersection of an external appraisal of the threats and opportunities facing an organization in its environment, considered in terms of key factors for success, and an internal appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization itself, distilled into a set of distinctive competences. Outside opportunities are exploited by inside strengths, while threats are avoided and weaknesses circumvented. Taken into consideration, both in the creation of strategies and their subsequent evaluation to choose the best, are the values of the leadership as well as the ethics of the society and other aspects of so-called social responsibility. And once a strategy has been chosen, it is implemented. (1994:36)

This Mintzberg graphically represents as follows (1994:37):

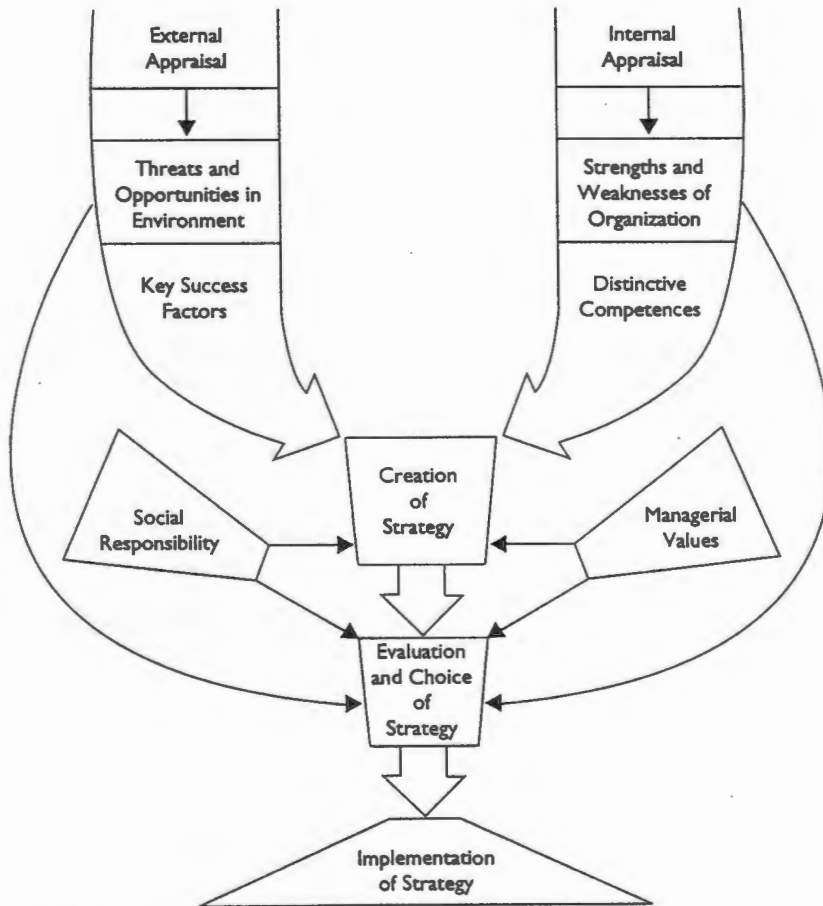


Figure 2-1  
Core "Design School" Model of Strategy Formation

Among the underlying premises of the model, Mintzberg identifies these:

1. **Strategy formation should be a controlled, conscious process of thought.**
2. **Responsibility for the process must rest with the chief executive officer: that person is THE strategist.**
3. **The model of strategy formation must be kept simple and informal.**
4. **Strategies should be unique: the best ones result from a process of creative design.**
5. **Strategies must come out of the design process fully developed.**
6. **The strategies should be made explicit and, if possible, articulated, which means they have to be kept simple.**
7. **Finally, once these unique, full-blown, explicit, and simple strategies are fully formulated, they must then be implemented.**

(1994:38-39. Here again, the use of bold text follows the original.)

The Planning School model has much in common with this Design School model. Perhaps the only real difference, Mintzberg says, is an emphasis on "the setting of formal objectives in place of the implicit incorporation of managerial values". (1994:39)

"Where the two literatures most decidedly parted company was in the premise of keeping the process simple and informal." (1994:40) The Ansoff model, as developed by H. Igor Ansoff in his 1965 book *Corporate Strategy*, contains no less than 57 boxes, Mintzberg observes. A second difference relates to the role of the CEO:

The premise of the chief executive as architect of strategy was not so much dismissed as sidestepped. ...While lip service was paid to the top line management in this regard, a good deal of the literature implicitly brought the planner front and center, sometimes as an advisor with more than passive influence, sometimes as the designer of the system of strategy making, or even of the strategies themselves (which could relegate the CEO/architect to the role of approving rather than designing strategies), and sometimes as the police officer who ensured that everyone else planned (meaning carried out the designated planning procedures). (1994:42)

And a third difference relates to generic rather than unique strategies: the nature of the process, based on formalization, "often undermined creativity and so promoted strategies that were more generic than unique", (1994:42), where generic means "well-defined, belonging to a class" (1994:181).

Mintzberg summarises the premises of the planning school as follows:

- 1. Strategy formation should be controlled and conscious as well as a formalized and elaborated process, decomposed into distinct steps, each delineated by checklists and supported by techniques.**
- 2. Responsibility for the overall process rests with the chief executive in principle; responsibility for its execution rests with the staff planners in practice.**
- 3. Strategies come out of the process fully developed, typically as generic positions, to be explicated so that they can then be implemented through detailed attention to objectives, budgets, programs, and operating plans of various kinds. (1994:42)**

In Mintzberg's account of the Ansoff model, of particular interest in the Natal University context, is Ansoff's characterisation of his model as a "cascade of decisions, starting with highly aggregated ones and proceeding toward the more specific" (1965:201). "This gives the appearance of solving the problem several times over, but with immensely more precise results ...." (As quoted in Mintzberg, 1994:44)

Mintzberg also refers to the concepts of *gap* analysis and *synergy*. Again quoting Ansoff on gap analysis:

The procedure within each step of the cascade is similar. (1) A set of objectives is established. (2) The difference (the 'gap') between the current position of the firm

and the objectives is estimated. (3) One or more courses of action (strategy) is proposed. (4) These are tested for their 'gap-reducing properties.' A course is accepted if it substantially closes the gaps; if it does not, new alternatives are tried. (Quoted in Mintzberg 1994:44)

Synergy, observes Mintzberg, has a dictionary definition of "combined" or cooperative action", as between nerves in a body or drugs in chemistry. (1994:44-45) For Ansoff, it includes any "effect which can produce a combined return on the firm's resources greater than the sum of its parts". (Quoted in Mintzberg 1994:45).

"In essence," says Mintzberg, "synergy serves as an attractive label (or perhaps measure) for the most basic concept of the design school model, namely fit or congruence, the linking of components to gain competitive advantage". (1994:45) He quotes Ansoff as saying that the measurement of synergy is similar in many ways to what is frequently called "evaluation of strengths and weaknesses". (1994:45)

The detail of Mintzberg's "decomposition" of the basic model, as represented by Ansoff and the later work of George Steiner, need not concern us here. Some of his conclusions, however, are relevant.

"Somehow," says Mintzberg, "the ostensible object of the whole exercise got lost in the exercise":

The whole planning exercise ... was programmed in great detail [in the models]: the delineation of steps, the application of checklists and techniques to each of these, the scheduling of this whole thing, everything nicely accounted for. Except for one minor detail: *strategy formation itself*... Nowhere was anyone told how to create strategy. How to collect information, yes. How to evaluate strategy, yes. How to implement it, for sure. But not how to create it in the first place. Every writer literally talked around that step. (1994:66, italics in original)

He continues:

When Malmow, in a 1972 article in the journal *Long Range Planning*, put boxes into his planning chart labeled 'Apprehend Inputs' and 'Add Insights,' he was merely presenting the worst example of a problem symptomatic of the entire literature: assuming that a phenomenon has been captured, that action will take place, simply because it has been labeled in a box on a piece of paper. With all that decomposition, there never was any integration. Ansoff's talk of synergy notwithstanding, the Humpty Dumpty of planning lay in pieces on its flat surface. Of course, this was all to be taken care of in one step, called formulating strategy. But they forgot to specify that step - no decomposition, no articulation, no rationalization, indeed, no description! (1994:66)

The key to understanding planning, for Mintzberg, is formalization:

What to us captures the notion of planning above all - most clearly distinguishes its literature and differentiates its practice from other processes - is its emphasis on formalization, the systemization of the phenomenon to which planning is meant to apply....

Formalization here would seem to mean three things, especially (a) to decompose, (b) to articulate, and especially (c) to rationalize the processes by which decisions are made and integrated in organizations.

An emphasis on formal *rationality* permeates the literature of planning. (1994:12-13)

For Mintzberg, the process of planning is analytical and reductionist:

Rationality of this formal kind is, of course, rooted in analysis, not synthesis. Above all, planning is characterised by the decompositional nature of analysis - reducing states and processes to their component parts. Thus the process is formally reductionist in nature. This may seem curious, given that the intention of planning is to *integrate* decisions. But the performance of planning has been curious too and for this very reason.... Here, in any event, we seek to characterize planning by the nature of its process, not by its intended results. In fact, the key, if implicit, assumption underlying strategic planning is that *analysis will produce synthesis*: decomposition of the process of strategy making into a series of articulated steps, each to be carried out as specified in sequence, will produce integrated strategies. This, in fact and not incidentally, is the old "machine" assumption, the one that underlies the design of the manufacturing assembly line - itself a kind of machine of human steps. If every component is produced by the machine as specified and assembled in the order prescribed, an integrated product will appear at the end of the line. Indeed, ...this analogy underlies some of the most important thinking in the field of planning, and has proved to be patently false. Organizational strategies cannot be created by the logic used to assemble automobiles.

Along with rationality and decomposition, articulation is the third key component of formalization. The product of planning - the plans themselves - after being carefully decomposed into strategies and substrategies, programs, budgets, and objectives, must be clearly and explicitly labeled - by words and, preferably, numbers on sheets of paper. (1994:13-14)

Mintzberg claims that the definition he proposes "is, by virtue of planners' own behaviors, closest to the one that planning has created for itself, and, indeed, has chosen for itself, however implicitly." (1994:14)

Obviously, formalization is a relative, not an absolute, term. And obviously, planners carry out a range of activities, some more, some less formal. But as a process, we argue here that planning sits towards the formal end of the continuum of organizational behavior.... It must be seen, not as decision making, not as strategy making, and certainly not as management, or as the preferred way of doing any of these things, but simply as the effort to formalize parts of them - through decomposition, articulation, and rationalization. (1994:15)

Referring back briefly to the discussion of Theory X and Theory Y, one sees in this account of conventional strategic planning the operation of a Theory X-like approach. The answer to producing plans and getting everyone to follow them is the establishment of a lock-step procedure - effectively a Fordist assembly line of planning and implementation - which is consistent with the Theory X assumption (to take one

example) that "the average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, wants security above all". (McGregor, in Pugh (Ed.) 1984:318)

And anticipating for a moment the argument advanced in Chapter Four, one can clearly see the assembly line at work in the University of Natal's "Planning Cycle and Process", a flow chart which accompanied the December 1991 Report of the Vice-Chancellor's Review (University of Natal 4, 1991), reproduced here as Appendix 1.

### 3.5 ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

The shift at the University of Natal which distinguishes the first phase or sub-unit of the case study from the second is, it is submitted, largely a shift from a more or less conventional strategic planning discourse to talk of a learning organization, as popularised by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* (1994). As will be seen in Chapter Five, the notion of the University becoming a learning organization was rather abruptly introduced as one of the institution's "strategic initiatives" in 1994, after the University had persevered for a number of years with a conventional strategic planning process. The notion of organizational learning, however, is not without its antecedents. One important antecedent is to be found in notions of "single-loop" and "double-loop learning" in organizations, as developed by Argyris and Schön.

In a recent update of their 1978 *Organizational Learning*, Argyris and Schön note that Senge's approach to organizational learning "combines the methodology of systems dynamics with certain ideas adapted from our theory-of-action perspective, notably an awareness of the importance of the 'mental models' held by organizational practitioners, including those that constrain or facilitate reliable inquiry into organizational processes." (1996:184) "Senge's treatment of the subject," they say, "unites systems thinking with organizational adaptation and with the realization of human potential in a mixture that has a distinctly Utopian flavor." (1996:184)

It is not necessary to take a position here on the flavour of *The Fifth Discipline*, nor to address the skeptical challenges to the very notion of organizational learning which Argyris and Schön themselves refer to. The purpose here is to provide a fairly typical account of organizational learning in general, before turning to Senge's learning organization.

Taking Argyris and Schön's *Organizational Learning* (1978) as an example: The authors say that organizational learning is "a metaphor whose spelling out requires us to re-examine the very idea of organization". (1978:29) "Organizations do not literally remember, think, or learn. At least," they add, "it is not initially clear how we might go about testing whether or not they do so." (1978:11)

There are a number of ways of looking at an organization, the authors say. With regard to the sense in which an organization may be said to act, an organization may be a government or *polis*, an agency, or a task system. (1978:12)

This seems fairly straightforward. A mob or collection of people is not an organization; but if the people devise procedures for "making decisions in the name of the collectivity", for "delegating to individuals the authority to act for the collectivity", and for "setting boundaries between the collectivity and the rest of the world", they become an "organizational 'we' that can decide and act", a *polis* or political entity. (1978:13) "So long as there is continuity in the rules which govern the behavior of individuals, the organization will persist, even though members may come and go"; and even though the rules may remain tacit. (1978:13)

As an *agency*, the collection of people becomes "an instrument for continuing collective action". "Such agencies have functions to fulfill, work to do." (1978:14) Because an agency's work is generally complex and on-going, the agency "embodies a strategy for decomposing that complex task into simpler components which are regularly delegated to individuals. Organizational roles – president, lathe-operator, shop steward – are the names given to the clusters of component tasks which the agency has decided to delegate to individual members. The organization's *task system*, its pattern of interconnected roles, is at once a design for work and a division of labor." (1978:14)

This notion of "task system" as a pattern of interconnected roles is familiar, being arguably very close to Mintzberg's notion of organizational structure as the division of labour into distinct tasks and their coordination.

What is not familiar, or straightforward, is the treatment which Argyris and Schön give to the organization in the sense that it may be said to know something and to learn. As such, they say, an organization is "a theory of action"; "a cognitive enterprise undertaken by individual members"; and "a cognitive artifact made up of individual images and public maps". (1978:12)

Taking the example of a sugar-refining company, they say that the company's way of growing cane reflects certain strategies, norms and assumptions which, embedded in

the company's cane-growing practices, constitute its *theory of action* for cane-growing. Taken together with comparable theories of action implicit in the company's ways of distributing and marketing its products, these component theories of action represent an "instrumental" theory of action for achieving corporate objectives. (1978:14)

The company's instrumental theory of action is a complex system of norms, strategies, and assumptions. It includes in its scope the organization's patterns of communication and control, its ways of allocating resources to goals, and its provisions for self maintenance....

Like the rules for collective decision and action, organizational theories of action need not be explicit. Indeed, formal corporate documents such as organization charts, policy statements, and job descriptions often reflect a theory of action (the *espoused theory*) which conflicts with the organization's *theory-in-use* (the theory of action constructed from observation of actual behavior) – and the theory-in-use is often tacit. Organizational theory-in-use may remain tacit ... because its incongruity with espoused theory is *undiscussable*. Or it may remain tacit because individual members of the organization know more than they can say – because the theory-in-use is *inaccessible* to them. Whatever the reason for tacitness, the largely tacit theory-in-use accounts for organizational identity and continuity. (1978:15)

Taking the US Army as an example, Argyris and Schön say that in a period of 50 years or so, its personnel might have turned over completely and its uniforms and weapons might have changed entirely. So in what sense can it be said to be the same organization? The answer would lie in studying the evolution of the Army's theory-in-use, its norms for military behavior, strategies for military action, and assumptions about military functioning. (1978:15)

It is this theory-in-use, an apparently abstract thing, which is most distinctively real about the Army. It is what old soldiers know and new ones learn through a continuing process of socialization. And it is the history of change in theory-in-use which we would need to consult in order to inquire into the Army's organizational learning.

In order to discover an organization's theory-in-use, we must examine its practice, that is, the continuing performance of its task system as exhibited in the rule-governed behavior of its members. (1978:16)

Argyris and Schön argue:

Each member of the organization constructs his or her own representation, or image, of the theory-in-use of the whole. That picture is always incomplete. The organization members strive continually to complete it, and to understand themselves in the context of the organization. They try to describe themselves and their own performance insofar as they interact with others. As conditions change, they test and modify that description. Moreover, others are continually engaged in similar inquiry. It is this continual, concerted meshing of individual images of self and others, of one's own activity in the context of collective interaction, which constitutes an organization's knowledge of its theory-in-use.

An organization is like an organism each of whose cells contains a particular, partial, changing image of itself in relation to the whole. And like such an organism, the organization's practice stems from those very images. Organization is an artifact of individual ways of representing organization.

Hence, our inquiry into organizational learning must concern itself not with static entities called organizations, but with an active process of organizing which is, at root, a cognitive enterprise. Individual members are continually engaged in attempting to know the organization, and to know themselves in the context of the organization. At the same time, their continuing efforts to know and to test their knowledge represent the object of their inquiry. Organizing is a reflexive inquiry. (1978:16-17)

There seem to be too many jumps in this chain of argument, with no empirical evidence for a safety net, and too many terms which are not immediately clear. For example, Argyris and Schön talk as though all members of an organization participate almost by definition in an active and reflective process of some complexity, when in fact most of them might be daydreaming. And just where and how does the "continual, concerted meshing of individual images of self and others" take place?

And when they turn to organizational maps as "public representations of organizational theory-in-use", and conclude that "organizational theory-in-use, continually constructed through individual inquiry, is encoded in private images and in public maps" (1978:17), one is left to wonder how these organizational maps are to be distinguished from the "formal corporate documents such as organization charts, policy statements, and job descriptions" which, we are told, "often reflect a theory of action (the *espoused theory*) which conflicts with the organization's *theory-in-use*". (1978:15)

However, suspending these reservations for the moment, it may be useful to agree that organizations are active, largely cognitive undertakings, rather than static and given, and to consider the kinds of learning which Argyris and Schön see as occurring within organizations.

Their basic distinction is between "single-loop" and "double-loop" learning. In single-loop learning, there is "a single feedback loop which connects detected outcomes of action to organizational strategies and assumptions which are modified so as to keep organizational performance within the range set by organizational norms. The norms themselves ... remain unchanged." (1978:18-19)

*Just as individuals are the agents of organizational action, so they are the agents for organizational learning. Organizational learning occurs when individuals, acting from their images and maps, detect a match or mismatch of outcome to expectation which confirms or disconfirms organizational theory-in-use...*

But in order for *organizational* learning to occur, learning agents' discoveries, inventions, and evaluations must be embedded in organizational memory. They

must be encoded in the individual images and the shared maps of organizational theory-in-use from which individual members will subsequently act. If this encoding does not occur, individuals will have learned but the organization will not have done so. (1978:19, original emphasis.)

"Single-loop learning," the authors say, "is sufficient where error correction can proceed by changing organizational strategies and assumptions within a constant framework of norms for performance. It is concerned primarily with effectiveness.... In some cases, however, error correction requires an organizational learning cycle in which organizational norms themselves are modified." (1978:20-21)

In such double-loop learning, there is "a double feedback loop [which] connects the detection of error not only to strategies and assumptions for effective performance but to the very norms which define effective performance." (1978:22)

"In organizational double-loop learning, incompatible requirements in organizational theory-in-use are characteristically expressed through a conflict among members and groups within the organization.... Double-loop learning, if it occurs, will consist of the process of inquiry by which these groups of managers confront and resolve their conflict." (1978:22-23)

Where the groups settle a conflict by fighting it out rather than by inquiry, the conflict may be settled for the time being, "but not by a process that could be appropriately described as learning". (1978:23)

*We will give the name 'double-loop learning' to those sorts of organizational inquiry which resolve incompatible organizational norms by setting new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring the norms themselves together with associated strategies and assumptions. (1978:24, original emphasis.)*

In these cases, individual members resolve the interpersonal and intergroup conflicts which express incompatible requirements by creating new understandings of the conflicting requirements, their sources, conditions, and consequences – understandings which then become embedded in the images and maps of organization. (1978:24)

Argyris and Schön make three observations on single-loop and double-loop learning:

First, it is often impossible, in the real-world context of organizational life, to find inquiry clearly separated from the uses of power. Inquiry and power-play are often combined....

Second ... Organizations may learn more or less well, yet their inquiries may still qualify as learning of the single- or double-loop kind.

Finally, ... the distinction between single- and double-loop learning is less a binary one than might first appear. (1978:24-25)

They also say: "It is possible, we think, to make clear distinctions between relatively deep and relatively peripheral examples of organizational learning." (1978:26)

Beyond single-loop and double-loop learning, however, Argyris and Schön introduce the notion of "deutero-learning" or second-order learning, somewhat incongruously introduced for a work on organizational learning by an example on the training of a porpoise:

When an organization engages in deutero-learning, its members learn, too, about previous contexts for learning. They reflect on and inquire into previous contexts for learning. They reflect on and inquire into previous episodes of organizational learning, or failure to learn. They discover what they did that facilitated or inhibited learning, they invent new strategies for learning, they produce these strategies, and they evaluate and generalize what they have produced. The results become encoded in individual images and maps and are reflected in organizational learning practice. (1978:27)

Organizations, they say, are not only theories of action:

They are also small societies composed of persons who occupy roles in the task system. What we have called the internal environment of an organization is the society of persons who make up the organization at any given time. These societies have their own characteristic behavioral worlds.... These behavioral worlds, with their characteristic models of individual theory-in-use, may be more or less conducive to the kinds of collaborative inquiry required for organizational learning.

Hence, if we wish to learn more about the conditions that facilitate or inhibit organizational learning, we must explore the ways in which the behavioral worlds of organizations affect the capacity for inquiry into organizational theory-in-use. (1978:28)

For purposes of the present case study, the importance of the work of Argyris and Schön lies not so much in the detail of the various kinds of learning which they discuss, but more in the emphasis they place on the organisation as an active, cognitive enterprise and the consequent stress which they place upon learning within organizations. It is Senge's idea of the "learning organization", incorporating as it does some aspects of Argyris and Schön's theory-of-action perspective, which is of more direct concern in Chapter Five when the University of Natal's new strategic initiative to become a learning organization is discussed.

### 3.6 THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Turning now to Senge's views, it is possible to see in his account of the learning organization a number of the features alluded to in the discussion thus far. For example, whether "Utopian" or not, Senge is clearly more inclined to McGregor's Theory Y than to Theory X; and elements of Argyris and Schön's theory-of-action perspective and double-loop learning are apparent.

"The central message of *The Fifth Discipline*," says Senge, "is more radical than 'radical organizational redesign' – namely that our organizations work the way they work, ultimately, because of *how we think and how we interact*. Only by changing how we think can we change deeply embedded policies and practices. Only by changing how we interact can shared visions, shared understandings, and new capacities for coordinated action be established." (1994:xiv)

From a very early age, Senge says, "we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole." (1994:3)

The "tools and ideas" he presents "are for destroying the illusion that the world is created of separate, unrelated forces. When we give up this illusion – we can then build 'learning organizations,' organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together." (1994:3)

Turning to leadership, Senge says:

It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization, a Ford or a Sloan or a Watson. It's just not possible any longer to 'figure it out' from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the 'grand strategist.' The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at *all* levels in an organization. (1994:4)

The key to the learning organization, for Senge, is "systems thinking", which he designates the "fifth discipline" and from which he takes the title of his book. It is the fifth discipline, he says, because "it is the discipline that integrates the disciplines, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice." And it is vital, he says, that "the five disciplines develop as an ensemble" for although integrating the disciplines is more difficult than applying them separately, "the payoffs are immense". (1994:12) The

other disciplines are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and dialogue.

**Systems Thinking.** Businesses and other human endeavours, says Senge, are systems, "bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often may take years to fully play out their effects on each other. Since we are part of that lacework ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern of change. Instead, we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, and wonder why our deepest problems never seem to get solved. Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively." (1994:7)

**Personal Mastery.** People with a high level of personal mastery, says Senge, "are able to consistently realize the results that matter most deeply to them – in effect, they approach their life as an artist would approach a work of art. They do that by becoming committed to their own lifelong learning." (1994:7)

Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively. As such, it is an essential cornerstone of the learning organization – the learning organization's spiritual foundation. An organization's commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members. (1994:7)

**Mental Models.** "Mental models", says Senge, "are deeply engrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action. Very often, we are not consciously aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our behavior." The success of Royal Dutch/Shell in "managing through the dramatic changes and unpredictability of the world oil business in the 1970s and 1980s came in large measure from learning how to surface and challenge manager's mental models." (1994:8)

Senge quotes Arie de Geus, onetime Coordinator of Group Planning for Shell, as saying that continuous adaptation and growth in a changing business environment depend on "institutional learning, which is the process whereby management teams change their shared mental models of the company, their markets, and their competitors. For this reason, we think of planning as learning and or corporate planning as institutional learning." (Quoted in Senge, 1994:8-9)

Says Senge:

The discipline of working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward: learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface

and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry on 'learningful' conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others. (1994:9)

**Building Shared Vision.** "When there is a genuine vision," says Senge, "(as opposed to the all-too-familiar 'vision statement'), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many leaders have personal visions that never get translated into shared visions that galvanize an organization.... What has been lacking is a discipline for translating individual vision into shared vision – not a 'cookbook' but a set of principles and guiding practices.

"The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared 'pictures of the future' that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance."  
(1994:9)

**Team Learning.** Senge says that team learning is vital "because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning units in modern organizations. This is where 'the rubber meets the road'; unless teams can learn, the organization cannot learn." (1994:10)

Team learning starts with "dialogue", which Senge calls the "capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together'."

The discipline of dialogue also involves learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning. The patterns of interaction in teams are often deeply engrained in how a team operates. If unrecognized, they undermine learning. If recognized and surfaced creatively, they can actually accelerate learning. (1994:10)

Returning to systems thinking, Senge says it "makes understandable the subtlest aspect of the learning organization – the new way individuals perceive themselves and their world. At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind – from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something 'out there' to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience. A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it." (1994:12-13)  
Senge uses the term "metanoia" for this shift of mind.

"This, then, is the basic meaning of a 'learning organization' – an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future." (1994:14)

Senge identifies seven "learning disabilities" of organizations, to which, he says, the five disciplines can act as "antidotes":

"I am my position"  
"The enemy is out there"  
The illusion of taking charge  
The fixation on events  
The parable of the boiled frog (maladaptation to gradually building threats to survival)  
The delusion of learning from experience  
The myth of the management team  
(1994:18-26)

The "beer game" is introduced as a "laboratory experiment", involving a production/distribution system, to show the learning disabilities in action. (1994:27)

Senge adduces three lessons from the beer game:

1. Structure influences behavior.
2. Structure in human systems is subtle.
3. Leverage often comes from new ways of thinking.

Says Senge:

When placed in the same system people, however different, tend to produce similar results.

The systems perspective tells us that we must look beyond individual mistakes or bad luck to understand important problems. We must look beyond personalities and events. We must look into the underlying structures which shape individual actions and create the conditions where types of events become likely. (1994:42)

He adds:

The term 'structure,' as used here, does not mean the 'logical structure' of a carefully developed argument or the reporting 'structure' as shown by an organizational chart. Rather, 'systemic structure' is concerned with the key interrelationships that influence behavior over time. These are not interrelationships between people, but among key variables, such as population, natural resources, and food production in a developing country; or engineers' product ideas and technical and managerial know-how in a high-tech company....

But it is very important to understand that when we use the term 'systemic structure' we do not just mean structure outside the individual. The nature of structure in human systems is subtle because we are part of the structure. This means that we often have the power to alter structures within which we are operating. (1994:44)

Success in the beer game is possible, Senge says, but "it requires a shift of view for most players. It means getting to the heart of the fundamental mismatches between common ways of thinking about the game – what we will later call our 'mental models' of it – and the actual reality of how the game works. Most players see their job as 'managing their position' in isolation from the rest of the system. What is required is to see how their position interacts with the larger system." (1994:48)

Senge argues:

The systems perspective shows that there are multiple levels of explanation in any complex situation.... But their usefulness is quite different. Event explanations – 'who did what to whom' – doom their holders to a reactive stance....

Pattern of behavior explanations focus on seeing longer-term trends and assessing their implications....

The third level of explanation, the 'structural' explanation, is the least common and most powerful. It focuses on answering the question, 'What causes the patterns of behavior?'

The reason that structural explanations are so important is that only they address the underlying causes of behavior at a level that patterns of behavior *can be changed*. Structure produces behavior, and changing underlying structures can produce different patterns of behavior. In this sense, structural explanations are inherently *generative*. Moreover, since structure in human systems includes the 'operating policies' of the decision makers in the system, redesigning our own decision making redesigns the system structure. (1994:52-53)

Although much more could be written to reflect the "flavour" of *The Fifth Discipline*, it is submitted that there is enough in the above account of Argyris and Schön on single- and double-loop learning and Senge on systems thinking and mental models to provide sufficient background for the later discussion (Chapter Five) of the second sub-unit of the case study, viz. the learning organization.

The two sub-units, strategic planning and the learning organization, represent two strategies adopted (consciously or otherwise) by the leadership of the University of Natal to engineer consensus among the professionals in the operating core of the University (as Professional Bureaucracy) with regard to wide-ranging proposals for fundamental institutional change. It is the task of the remaining three chapters to present and analyse the case which those efforts constitute, beginning with the conventional strategic planning phase or sub-unit in Chapter Four.

Borrowing loosely from Senge's account of different levels of explanation above, it might be said that the discussion operates initially (in Chapters Four and Five) at the level of "patterns of behaviour", with the case study attempting to understand patterns of events and behaviour more or less within the conceptual frameworks of the participants or actors. In the final chapter, the discussion is re-contextualised at a more "structural" level after the explanatory power of these frameworks runs out of steam. As will be seen, the structural framework employed in the recontextualisation in Chapter Six is, however, of a more sociological nature than the sort of framework based in organizational theory which Senge and the other theorists alluded to in this chapter can provide.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### UNIVERSITY OF NATAL: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THE SEARCH FOR SPECIFICITY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The University of Natal formally became an independent University on 15 March 1949, but its history goes back to the foundation of the Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg in 1910. The time frame of this case study, however, is much more limited. It covers a period of roughly 10 years, from 1988 to 1997, with field work at the University being conducted (as mentioned earlier) in January 1996 and September 1997.

The time frame is to some extent arbitrary, reflecting a period which was considered important – strategically speaking – by those interviewed in the course of the research. An argument could be made for any one of a number of other starting points: for example, the adoption in 1982 of a Statement of Management Policy for the University would be a possibility (University of Natal 1, 1982). But, although reference will be made to this document in passing, it does not appear to have played a key role in terms of institutional change.

The period selected for the case study begins with a financial crisis for the University and a report on the crisis, which recommends fundamental (or strategic) organizational changes to the University. The period of the study ends with another financial crisis; another report on the crisis, which again recommends fundamental change; and the beginnings of the institutional response to the latter crisis.

Although this gives the time frame a neat unity, the overriding factor for the time frame selected is that it encompasses the two strategies employed by the University executive to bring about institutional change, characterised in earlier chapters as conventional strategic planning and learning organization theory. It is the main purpose of the case study to illuminate these responses to the challenge of change on the part of the University of Natal. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the conventional strategic planning unit of the embedded single-case design (following Yin).

The main sources for this examination are key documents, including the so-called Walker Report of 1988 (University of Natal 2, 1988), the 1989 Mission Statement and its supporting document (University of Natal 3, 1989), the Vice-Chancellor's Review of 1991 (University of Natal 4, 1991) and later related documents; interviews conducted with the present Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brenda Gourley, and others at the

University of Natal in January 1996 and September 1997; and interviews conducted with former office bearers such as Professor James Leatt and Professor Chris Cresswell.

It is not possible to reflect fully the content of the various documents produced, or to provide a blow-by-blow account of how they were drawn up and their effects. The intention is to focus on those aspects of the process which relate to the preceding discussion around "conventional strategic planning" and the University as an organization. In particular, the focus is on strategic planning as a means of overcoming resistance to change within the University.

The argument developed in this chapter is twofold. Firstly, that the search for specificity which characterises Professor Gourley's account of the process, and which is reflected in the documents, is the University of Natal's attempt to realise the "cascade" of ever more detailed plans in the conventional strategic planning model. To the extent that this process was expected to produce a strategy for the institution, it was unlikely (following Mintzberg on conventional strategic planning) to succeed. Secondly, it is argued that the model mis-cast the University as a Machine Bureaucratic organization. To the extent that the model implied top-down planning and a loss of autonomy for the academic staff – the professionals who work in the "operating core" of the University – it was likely to meet with resistance.

#### **4.2 THE WALKER REPORT, 1988**

Perhaps the most prominent engine for change at the University of Natal during the period under review has been the financial difficulties it experienced. A key document produced in 1988, titled "The Short Term Plan for Academic Departments" but commonly referred to as the Walker Report (University of Natal 2, 1988), observed that the University was "R8-million short of even meeting those current activities which our priorities committees have rated as contractual obligations", and it argued for reductions in the staff complement to effect savings of R13-million. (1988:5) The savings would be spread across the non-medical academic departments (R7,600,00), the Medical Faculty (R1,100,000), and the non-academic departments (R4,300,000). (1988:11-12)

The report refers to the goal of the University, as stated in the 1982 Mission Statement (University of Natal 1, 1982), as being: "To serve the community through excellence in teaching, learning, scholarship and research". It says in its introduction:

Planning towards our goal has, until now, been carried out against a background of growth. Decisions could be made on academic criteria without serious consideration of financial constraints. This situation has now changed. In a

situation of zero or negative growth new activities and the improvement of existing activities cannot occur without pruning other activities which no longer have high priority. The prudent assumption in the short term is that levels of funding will not be significantly different from those of 1988. At these levels, given its existing staffing establishment and activities, the University does not have enough money to carry out its day-to-day activities. It is thus essential to make substantial savings on our staffing budget. (1988:i)

The focus of the report is on the academic departments. It says:

This document is a plan for *academic* departments. It assumes that equivalent cuts will be made in the administrative and service departments by looking critically at their operations, improving their productivity and ceasing operations which are not essential to the proper functioning of the University in its attempt to meet its goal. (1988:2)

As far as the Medical Faculty is concerned, the report says:

We have had great difficulty in making any recommendations for the medical faculty. They have in the past not provided staffing statistics in the same way as other faculties and they have now failed to supply a faculty plan. Their staffing is extremely expensive with staffing costs amounting to almost 20% of the staffing costs of all other academic departments. In the circumstances, we have no alternative but to recommend a *pro rata* cut. (1988:19)

Implementation of the plan should start from 1 January 1989, the report says. "Where departments must shrink, use should be made of natural staff attrition so that the plan is implemented over 3 years. Where departments are to be abolished it would, however, be advisable to implement this without delay." (1988:21)

But prior to the start of implementation, a complicated set of "Procedures for Planning" were to be followed, because the details of planning within the financial constraints were considered an academic affair and "the details of how the targets are to be achieved are put firmly within the hands of the faculties themselves". (1988:12)

Some closely related faculties will be grouped together for planning purposes. The intention is that each faculty or group of faculties will have a review committee appointed by UPC [the then University Planning Committee] and a planning committee which is either the present faculty planning committee or a joint committee in the case of linked faculties. The review committee will interact with the faculty planning committees and will consist of a Deputy Vice Chancellor and two academic members of UPC. (1988:12)

Broadly speaking, there was to be an academic evaluation of departments (driven mainly by the review committees, consulting with the Deans and assisted by the faculty planning committees) and a faculty plan (mainly the responsibility of the faculty planning committees) built upon the academic evaluations and other department-related information. (1988:12-13)

Significantly, very little of this plan was implemented. The result of the exercise was not departmental cuts, but rather the drawing up of a new Mission Statement.

Referring to the Walker document in a September 1997 interview, Professor Chris Cresswell said it had a lot of common sense, but was hastily put together. "It was almost grounded because of inaccurate data that was presented. It wasn't palatable in many ways, and the academics soon jumped on it. Nothing was ever implemented, or it was done half-cock. The general attitude was: 'Just weather it'."

This attitude was assisted by the response of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Booysen, who took the view (in Professor Cresswell's account) that one could not go about planning with no clear directions on where the institution wanted to go in the next five years. This stimulated the Mission Statement – written largely by Professor Booysen, Professor Gourley, and Professor Cresswell – which "set major signposts for the direction the University would take over the next 10 years".

Professor James Leatt's account of the response to the Walker Report (in an August 1997 interview) is similar: "The implications of the Walker Report were so difficult to handle that in a way he became a scapegoat. People questioned his methodology. They found fault with his figures. Walker, who was a Professor of Physics, was left high and dry. Instead of doing an audit, the University said: Let's agree on where we want to go."

The result of the process of agreeing on where the University wanted to go was the 1989 Mission Statement which, among other things, was premised on continued growth for the university, where the basic assumption of the Walker document was that there would be zero growth. An account of this turnabout is provided in the next section.

#### **4.3 THE 1989 MISSION STATEMENT**

"The University of Natal strives to serve all sections of its community through excellence in scholarship, teaching, learning, research and development."

This summary appears at the head of the University's 1989 Mission Statement. (The text of the Mission Statement is included here as Appendix 2.) The overall goal of the 1982 Mission Statement was: "To serve the community through excellence in teaching, learning, scholarship and research." (See 1988: i, 2)

Although there may not seem to be much difference between the two broad formulations, there were differences in the detailed objectives, and the document

supporting the later Mission Statement, entitled "The Role in Society of the University of Natal, 1989 Onwards" (University of Natal 3, 1989), was clearly critical of the earlier attempt. It says:

In the early 1980's the forerunner of the University Planning Committee, the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, prepared a Statement of Management Policy for the University in the form of a broadly encompassing statement of Goal, a list of nine Objectives, each with an attendant list of Strategies totalling 73, and a further 43 statements of Action.

This document, which may for convenience be referred to as "Mission Statement 1982", was approved by Senate and Council in 1982 and was intended to provide the basis for forward planning in the University. On reflection, it is clear that Mission Statement 1982 has had very little impact on the planning process and has not significantly influenced decisions and actions on current issues.

There may be a number of reasons why this is so and these may include the fact that the Goal is a brief and broad statement of an ideal with no reference to the particular circumstances of the University of Natal and the society in which it exists. Perhaps, as a consequence, the list of Objectives, Strategies and Actions which flow from the Goal tend to be a comprehensive 'wish list' striving towards an ideal, rather than a statement of mission which takes into account the social and financial circumstances of the day. (University of Natal 3, 1989:1)

The document notes two factors as the most significant changes in the circumstances of the University since 1982: "the allowance of a non-racial student admission policy and the imposition of financial constraints". (1989:1)

In 1982, it says, "the University of Natal was receiving a full subsidy provision and the staff establishment was in a state of expansion" (1989:1). But in the five years 1984-1988, the university's subsidy entitlement had been cut by 5%, 16%, 15%, 17%, and 25% respectively. (1989:4) And in 1982, the document reports, "the student population was overwhelmingly White as the government controls on admission of other races were still being enforced and there was little prospect of any change in that area in the foreseeable future". But new legislation in 1983 "relaxed governmental control on student admissions". (1989:1) Between 1983 and 1988, there was a 166% increase in the number of African enrolments at the University and an 88% increase in the number of Indian students, while Coloured students increased by 16% and White students by 13%. The proportion of African students increased in the period from 5.5% (542 students) to 11.3% (1,442 students), while the proportion of White students declined from 81% (7,928 students) to 70.3% (8,939 students), as the total number of students grew by 30% from 9,800 in 1982 to 12,724 in 1988. (1989:3)

The document marshals a strong argument, based on national and regional demographics and student demand for admission to the country's universities, for a

policy of growth with increasing admission of students who were not white. It says:

The Minister of Education and Culture has decreed that the University of Natal, together with other so-called 'White' universities that resort under his ministry, should have negligible or very low growth rates.... However, the University is unable to accept this basis of planning for the future since it takes no account of demographic realities and the demand for education. (1989:5)

It says the scenarios for university enrolment implied by the government's racially based "own affairs" policy are "clearly not practical". It says:

The only feasible solution is to take a global non-racial view of the future provision of university education in South Africa and provide for an annual growth of approximately 3,4% in student numbers at all universities in South Africa, with each university being expected to provide for all race groups. (1989:8)

The document calculates that "the universities of the Natal/KwaZulu region should plan to provide for an annual increase in student numbers of the order of 6,4% until the year 2010. If the ratio of 9,1/1000 head of population is to be achieved for each of the race groups as presently defined by Government, then the growth of African student numbers must continue at a much faster rate than that of other race groups and a decline in Indian and White students numbers must take place." (1989:10) It takes a somewhat more conservative view, however, arguing for a controlled growth rate of 4% per annum for the University of Natal, projecting a total of 28,091 FTEs (Full-time Equivalent Students) by the year 2010, in approximate proportions of 67% African, 20% White, 10% Indian and 3% Coloured. (1989:11-12)

Committing the university to an "Equal Opportunities, Affirmative Action" policy, the document notes that in terms of this EO/AA policy "the current practice for determining student admission to the University on the basis only of performance in the matriculation examination is clearly not proper". (1989:15) It says:

Every effort must be made to develop other criteria for judging the potential for prospective students to succeed at university so that these can be used in conjunction with past performance for determining admission to the University.

In circumstances where students enter the University without the necessary educational background to benefit immediately from the experience, irrespective of the method of selection, it is necessary for special academic support programmes to be developed so that these students can make good their educational deficiencies and so be given the best possible opportunity of realising their potential for success. These support programmes are of a variety of kinds, including intermediate tertiary colleges, bridging courses, back-up tutorial courses, extended curricula and additional courses, etc....

The educationally disadvantaged students also come for the most part from economically impoverished family circumstances. The need for substantial amounts of money is evident to provide alternative methods of instruction, as well as to provide bursaries for the rapidly increasing number of these students. These funds should be sought from Central Government, who at present do not include this activity for subsidy purpose, as well as from the private sector and other sources, as it is clear that the University will not be able to meet these needs from its own resources. (1989:15)

In a section entitled "Structures and Procedures for Policy Implementation", the document makes the observation:

It is one thing to make statements of policy and another to ensure their implementation. It is, however, necessary to examine all existing structures and procedures in the University to ensure that they are conducive to the implementation of the policy and the realisation of goals. Where deficiencies exist then either current structures and procedures must be adapted or new ones developed. (1989:17)

This statement, as we shall see in what follows, sets up a fundamental problem with which the University has been struggling in the past 10 years. Whatever the policy (or strategy) that the institution decides upon, there remains the problem of implementation. Here, as in more recent developments at the University, it is clear that the examination of "existing structures and procedures in the University to ensure that they are conducive to implementation of the policy and the realisation of goals" goes beyond what would reasonably be required to meet the immediate problem of balancing the books. (At the same time, in the case of the 1989 Mission Statement, it was the strategic decision to go for growth which, however logical and politically laudable, set up the financial crisis which had to be addressed in 1997.)

Looking firstly at "Present Macro-structures and Functions", the 1989 document notes that the University of Natal "is a unitary institution consisting of two centres (Durban and Pietermaritzburg) including three academic campuses – Howard College and Medical School in Durban, and Scottsville in Pietermaritzburg." (1989:17) It argues that there is good reason for maintaining the two-centre structure; and the advantage of maintaining the unitary nature of the institution at the highest level of Senate and Council "is that the three campuses can be developed rationally in relation to one another." (1989:17) But below this highest level, it says, "the maximum amount of autonomy of the two centres is to be encouraged". (1989:17)

Consistent with the needs for institutional unity and centre autonomy, full encouragement should be given to the maximum possible degree of devolution of authority in terms of administrative functions and resource allocation. Greater authority and responsibility must be devolved to Centre, Faculty and Departmental levels. Clearly, policy will still be determined centrally and the resource allocation process will commence centrally.

Improvement in efficiency of operation is not only a matter of internal rationalization and devolution of authority. The case for inter-university rationalization is growing in proportion to the reduction of resources. Clearly, a considerable opportunity for inter-university rationalization exists amongst the three residential universities in Natal/KwaZulu and UNISA.... (1989:18)

Turning to "Faculty and Departmental Functions and Structures", the document says:

The present arrangement of 16 faculties (9 in Durban and 7 in Pietermaritzburg) and the attendant 110, or so, departments has arisen by a process of evolution and elaboration of traditional programmes. The structure (Departments and Faculties) has evolved in order to give effect to functions (disciplines, curricula and courses). With the advent of serious financial constraints, the University has to look critically first at its functions and then its structures. It will have to restrict its range of functions to affordable limits. In order to do this rationally, it must examine and prioritise all functions so that those it sheds do not include those which are academically essential or highly desirable. An academically appropriate narrowing of the range of disciplines, a reduction of courses within a discipline and a simplification of curriculum options with less undergraduate specialization can be achieved and will have to be achieved if the University is to have sufficient resources for the functions it wishes to retain, and for the developments which its new obligations will demand of it.

This critical review of new functions may well suggest new structures. New and more appropriate department alignments, fewer larger departments reflecting less undergraduate specialization, new faculty alignments avoiding, where possible, the luxury of small faculties – all these will need to be considered and will flow logically from rationalization of function. (1989:18)

Apart from the significant assumption that certain structural changes will "flow logically from rationalization of function", what is proposed would seem to make sense in terms of reducing costs. But when the document turns to consideration of "Alternative Structures for Alternative Functions", factors which go well beyond rationalization for cost-cutting or efficiency purposes are introduced, attached to a notion of inter-disciplinary programmes which is repeated and becomes more insistent over the 10-year period. The document says:

As the University develops new programmes (curricula and research) aimed at meeting the needs of all sections of our community, so it will need to consider alternative structures. Existing structures may not be suited to these new programmes because of the essential interdisciplinary nature of the programmes. Present curricula by and large reflect a selection of courses arising from discipline determined departments. The curricula options have been developed with a view to first-world experiences and opportunities. The applications of these same disciplines to the needs of other sections of our community requires different course emphasis and a far greater degree of interdisciplinarity in curriculum structuring. Present structures are not well suited to such developments. (1989:18)

This could almost be a paraphrase of Mintzberg's observation, quoted in Chapter Three, that major innovations and new programmes in Professional Bureaucracies "cut across existing specialities" and "require a rearrangement of the pigeonholes". (1979:374-375)

The University's "Role in Society" document continues:

For instance, perhaps the University should now create four inter-departmental and inter-faculty Schools, each with its Board of Studies – a School of Educational Development, a School of Developmental Medicine, a School of Rural Development, and a School of Urban Development. Each School would govern a Bachelors degree of the same name. The membership of each of these Schools would be drawn from the staff in a variety of departments and faculties. The Boards of Studies would develop the inter-disciplinary undergraduate

curricula and co-operative research programmes to address appropriately community needs in these areas. Each School should span not only Faculties, but also Centres.

The term 'School' should then be reserved for interdepartmental structures which govern and administer a degree programme of their own. The Board of Study of a School may report either directly to Senate Executive, as do Boards of Faculty, or it may report to Senate Executive through a Board of Faculty. Provision must be made for community input into the Board of Study of the School. The existing and proposed alternative structures are illustrated diagrammatically in Annexure 1. (1989:18) (Annexure 1 is included here as Appendix 3.)

The diagram is significant, as a graphic illustration of a fundamental restructuring of the institution which the university executive envisaged at that time. It sets up a duality in terms of institutional governance, between the proposed Schools on the one hand and the existing Departments and Faculties on the other, with the academic staff (the professionals in the operating core of the organization) being distributed between the two structures. One might go so far as to say that the dotted lines of the diagram represent the academic staff being "interpellated" or "hailed" in two different ways by the proposed structure: as serried ranks of professionals grouped together in the various Departments, and as dispersed individuals in relation to the Schools. This will be returned to later, particularly as the 1997 restructuring proposals go a step further than the diagram suggests – effectively proposing to eliminate the academic department as a significant administrative entity. For the moment, it should be noted that what the 1989 Mission Statement document and its diagram propose is a degree of restructuring which goes beyond the needs of cost-cutting and efficiency and which (if only implicitly) points in the direction of a reduction of the authority of the discipline-based academic departments.

The question to be posed now is this: If the 1989 Mission Statement was the response of the institution to the cost-cutting proposals of the Walker Report, what was the response to the Mission Statement?

This is the way Professor Leatt saw it (in an August 1997 interview):

The 1989 Mission Statement took a long time to negotiate. Very much against the stream, it argued for growth. Although Natal University considered itself a national university, it said: If you look at the Natal region, the number of university places relative to the population is very poor. So, despite fiscal stringencies, Peter Booysen and others were arguing for growth.

Where it came unstuck: Having come up with the Mission Statement, the question of how to implement it arose. In my understanding, the University spawned something like 80 working committees on how to implement the Mission Statement. The upshot was predictable; the thing ran into the sand, it ground to a halt. There were too many people burrowing away at different things. The work of key University committees ground to a halt as committees waited for each other to complete tasks.

One of the arguments advanced in the Mission Statement document was that the University of Natal should not only grow, but should be about 70% black by the year 2010. It came unstuck, as things often do, at the level of implementation. The Mission Statement was silent on how the growth was to be paid for. Subsidies were being cut. Operating expenses were still way over subsidy, by about R20-million. But a lot of people felt: How could you not be in favour of this? It was like being against motherhood or apple pie. But they were gravely cynical about how to get there. They didn't put their shoulders to the wheel, because they couldn't see how it could be done.

Professor Gourley, who was Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the time of the 1989 Mission Statement, took this view of the process in a January 1996 interview:

Strategic planning is not something that universities have been involved in traditionally. We had very savage budget cuts. As the executive changed, we had a group of people who felt strongly that it was important to do strategic planning. We thought that we should be involved in strategic planning in a much more specific kind of way than we had been before that.

Wherever the idea originated, we got on with putting together a mission statement, which was published in 1989. It was all covered with blood, sweat and tears. There was a tremendous amount of consultation.

The Vice-Chancellor wrote the first draft. We had done consultation before that. There were about 67 different inputs. The mission statement says we want to be excellent in everything. It talks about research and development, and developing the community.

Having written the mission statement, we fell back with delight and exhaustion. We had solved the problem. We *had* made progress, but we hadn't made it easier for people to make specific decisions about specific things. The mission statement wasn't specific enough.

#### **4.4 THE 1991 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REVIEW**

The response to the 1989 Mission Statement, then, was essentially more planning – as contained in the 1991 Vice-Chancellor's Review (University of Natal 4, 1991), discussed below; and the September 1992 Working Paper (University of Natal 5, 1992), which will be examined in the next section.

The Vice-Chancellor's Review covers an enormous amount of ground, dealing with several key issues of the time, and shows evidence of gargantuan tasks having been undertaken as part of the process.

For instance, the review discusses four options for the arrangement of the Durban campus, including Medical School, and the Pietermaritzburg campus (status quo,

devolution, total autonomy, centralisation) and recommends the option of devolution. And in its review of the University's committee system alone, it records that more than 137 interviews were held and 47 written submissions evaluated, in addition to earlier committee reports and accounts of committee structures at several other institutions.

The detail of the review cannot be reflected here. Of more concern in the present context are some of the presuppositions of the review and its approach to planning and resource allocation. The argument made here is that the University of Natal followed a more-or-less conventional approach to strategic planning, although both Professor Gourley and Professor Leatt said that there was no one, explicit, model of strategic planning being followed.

One illuminating pre-supposition is the acceptance by the planners of the conventional planning doctrine that structure should follow strategy. (This could be seen as a variation of the view found in the 1989 Mission Statement document that structures will follow logically from functions.) In Chapter 9, on Implementation and Transition, the review states: "Before Phase One of the Review, there was some debate as to whether the strategic planning phase should precede rather than follow the consideration of structure. The literature demonstrates that 'structure follows strategy', and indeed it is self-evident that this must be so." (1991:141-142)

This is illuminating, in that it illustrates how organisations can become mesmerised by the models they consciously adopt, or the received wisdom they less consciously accept and apply.

To say that structure must follow strategy is a powerful argument for keeping planners in business. But it can surely only be in a situation in which an organisation is being planned *de novo* that such a claim can be seriously made. Where an existing organization of any complexity undertakes a strategic planning exercise *in media res*, its history and existing structures must influence the planning debate and frame the possibilities open to it.

By accepting the view that structure must follow strategy, the authors of the review put themselves into something of a bind. They effectively apologise for a decision to "proceed immediately with the examination of structural matters on the understanding that much could be achieved in streamlining the operational functions of the University, thereby releasing great energy into the system", although "it must be appreciated that the strategic planning exercise in Phase Two could conceivably carry structural implications and it would be unfortunate to have to impose two sets of changes on any part of the system in a short period of time". (1991:142)

Yet one of their key recommendations, with implications throughout the system, is clearly dictated at least in part by structural considerations: and that is to devolve authority to the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses, dictated (once total autonomy was excluded) by the simple physical distance between the two centres and the time it takes senior administrators to travel back and forth.

The precedence of this consideration is implicitly acknowledged in Professor Gourley's account of the review process:

The Vice-Chancellor had given notice of his retirement. The new Vice-Chancellor was James Leatt, from UCT. He was quite vigorous and eager to get things going.

He recognised the frustration in the executive and the organisation as a whole in not coming to grips with a more specific direction. He set in motion the Vice-Chancellor's Review. We wanted to be more specific about strategies. What do words like 'excellence' and 'equity' mean?

We knew there was an enormous amount of frustration and waste of effort as a result of being a three-way campus: Medical School, Maritzburg, and Durban. A lot of time was wasted up and down the road.

One of the first things we decided was to look at how we were governing ourselves. Accepted business theory says that structure follows strategy. But we knew that we had to have a more devolved structure. We needed to push power down to the people. Being highly centralised doesn't encourage initiative.

In the chapter on Planning and Resource Allocation, the review makes the point that all institutions and organisations, including universities, are "involved in planning, whether processes and procedures are formalised or not" (1991:131). It endorses the view of Fielden and Lockwood (John Fielden being the overseas consultant who assisted the review team) that "planning is the continuous and collective exercise of judgment in the taking of decisions affecting the future" (Fielden and Lockwood, 1973:112).

The review says:

Because planning is a continuous process, a planning cycle must be defined. For the collective exercise of judgment, planning should also be participative at its base. Obviously only a few members of the University can be involved in all facets of planning, but all members should be involved in some aspects. At the very least, each member of staff should be involved in the forward planning of the Department or unit to which he or she belongs, while students should be afforded the opportunity of giving feedback on courses and thereby having input into Departmental course planning. The planning process is essentially integrative and includes coordinating financial plans and resource allocation with human resource plans (students and staff) and physical and space plans, etc. (1991:132)

Again, the accepted wisdom ties the process into something of a knot. What does it mean, in the context of a complex organisation like the University of Natal, to say that

"planning is the continuous and collective exercise of judgment in the taking of decisions affecting the future"?

To be both continuous and collective, in any accepted meaning of those words, is clearly impossible. To the extent that it is continuous, the process reduces to that of managing the institution. (Compare Mintzberg's discussion of planning as "future thinking", or "controlling the future", or "decision making" (1994:7-10).) To the extent that it is collective, it must either be a non-continuous adjunct to management or a continuous attempt by the collective to manage the institution; which latter is not far from what the more extreme proponents of transformation would like to see, but which would (probably) make the day-to-day management of the institution impossible.

The inherent contradiction plays itself out in what follows. The planning cycle, to the extent that it is defined in the review, is neither continuous nor thoroughly collective. (The flow chart setting out an annual Planning Cycle and Process is included here as Appendix 1.) Three "interdependent" planning processes are proposed:

**Strategic plans** which cover a time horizon of (say) five years and which set objectives, goals, and targets to be achieved during that period...;

**Operational plans** which are the translation of the strategic plan into specific action programmes for a two to three year period in implementation of the strategic plan;

**Budgetary plans** which are the refinement of the operational plan into a fixed plan for the year ahead.... (1991:136)

These planning processes are linked, in a way which is not made clear, to four planning levels. "It is implicit in this planning structure," the review says, "that inputs are made from each of the four planning levels into each of the three planning processes. Guidelines and assumptions will be agreed at the University level and issued to all levels." (1991:136)

The four levels are:

**The University level** which has the dual function of formulating plans and policy and of allocating resources to the University as a whole...;

**The Campus level** at which plans and policies for a campus are developed (within the parameters set at University level) and plans from the Area levels are co-ordinated...;

**The Area level** which consists of Faculties, Schools, and Divisions...;

**The Unit level** which consists of academic departments and other functional entities such as the Audio-Visual Centre, the Multicopy Centre, etc."

(1991:135-136)

Whatever else we have here, we are clearly looking at a "cascade" model of strategic planning. Someone at the top is looking out over Durban, taking the longer view and

setting the broad parameters, and those lower down are taking progressively shorter views and developing ever-more detailed plans as the strategic plan cascades down the structure.

Clearly, also, this is more of an analytical than an integrative process. The strategic plan is decomposed into operational plans, which are again decomposed into budgetary plans.

And the process is essentially top-down. The responsibility for University planning, policy formulation, and overall resource allocation belongs to the Joint Executive Committee (JEC), the review says (1991:136-137). "This committee ... will allocate the required and approved resources to the two campuses and to the Central Office for their operational costs and any special projects approved." (1991:137)

It should be noted that this committee is fairly large, at about 20 members (1991:100), and the review states: "The allocation of resources will be based on the operational and development plans submitted to the JEC by the Central Office and by the two Campus Executive Committees. The preparation of these plans will derive from an interactive process between the various planning levels ... and will require the JEC's approval." (1991:137)

But the whole cycle (see Appendix 1), begins with the JEC translating the strategic plan into operational plans and ends with the JEC revising the strategic and operational plans. The top-down nature of the process is clear.

It is one of the paradoxes of this model of strategic planning that it inherently perpetuates one of the difficulties which the review committee explicitly wants to remove: the separation, at least conceptually, of planning from the budget. The review says that the first problem which only a new planning structure can address is "that the present planning process is divorced from the budgeting/resource allocation activity" (1991:133). It adds: "Planning and resource allocation should be considered as the two sides of a single coin. It is unwise to try to separate them." (1991:134)

But the model still seems to suggest that a significant planning exercise can take place, at all levels and through at least two of the processes, without budget constraints pre-determining the outcome to some extent.

(This separation of planning from budgets is, incidentally, one of the common problems of tertiary education institutions in South Africa. It is one of the problems which the

Peninsula Technikon, for instance, is trying to resolve in its own planning and budgeting process. One can only speculate on how such a separation could come about: The fact that the institutions are (largely) funded rather than entrepreneurial; a divide between the planners (mostly academics) and the administration?)

But the key paradox to note here is that this cascade-type planning programme sits uneasily with the avowed intention of devolution. The review says:

The devolution of autonomy to campuses and Faculties, and the development of an integrated and interactive planning and resource allocation process, are essential to the well-being of the University and should lead to a high level of effectiveness and efficiency, as well as to an ethos of responsibility, decision-taking, and accountability. (1991:138)

But how can an "integrated and interactive planning and resource allocation process" which is essentially decompositional and top-down be expected to have such an outcome?

Look again at our starting point here: the implications which follow from the assumption that "planning is the continuous and collective exercise of judgment, etc." What becomes of "collective"?

- Although the review says that "planning should also be participative at its base", it qualifies this by saying that "obviously only a few members of the University can be involved in all facets of planning" (1991:132). This is clearly impossible if taken literally, and must mean that only a few members can be involved in the really important parts.
- "All members should be involved in some aspects": Everybody (staff members, that is) can get involved in the less important parts, for example at the departmental or unit level.
- "Students should be afforded the opportunity of giving feedback on courses and thereby having input into Departmental course planning": The students are allocated a still more tangential role, restricted effectively to commenting on their courses – clearly far less than anything they would accept under the current climate of transformation.

The overall picture is that of a top-down plan, cascading down the structure, which, far from encouraging "responsibility, decision-making, and accountability", will carry everyone along with everything mapped out to such a degree of detail (read "specificity") that decision-making will become virtually redundant.

#### **4.5 THE WORKING PAPER: SEPTEMBER 1992**

This is how Professor Gourley saw the consequences of the 1991 Vice-Chancellor's Review, in a January 1996 interview:

The report came out in December 1991. It had to go through Senate and Council. So we got cracking towards the second half of 1992 and in 1993.

We made a number of fundamental changes. We created a highly decentralised structure. We pushed as much authority down as we could.

In the Senate House structure (or central office) we kept Finance, Public Affairs, Fund Raising, the Management Information Service, Research Office, Data Bases, Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, etc.

We left very few committees at the top. We cut out something like 37 committees and created 12 new ones, with a nett loss of 25 committees. We also cut down on the number of people in committees.

This was a major change in the way the organisation operated.

Another objective was to cut down on the time it took to make decisions. A proposal would go through all the committees. It would take forever. We made it possible to get decisions made a lot quicker.

Up to that time, virtually all the committees were composed of Academic members of staff. Other staff might attend meetings, without a vote. We said that was not acceptable. All members of staff should be part of the discussion, and able to elect people on to the various committees.

This was a fundamental change in ethos.

We had students on Senate and Council a long time ago. Where they wanted to be, they were there. This was formalised and extended, so that they could be on all committees.

Professor Gourley continued: "Then the next part: we wanted to take the mission statement and turn it into more of a working document: something that people could do something with. We appointed a group of people and gave them tasks. They wrote position papers on things we thought were important. 'Quality and Equity': What are they? And a pretty standard thing about strengths and weaknesses."

The result of this exercise, the 1992 Working Paper (University of Natal 5, 1992), subtitled Choosing a Focus, is an odd document. It's oddity derives mainly from a feature which will be familiar to many of those who have been involved in strategic planning at some time or another: it is presented as "a working paper" (1992: Preface), not in the sense of something that people can "do something with" but in the sense of a draft intended for wide consultation, but it effectively decides many of the issues which it raises for debate.

The document, readers are told on page 1, "is by no means a final product and should be seen as only a draft for discussion within the community and every page is labelled as such" (1992:1, original emphasis).

Yet, to take one example, Chapter 8 discusses three possible strategies for the future (Haven of Excellence, Mass University Education, and Quality with Equity) and concludes:

The sections which follow work through the implications of a new strategy on the University's Mission Statement and suggest how the rest of the planning process would work. In order to do this it has been necessary to make an assumption as to which of the three possible strategies is selected. For these purposes only the Quality with Equity strategy has been used. **Whichever strategy is ultimately chosen by the University, the development of goals and objectives and subsequent planning process will be similar**" (1992:47, original emphasis).

In fact, some key decisions such as devolution, with widespread implications for the institution, were already being implemented following the December 1991 Vice-Chancellor's Review. But the working paper says repeatedly that the strategic plan is not yet in place. For example, Chapter 10, on Completing the Strategic Plan, opens with the statement: "Once Senate and Council have decided on the broad strategy for the University, the business of planning can begin in earnest" (1992:52).

A second example: Chapter 6 is entitled "Changes Needed Whatever the Strategy". The Working Paper says: "The University now has to make changes for these two sets of reasons: the qualitative and the financial. Whatever strategy it selects from those outlined in section 8, there are some fundamental developments that must take place." (1992:29)

These "fundamental developments", each dealt with in some detail, include the implementation of equal opportunities policies for staff and students, efficiency savings in administration, academic rationalisation, management of people, generating income and fostering academic entrepreneurs, democratisation of the University's governance, regional collaboration, and international links and markets. (1992:29-34)

The question is: If that does not already constitute a strategy, what does?

In a revealing comment in an August 1997 interview, Professor Leatt said: "The Registrar was beside himself. He never knew whether he should be implementing the December 91 report or contributing to the new strategic plan."

The submission here is that this indicates something more than a lack of clarity over priorities. It is indicative of the confusion which must arise when a plan is being implemented while the plan is still awaited.

But the bind into which the "postponed plan" puts the planners (anticipated of course in the treatment of "strategy before structure" in the 1991 Review) is perhaps best illustrated in the section on democratisation of the University's governance.

The Working Paper says:

It is very important that discussions on participatory structures do not neglect the basics of good management practice. The consequences of many similar discussions in universities in the USA and the UK in the 1960s/1970s were that decision processes became too elongated and tortuous, large committees were expected to arrive at technical decisions and there was a great reluctance to trust individuals to do anything. The main objective of Phase 1 of the VCR was to eliminate the vestiges of such practices from the University. It would be a tragedy if they were to be reintroduced. A way must be found of giving stakeholders a proper role in decision-making without strangling the system again. (1992:33)

The danger perceived by the authors is that the postponed plan, in having to deal with the now stronger transformational demands of the students who "would seek to question the powers of Council, Senate, Faculties, etc" (1992:33), might conflict with the existing plan then being implemented. Or to put it another way, they are saying that strategy must not be allowed to dictate to (the new) structure.

It is not being suggested here that this sort of contradiction is an indication of bad faith on the part of the University leadership, although the document would more than likely have been seen by its readers at the University as another indication of a top-down approach to planning.

But the problem is not unique to the University of Natal. Every institution which embarks on a planning process is faced with the dilemma between leadership and participation. What is the CEO's prerogative? How can the commitment of the rank and file members of the organisation be secured, if every new suggestion or movement is seen as another management imposition?

It is rather the fundamental assumption of strategic planning which Mintzberg has identified that seems to dog the entire process at Natal, as it does elsewhere: the assumption that analysis will produce synthesis. Along with such subsidiary assumptions as "structure follows strategy" (University of Natal 4, 1991:142), or that the rationale of strategic planning is "to seize the initiative and to be in control" (University of Natal 5, 1992:13).

There simply is no resting point at which the entire institution can stop and say: "In the best of all possible worlds, where would we like to go?" We are already in a particular part of a particular world, which is not the best of all possible worlds, and we are already moving in a particular direction, and these facts have significant implications for where we might want to go. And no amount of analysing the situation is suddenly going to reveal the one best strategy: on that route, strategy formation remains a mysterious black box, as Mintzberg would have it.

Where the Working Paper does show significant progress, is in the degree to which it brings a greater understanding of the University of Natal itself and of its location in that particular part of the world in which it finds itself.

The Working Paper draws on planning papers written by University staff, on: Mission Statement Review; Institutional and Competitor Analysis; Political Scenarios; Student Scenarios; Land, Buildings and Equipment; Staff; Learning and Teaching; Collaboration; International Links; Income Generation. It also acknowledges a debt to the post secondary working party of NEPI (National Education Policy Investigation) which was then engaged in a thorough review of national educational needs and priorities. (1992:i,2)

The Working Paper contains a profile of Natal University, comparisons with other Universities, tables showing student progress and time to complete, and a central position is given to anticipated financial difficulties, based on a projected 25% cut in state funding (1992:i,17) and a possible total annual funding shortfall of R60-million by 1995 (1992:19).

The self-reflective nature of the document is indicated, for example, by a paragraph on its purpose:

South Africa is poised for a radical transformation on political, social and economic fronts. The University of Natal must also radically transform itself. Throughout the world universities have found it very difficult to bring about changes in themselves without strong external pressure. They are by nature highly conservative institutions with cumbersome decision-making structures which resist innovation almost instinctively. The University of Natal is no exception and its last decade provides several examples of changes failing to happen for one reason or another. As a result many believe that opportunities have been lost through the regular adoption of "random misery" as a solution to difficult financial constraints. All this has happened despite the adoption of an excellent Mission Statement which had widespread acceptance. The missing ingredients have been a clear focus derived from all the desirable aspirations in the Mission Statement and any strategic objectives against which faculties could plan. (1992:3)

("Random misery" here refers to the practice of reducing expenditure by freezing positions wherever vacancies occur in the institution, as opposed to cutting back in some areas rather than others according to some policy, set of criteria, or "strategy". The Working Paper says that these "equal misery" and random-cuts-by-vacancy-freeze solutions are irrational and cut both the weak and the strong. (1992:29))

Although remaining loyal to the Mission Statement as a statement of intent, the Working Paper recognises in a number of places a failure on the part of the Mission Statement to produce significant change in the desired direction. For example, it says:

The University's Mission Statement 1989 rightly gives enormous prominence to the concept of excellence. It highlights the commitment to excellence in scholarship, teaching, learning, research and development.

The Planning Papers have shown that the University is not living up to these aspirations in several areas: the quality of teaching (as evidenced by time taken to graduate); the uneven performance in research; and the failure to integrate development studies into the life of the University. (1992:42)

In Chapter 9, Reviewing the Mission Statement, the Working Paper considers arguments for and against revising the statement, before assuming that the arguments against changing it "will find favour with the University community and that the 1989 Statement is retained for the moment with the possibility of minor amendments in two or three year's time." (1992:48)

Again, it is difficult to see what the missing "clear focus" and "strategic objectives" might be, other than the plan being laid out in the Working Paper or a re-worked Mission Statement, which re-working was also implicitly being undertaken in the Working Paper while it explicitly maintained unswerving allegiance.

Clearly, as the discussion around equity and quality demonstrates, "excellence" is no longer the sole, or even the predominant, aim of the University.

To take just one telling example: In a brief discussion on the possibility of adopting an outright focus on quality, the Working Paper observes: "In the light of financial forecasts it is most unlikely that the State would acknowledge the University's special quality status with any extra funding." (1992:42)

The Working Paper's discussion on "goals" and "objectives", apart from bearing out the various ways in which key terms in the planning vocabulary can be defined, really

constitutes a re-writing of the Mission Statement, with the goals and strategic objectives (assuming of course that the Quality with Equity strategy is adopted) replacing the 1989 Mission Statement's 12 point statement and 20 page supporting document.

The proposed goals are:

The University of Natal has a strategy of Quality with Equity. It dedicates its excellence in teaching, research and development to progress through reconstruction. It serves South Africa, and the Natal KwaZulu Region in particular, by delivering quality teaching which enables students from all backgrounds to realise their academic potential and to obtain degrees of a continuing international standard. It undertakes quality research to national and international standards and provides development services which meet clients' needs. (1992:49.)

And proposed as a "suitable set of strategic objectives", should the University adopt the Quality with Equity strategy, are the following:

The University of Natal will ensure that:

1. Its courses and curricula are in line with the changing needs of society.
2. It grows selectively in response to the needs of society, in so far as resources allow.
3. Equal opportunities policies for both staff and students are implemented energetically and on the basis of agreed targets.
4. The quality of teaching and learning activities is promoted and rigorously monitored in order to uphold exit standards.
5. Any research it undertakes achieves national and preferably international standards of excellence.
6. Staff are enabled, and expected, to devote their skills to achieving the University's Mission and Goals and are encouraged to be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial.
7. It uses its resources in development and environmental studies to serve the Natal KwaZulu Region, South Africa and other African clients.
8. It works, wherever possible, with other institutions in the Natal KwaZulu Region and elsewhere in pursuit of its strategies.
9. It enables its community to have the widest input into governance that is compatible with effective and efficient management.
10. It develops international and African academic links in order to enrich its basic disciplines as well as contributing to the community of scholars.
11. It maintains cost-effective academic and support services and a sound infrastructure. (1992:49-50)

The Working Paper says "it is not the purpose of this document to suggest details of the programmes by which the University will achieve the above strategic objectives" as "that is the role of the various planning processes". (1992:50) But it proceeds to give some examples of "how the programmes and performance measures interact with the objectives" (1992:50); and then, "in order to illustrate some possibilities", it shows in Appendix V (reproduced here as Appendix 4) "some programmes for each of the 10 [in fact 11] strategic objectives and then suggests measures for each programme". (1992:51)

So, with the 1989 Mission Statement ostensibly still in place; with key recommendations from the 1991 Vice-Chancellor's Review being implemented and re-shaping the

institution; with the new strategic plan still awaited; we have a whole new cascade – from a re-worked Mission Statement (in the form of the proposed goals), through objectives, to tentative programmes and measures.

This new cascade again falls squarely within the more or less conventional model of strategic planning. The decomposition and analysis is there. A fair degree of specificity, in a Fordist or assembly-line paradigm, had been achieved. The synergy (or overall strategy), although to some extent pre-determined and heavily implied, is still awaited. The assumption that if everyone follows the steps, everything will work out fine, underlies the process.

#### 4.6 HEARTS AND MINDS

The argument which has been advanced above is that the conventional strategic planning approach of the planners at the University of Natal tied them up in a number of knots. For example, their commitment to the notion that strategy should precede structure made it difficult for them to acknowledge the strategic implications of structural considerations (such as the distance between Pietermaritzburg and Durban requiring a degree of devolution). And, worse still, the notion that the cascade of the conventional strategic planning process would result, through its analytical process, in the synthesis of strategy, meant that the university's strategy was always on hold. Even when key strategic decisions had effectively been taken and were to some extent being implemented, the strategy was still awaited. And, argues Mintzberg, it was unlikely to come out of that process: analysis does not produce synthesis.

But there is another bind, or contradiction, which needs to be more clearly focused. Devolution of authority was one of the avowed aims of the planners; and of course it was to some extent implied by structural considerations and the strategy-in-waiting. But the *process*, being essentially top-down, was not consistent with the intention. To put this in terms of our earlier discussion of Mintzberg on organizations, a Machine Bureaucratic process was being applied in a Professional Bureaucracy.

The frustration of the University leadership is clear from the documents referred to above. Faced with the prospect of ever-deeper government cuts in subsidy and the debilitating effects of the "random misery" approach, the leadership was faced with an admirable mission statement or set of goals on the one hand, and a lack of meaningful change at grassroots level on the other. As we saw above, the Working Paper bewailed the highly conservative nature of universities, with their "cumbersome decision-making

structures which resist innovation almost instinctively”, and added:

The University of Natal is no exception and its last decade provides several examples of changes failing to happen for one reason or another.... The missing ingredients have been a clear focus derived from all the desirable aspirations in the Mission Statement and any strategic objectives against which faculties could plan. (1992:3)

Professor Gourley, reviewing the process of drawing up the Working Paper in a January 1996 interview, put it this way: “This clarified our thinking quite substantially. We learned a lot in the process. But it was not enough. We were making a clearing in the forest. But it wasn’t specific enough.” And as an aside: “For academics, the less specific, the better. So that they can yell at you from the sidelines.”

At another point in the interview, she observed: “The thing we have come to understand about strategy, in a long process of learning the hard way: strategy doesn’t mean anything unless you have the hearts and minds of the people.”

The frustration of the search for specificity, throughout this process, was the flip-side of the frustrating search for strategy. Both are attributable to the implicit strategic planning model. The constant analysis did not produce the desired synthesis, so the strategy was always (officially) on hold; but it was emerging all the time. To the extent that a strategy did emerge – for example in the Mission Statement or the Working Paper’s goals, or acceptance of the devolution route – the process did not deliver the lock-step outcomes implicitly promised by the planning cascade. The broad vision did not result in the specific actions at the grassroots required to bring about the desired change.

The argument here is that it could not reasonably have been expected to do so, although the helpfulness of such statements made with hindsight is questionable. The cascade model, if it is appropriate at all, is more appropriate to a Machine Bureaucracy than to a Professional Bureaucracy.

Mintzberg says of the Machine Bureaucracy that it is “a structure with an obsession, namely control”. (1979:312) In the Machine Bureaucracy, considerable power rests with the managers of the strategic apex, both formal power in terms of the hierarchy and chain of authority, and informal power in terms of knowledge. “The only ones to share any real informal power with the top managers are the analysts of the technostructure, by virtue of their role in standardizing everyone else’s work.” (1979:322)

Says Mintzberg:

Strategy in these structures clearly emanates from the strategic apex, where the perspective is broad and the power is focused. **The process of strategy making is clearly a top-down affair, with heavy emphasis on action planning.** In top-

down strategy making ... all the relevant information is ostensibly sent up to the strategic apex, where it is formulated into an integrated strategy. This is then sent down the chain of authority for implementation, elaborated first into programs and then into activity plans. (1979:323; original emphasis unless otherwise stated.)

Compare this with Mintzberg's picture of the Professional Bureaucracy, which he describes as a "highly decentralized structure", where "a great deal of the power over the operating work rests at the bottom of the structure, with the professionals of the operating core." The power of the professional "derives from the fact that not only is his work too complex to be supervised by managers or standardized by analysts, but also that his services are typically in great demand. This gives the professional mobility, which enables him to insist on considerable autonomy in his work." (1979:357) "In the professional hierarchy, power resides in expertise; one has influence by virtue of one's knowledge and skills." (1979:360)

Looking at strategy formulation in Professional Bureaucracies, Mintzberg observes that as their outputs are difficult to measure, their goals cannot easily be agreed upon. He says:

**So the notion of a strategy – a single, integrated pattern of decisions common to the entire organization – loses a good deal of its meaning in the Professional Bureaucracy ....**

It would appear that the Professional Bureaucracy's own strategies represent the cumulative effect over time of the projects, or strategic "initiatives," that its members are able to convince it to undertake – to buy a new piece of equipment in a hospital, to establish a new degree program in a university, to develop a new specialty department in an accounting firm. Most of these initiatives are proposed by members of the operating core – by "professional entrepreneurs" willing to expend the efforts needed to negotiate the acceptance of new projects through the complex administrative structure.... (1979:363,364-365)

The role of the professional administrator in the formulation of strategy is "far from passive", says Mintzberg, and goes beyond helping the professionals:

Every good manager seeks to change his organization in his own way, to alter its strategies to make it more effective. In the Professional Bureaucracy, this translates into a set of strategic initiatives that the administrator himself wishes to take. But in these structures – in principle bottom up – the administrator cannot impose his will on the professionals of the operating core. Instead, he must rely on his informal power, and apply it subtly. Knowing that the professionals want nothing more than to be left alone, the administrator moves carefully – in incremental steps, each one hardly discernible. In this way, he may achieve over time changes that the professionals would have rejected out of hand had they been proposed all at once. (1979:365)

Clearly, the process followed at the University of Natal to this point was more in keeping with the Machine Bureaucracy than the Professional Bureaucracy. This is not to say that the University of Natal, or any other university for that matter, can practically be

characterised as thoroughly and exclusively a Professional Bureaucracy. As Mintzberg observes, "real structures in all but the most trivial organizations are enormously complex", and far more complex than the five configurations he describes. (1979:468) But by and large, the university adheres much more closely to the Professional Bureaucracy configuration than to the Machine Bureaucracy.

Nor does this conclusion imply that the management (the "professional administrators") of the university were consciously trying to impose a machine bureaucratic system on the Professional Bureaucracy of the University. Far from it. For example, the quotation from the Working Paper (above) on the difficulties of innovation in universities shows the sensitivity of the planners to the nature of the organization. But the conventional strategic planning model which was being applied held the planners in thrall. And that model was not appropriate to the Professional Bureaucracy in which it was being applied. As such, it is not surprising that it failed to win the hearts and minds of the people.

In the following chapter, we see what is in effect an abandonment on the part of Professor Gourley and the University executive of the search for specificity, in favour of encouraging "shared vision" on the part of the University community through the adoption of the "strategic initiative" of becoming a learning organization. With shared vision, the need for a lockstep planning process or cascade would become unnecessary (so the theory promises); and, co-incidentally, it might offer a means of bringing about consensus on change which was more in keeping with a post-Fordist world and an institution in which professionals comprise the operating core.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### UNIVERSITY OF NATAL: THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION, FINANCIAL CRISIS AND RESTRUCTURING

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the failure of the strategic planning process at the University of Natal to promote institutional change was attributable at least in part to the nature of the process itself.

On the one hand, there was the problem of the plan which was always awaited. Although some changes were being made and some, like the move towards devolution, were clearly strategic in nature, the strategic planning process had yet to deliver an explicit strategy. Following Mintzberg, it was argued that the analysis of the strategic planning process had failed to produce the desired synthesis, or synergy, and was unlikely to do so.

On the other hand, the supposed "cascade" effect of the planning process had failed to bring about significant change, as witnessed by the frustration of the top management in their search for more and more specificity. An admirable mission statement had long since been adopted, but there was little sign of significant change at grassroots level.

Looked at from the perspective of organizational structure, it was argued, the University was experiencing the difficulties of bringing about change in an organization characterised as a Professional Bureaucracy, which is not geared for innovation and in which the employees value their autonomy, by means of a process which was more suited to a Machine Bureaucracy.

Relating this to the theoretical discussion in Chapter Three, it could be argued that the University was applying a method for bringing about fundamental organizational change which was premised more on Theory X (on cynical assumptions about human nature) than on the more sanguine Theory Y. This in itself would not be problematic, if it produced the desired results; but the results were clearly unsatisfactory.

In terms of the discussion of Argyris and Schön's notions of "single-loop" and "double-loop" learning, one could characterise the strategic planning approach as one which operates essentially at the single-loop level. It might be expected to bring greater efficiency to the system, but only within the prevailing paradigm. The questioning of presuppositions or "mental models" implied by double-loop learning is largely absent.

In Professor Gourley's terms, something more was required to win the hearts and minds of the University community.

What can be seen occurring at the University of Natal, with the introduction of the notion of the University becoming a learning organization, is a shift from a Fordist, assembly-line approach to institutional change, represented by the more-or-less conventional strategic planning model, towards an approach which is more in keeping with a world of reflexive modernity. It is this shift towards becoming a learning organization which provides the second sub-unit of the case study, in Yin's terms.

Given the period of the case study's fieldwork – January 1996 to September 1997 – it might be argued that a third sub-unit is required, which focuses on the restructuring crisis which preoccupied the University community from at least July 1997 and which is likely to continue to preoccupy it for some considerable time. But it is part of the argument of this chapter that the restructuring crisis in fact highlights the inherent weakness of the learning organization approach to institutional change; and that consequently the learning organization and the restructuring crisis are best dealt with as one sub-unit of the case study. The difficulty to guard against in so doing, is a tendency to focus too much attention on the more recent and more emotionally charged restructuring crisis at the expense of other significant factors.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, the relatively sudden and ad hoc arrival of the learning organization idea at Natal University is noted; the expected and actual role of a corps of facilitators as agents of change is examined; a general down-playing of the jargon of the learning organization is observed as the University moves towards a largely executive process of restructuring; the financial crisis of 1997 is outlined; and the restructuring crisis arising from management proposals to meet the financial challenge is examined.

## **5.2 THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION ARRIVES**

The history of strategic planning at the University of Natal was characterised in various ways by observers interviewed in the case study as one of "a failure of implementation". Mission statements might be drawn up (1982, 1989), to which everyone would nod their assent, but little substantive change would take place.

As shown in the previous chapter, Professor Gourley saw this as a "lack of specificity" in the outcomes of the planning process. Her predecessor, Professor James Leatt, spoke in an interview of the repeated failure of the University of Natal to "bite on the bullet" of

implementing change. "A critical success factor is the ability to implement," Professor Leatt said. "We didn't understand that well. We thought that if you knew *what* you wanted to do, that was almost as good as knowing *how* to do it." The head of the University's Educational Development Unit in Durban, Janet Frame, said in a September 1997 interview that the University had "a singular inability to engage in processes that lead us somewhere. We are good at documents. But when it comes to trying to get everybody aligned behind the thinking of the University, there is a big gap."

It was in an effort to bridge this gap that the University leadership introduced the notion of becoming a learning organization.

Reflecting in January 1996 on the continuing search for specificity after the Working Paper, Professor Gourley said that a small task group was put together, which she convened. "Then the Vice-Chancellor [Professor Leatt] left in March 93. That was a disaster. But I had the bit between my teeth and the executive did too. The money was getting tougher and tougher. We went into a very self-reflective mode. We did some hard thinking and read through the background and position papers."

The result of this process was an August 1994 document entitled Vice-Chancellor's Review Phase II: Planning Guidelines 1994-1998 (University of Natal 7, 1994). (Much of the document is taken up in an undated pamphlet intended for wide dissemination, called Strategic Initiatives for the University of Natal (University of Natal 8), and a revised version of the pamphlet dated March 1997 (University of Natal 12, 1997).)

It should be no surprise that the Planning Guidelines 1994-1998 are based largely on the Quality with Equity strategy, as this was effectively the strategy-in-waiting. And, as Professor Gourley put it in a January 1996 interview: "You would have to be Rip van Winkel if you felt you hadn't been able to participate."

The 1994 Planning Guidelines document says that the strategy was outlined only in broad concept in the earlier document:

Although there was little substantive disagreement with the Choosing a Focus document [the Working Paper], the view was expressed that it needed to be elaborated upon and the details spelt out to facilitate its translation into concrete plans. This is the purpose of this document. It develops the strategy and should be read in the context of the existing strengths and structures of the University. (University of Natal 7, 1994:2)

The document says its "core assumption" is the "model of one University with one overall set of strategies which are developed and applied in different ways in Pietermaritzburg and Durban." (1994:3) Effectively, this is the strategic move of devolution, arising out of the 1991 Review.

The "driving influence" of the financial situation is ever present, with predictions still of "heavy cuts in subsidy income of as much as 25%". Income is said to be already "far short of what we need to function as a quality institution". (1994:3) The sense of social and political change is perhaps more insistent: "South Africa is experiencing momentous change and the social transformations which are taking place have a profound effect on universities and other institutions." (1994:3)

What is surprising in the Planning Guidelines, however, is the introduction of a new "strategic initiative", not signalled in the earlier documents. This is the strategic initiative to create a "learning organization" along the lines of Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*. And accompanying this new departure are some epistemological considerations. Under the heading "Challenges and Changes", the Guidelines document discusses a paradigm shift, a new Renaissance, a demand for a new kind of graduate, and a new environmental awareness as factors which "need to be taken into account in seeking to achieve quality in our teaching, research and development paradigms". (1994:5)

The most significant of these factors, linking as it does to the notion of the learning organization, is the paradigm shift from seeing the world as "a disassociated collection of parts" to seeing it as an "integrated whole". "The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realise that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems – interconnected and interdependent ..." (1994:5, quoting Capra.)

The Planning Guidelines document says:

The new paradigm has profound consequences for all institutions, including universities. Over the last 300 years, the curriculum has been organised largely in terms of disciplines. This division promotes the 'old paradigm', that is, the tendency to view the world of nature, life and work as segmented, differentiated into parts. Curricula and research design, if they are to recognise the validity of the new paradigm, need to be organised in such a way that scholars are produced who go beyond the isolated facts, who make connections across disciplines, who help shape a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated and authentic view of life.

The systems approach to solving problems has consequences which go beyond inter- or multi-disciplinary activity. It impinges on attitudes and even behaviour. This is because it is an approach which, rather than being individualistic and self-assertive, places value on the integrative and the group. It results in a shift from competition to co-operation, from domination to partnership. (1994:5)

The identified challenges and changes, the document says, "require new intellectual responses". It says commitment to change is one response; "commitment to learning about the new demands and learning the skills required to meet these demands is another." (1994:7)

Peter Senge, the document adds, would argue that the University should consciously transform itself into 'a learning organisation':

He believes that the only organisations which are likely to be successful in the future are 'learning organisations' which 'discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organisation'. The development of team learning is a vital and integral part of this process. 'Team learning is the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire. It builds on the discipline of developing shared vision. It also builds on personal mastery, for talented teams are made up of talented individuals. But shared vision and talent are not enough, the world is full of teams of talented individuals who share a vision for a while, yet fail to learn.' How we do this will be something on which all players would have to agree, but, we believe that it may well be somewhat easier to achieve in a university than most other kinds of institutions. (1994:8, quoting Senge.)

To the extent that the adoption of the learning organization as a strategic initiative was a strategic decision, it is clear that it cannot be attributed to the foregoing strategic planning process. This is not a reflection on the learning organization; rather it serves to confirm Mintzberg's view that planning is unlikely to result in strategy formation. For the learning organization appeared on the agenda, at the University of Natal, pretty much out of the blue. Looking at the formal documents, in the long process beginning with the formulation of the 1989 Mission Statement, there is no mention of the learning organization idea until the 1994 Planning Guidelines.

From Professor Gourley's account, there is a strong sense of coincidence about the idea's arrival. "It was at that stage that I came across Senge," she said in a January 1996 interview. And again: "I don't know whether everybody knew what they were buying into, when they voted for it." In her address to the University on the occasion of her installation as Vice-Chancellor on April 12 1994 (University of Natal 6, 1994), Professor Gourley argued strongly for universities and their curricula to address the complex moral or ethical issues of a world in which science could no longer confidently be expected to solve all the problems. But although the Club of Rome report, *The First Global Revolution* (1991), is referred to in both her address and the Strategic Initiatives document, Senge and the learning organization do not feature in the address.

Professor Chris Cresswell, who was Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Principal responsible for the Durban centre until he took early retirement in 1993, returned to the University as Principal of the Durban campus after Professor Leatt's departure. While in Canada during the period of retirement, he had read Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* and saw it as having "tremendous merit". On his return, he found that Professor Gourley had read the book too.

The co-incidental or ad hoc introduction of the learning organization is borne out by the account of staffers Ralph Tyrrell (Staff Training and Development) and Megan Seneque (at the time in Architecture), two of the facilitators involved in promoting the idea within the University. They spoke about "coming across" Louis van der Merwe, a Johannesburg-based consultant who promotes the learning organization concept in South Africa, and of putting Professor Gourley in touch with him. Van der Merwe was later given the brief to run workshops – billed as "strategic planning workshops" – on campus.

The process around the introduction of the learning organization idea may have been "quite ad hoc" but the idea was not marginalised, said Seneque, as it had full executive authority behind it.

That the staff, including academics given to "yelling from the sidelines", might have voted for something without knowing quite what they were buying into could perhaps have been facilitated by the built-in ambiguity, in an educational institution, of the notion of a "learning organization". Whereas the notion might sound odd to the ears of workers in a coal mine or a packaging plant, it would sound much more familiar (although its implications might not be) to those employed in a university or technikon, or school for that matter. After all, isn't that what universities are all about, learning? It is the sort of ambiguity which allows the authors of the Planning Guidelines to say, referring either to the University consciously transforming itself into a learning organization or perhaps to the more specific development of team learning: "... we believe that it may well be somewhat easier to achieve in a university than most other kinds of institutions."  
(1994:8)

The Vice-Chancellor, however, did not make the assumption that it would be an easy matter to achieve what Senge means by a learning organization in a university context. Universities are "incredibly hierarchical", she said in a January 1996 interview. Professors assume that because they are expert in one area, they are expert in all, including organizational matters. Academics are trained to be critical. They work in specialised disciplines, isolated from one another; and so on. Professor Gourley saw it as implying a "change of the whole ethos" of the institution and "a very fundamental transformation".

The difficulties of bringing about such a fundamental transformation were becoming clearer by September 1997 than they were when the learning organization notion was

introduced at the University of Natal; and the difficulties will be spelt out more fully in later sections of this chapter. But even in January 1996, when there was considerable enthusiasm around the learning organization, criticisms were being advanced.

The first, ironically, given the ambiguity of the term "learning organization" in a university context, was a concern that the notion was a foreign import from the world of business. This argument, although not made as an outright judgment on the learning organization, was made in a variety of ways in interviews conducted at the University of Natal in January 1996.

Professor Ahmed Bawa, physicist and Campus Vice-Principal in Pietermaritzburg at the time (now Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Durban centre), raised it as a concern. He said:

In the workshops on the learning organization, and in reading around the learning organization, I began to be concerned about simply translating from experiences in the corporate sector into the university sector.

The input from the facilitators was how successful it was in making Shell the successful company it is now and other examples. The question I asked was: What is *our* measure. For Shell, it is how to maximise profits. It is more responsive to the market than we are.

The idea of a learning organization was appealing to me. Both from my experiences at the University of Durban Westville and in policy frameworks of the state, I felt that strategic planning was very limited in its scope. It was time-specific. It looked at the current reality and changes in society, and then tried to develop a five-year plan. Unless one had commitment to the five-year plan, strategic planning would falter.

The learning organization was trying to create an organizational system which would be responsive to changes and which would learn in a general sense. The staff would be in a position to look at the pressures on the University and the changes in society, to be untraumatized, and to be in a position to change.

There is an understanding of the potential you could unleash in staff by providing them with a framework, a management framework, which allowed them to be inventive and creative, which made the whole thing appealing to me. And especially the shift away from a very strong hierarchy.

On the other hand, I began to ask the question: What is it we are trying to achieve, other than making the University more effective? How will we know if the learning organization is more effective than any other approach?

To me, the key thing is student development. If it didn't facilitate student development, then the learning organization approach was not suitable for us.

A perhaps more serious challenge relates not so much to the question of the "currency" of the University or its output, but to the nature of the University as an organization and the way people work within the organization.

This view was conveyed in discussion by facilitators Ralph Tyrrell and Megan Seneque, playing the role of Devil's advocates. Asked Tyrrell:

Do you need a certain sort of set-up to make a learning organization, as a mechanism, work?

There appears to be a contradiction: the learning organization principles seem to encourage a team set-up, where there's a particular nature of communication. It ignores sectors. All the walls go down, you have one territory.

I'm not sure whether a university can actually operate like that. It is very territorial: this is written large in the faculties and departments. The very nature of research is specialisation. This creates a particular kind of mindset which is very difficult to change.

The learning organization might mean more than an adaptation into this environment. It might end up destroying it, it will shake it up so much. There might be a lot of resistance, because of territoriality.

And even if we compromise, will the University perform at the level of excellence that it wants?

Here is a view: That universities are driven by a state of healthy conflict. This is championed. But the feel of Senge's work is that we all talk together; we are a family. What does that do to healthy debate and differences of opinion? Do we need a conflict model?

Added Seneque:

Academics say: The learning organization is a bit too much product driven. Senge is being applied in non-educational contexts. It is okay in the corporate sector, but the universities are different kinds of organization.

The characteristics of a learning organization are not just things that exist in documents. It is changing people's ways of thinking and being. How is that going to influence my practice, in areas where people subscribe to academic autonomy?

The sort of question being asked is: Change? Change in *whose* interests? Why do we have to change? What do we have to give up? Who's going to pick it up?

Particularly in the humanities, where small departments are under threat. There is a thin understanding of what's understood by a learning organization, based on a perceived threat.

It is a problem if people think there is a blueprint, and you are going to manoeuvre them towards it.

I am working with four departments within the Architecture faculty. We have come up with a policy framework for curriculum development and promoting learning. We are operationalising it differently for each department.

One head of department said: 'It is a wonderful script, but there are no players.' It is not that he doesn't have the staff; but you have to work with each individual's mental models.

The team approach is very anti the way academics work. The reward system rewards individual academic work.

Some lecturing staff have private practices, and are very comfortable. Team work implies a big change. They have to make explicit all the things they have been able to do under the licence of academic freedom.

There is a resistance to change which adversely affects their own interests. It is making problematic the current reality.

Despite these reservations, there was considerable enthusiasm at the beginning of 1996 for the learning organization and the potential benefits it could bring to the University. As Tyrrell put it in a later interview (September 1997), the learning organization represented a "sensible and human" way of managing the institution, with feedback and reflection. This is consistent with the view, expressed above, that the learning organization is more in line with reflexive modernity than is conventional strategic planning. But, as will become apparent, it too has not been able to deliver on its promises in terms of effecting fundamental change – at least in the short term.

### **5.3 FACILITATORS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE**

In the January 1996 interviews, Professor Gourley argued that two indicators of change in the University would be found in curricular reform, and in the activities of the facilitators. She saw the corps of facilitators – some 25 volunteers including Tyrrell, Seneque, and Frame – being developed on campus as key agents of change as the institution moved towards a learning organization. Professor Gourley's idea was that the facilitators would work closely with the Deans and make the lives of the Deans easier, by facilitating change within the faculties and the production of faculty plans. The facilitators would report to the Vice-Principal: Planning and Resources, Professor Emmanuel Ngara. "He has to act by force of argument and influence, rather than crack the whip. That is the essence of a learning organization," said Professor Gourley.

By September 1997, with the crisis over restructuring and retrenchments occupying everyone's mind, it was clear that the facilitators had been sidelined and had not been able to make the contribution that had been envisaged. By contrast, the crisis had given rise to a group of academics and other staff members who were actively resisting change (at least insofar as it implied retrenchments and loss of departments or courses of study) through the unofficial Academic Restructuring Committee (ARC) which was formed in August 1997.

In a discussion with Ralph Tyrrell and Janet Frame in September, Tyrrell said the facilitators accepted that their role had run its course. Their task of continuing the

chorus of the learning organization principles had "dissolved, more or less":

We saw ourselves riding along in the wake of the Louis van der Merwe workshops. We would continue conversations with the faculties and departments, along the lines of what was coming out of the workshops. The reference point was to be the Vice-Chancellor's Review II, but that seemed to get lost.

The co-ordination didn't happen. We tried to be self-sufficient, but we all had our own jobs to do. We would try to do what we could from where we were. But we got a bit lost. The last time we met as a group was early this year [1997] – and we were still talking about what we should be doing.

Brenda Gourley said to us: 'You define your role. Tell me what you should be doing. I am not going to dictate. Where do you think your intervention should be?'

Said Frame:

We felt, as the facilitator group, that our role was more responsive, rather than one of giving direction. We would respond to requests as people tried to engage with change. For example, as departments started to grapple with questions of how to change the curriculum, they would need the facilitators to help them. We were there to help other people to engage with what was required of them.

But that presupposes that the whole University is fully in gear and going with it; that there's a plan on how to get the plan going. There is a missing link, of who is actually running the show and making sure that the University comes up with the actual plan, in terms of the strategic plan.

We thought we would engage with people as they tried to draw up the actual plan. They had to ask, in relation to quality with equity: 'What kind of courses should we be teaching?' We saw ourselves as facilitating this process, but without a sense of urgency. We started out with a huge number of requests, but they skirted around the main business of the University. They came mainly from Finance, Student Counselling, and other support services.

In many cases, they were successful. There was a lot of defining of the core purpose of operating units of the University. But it fails on the 'So what?' test if you don't address the core business of the University.

There was a feeling among the facilitators that a more pro-active group should be formed. A November 1995 document (University of Natal 9, 1995), noting action plans agreed to on the last day of a Facilitation and Dialogue workshop, proposes the formation of a "Co-ordinating Change Task Group (or Strategic Initiatives Co-ordinating Group)". The document says:

It was felt by the group that progress of strategically aligned initiatives in the University need[ed] to be co-ordinated and monitored so that the system could learn from the process and respond appropriately. The view was expressed that the change process in the University must proceed within a coherent and well conceived framework and, while being driven by the Vice Chancellor, requires a task force consisting of University leaders from both the academic and general staff sectors to develop the framework and co-ordinate and review strategic initiatives. This framework should be established to ensure that the initiatives are given space and recognition, maintain their impetus, energy and alignment and are known about in the University community.

A possible grouping for the task force could be:

Deputy Vice Chancellor, Planning and Resources  
Campus Vice Principals  
3 x Senior academics  
3 x Senior administrators

Broadly, the role of the task force would be to co-ordinate strategic work being done, to monitor progress and new initiatives, report back to relevant groups or sectors and to act as a conduit for work being done to responsible elements in the system. The task force would also arrange for continuation of strategic work and workshops and provide the University community with regular information on the change process. (1995:1)

After a workshop held on 6 June 1996, a document headed "Facilitating the Change Process at the University of Natal" was produced (University of Natal 10, 1996), which argued that a dedicated "Change Resource Group" was needed. The document identified the following functions of the Change Resource Group:

- To infuse and integrate learning into the change process
- To encourage, support, stimulate and reflect on the change process
- To provide a focus for co-ordination, linking, networking and sharing information
- To facilitate a shared understanding of the change process
- To develop the capacity of staff to support the change process
- To track, document and disseminate the University-wide initiatives
- To advise the Executive on matters of change
- To assist in the preparation of documentation for government, CUP, linkages and for funding

A September 1996 proposal, headed "Strategic Intervention, Response to Recent Student Disruptions" (University of Natal 11, 1996), proposes a major data gathering exercise with the aim of providing "comprehensive data on the University community's sense of the current reality and degree of alignment with current broad University strategy to achieve our vision" and a subsequent large-scale meeting aimed at "finding common core values and a common way forward as a University".

These proposals, and more recent ones, were treated with interest by the executive; but nothing has come of them. Effectively, in the view of the facilitators, the response was one of: "Don't call us, we'll call you."

#### 5.4 RETREAT FROM THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Although the facilitators have largely been sidelined and have not come to play a central role as agents of change, the University has not abandoned the learning organization as a strategic initiative. But clearly apparent in the rhetoric of the executive members is a certain down-playing of Senge and the learning organization.

On the positive side, Professor Gourley pointed in a September 1997 interview to a Masters programme in Systems Thinking which is about to be introduced by some of the facilitators, in conjunction with other universities. And she pointed to the planned establishment of an Organisational Learning and Leadership Centre, made possible by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation. The centre will provide a locus for those interested in learning organization issues, offer a range of courses, and give the notion academic respectability.

She sees the centre as representing "a huge injection of resources and energy into the system". She said: "We need to do as much as we can to help people who are championing the cause, so that eventually they become the leaders. It takes a long time to build a learning organization, especially at a university. It's a matter of changing the culture."

On the other hand, Professor Gourley noted that there was a danger in talking "learning organisation jargon". "It puts people off," she said. "Academics are not into other people's jargon, especially business jargon. You lose fans rather than gain fans. You have to behave in a way that is consistent with a learning organization and encourage behaviour in others that is consistent with it."

Reflecting on the role of the facilitators, she said a "very substantial" training course was run for them with the idea of building up a group of facilitators who would take on the role of getting people through the kind of things they would have to do. "It worked in some places and not in others." Responding to a suggestion that the input of the facilitators seemed to have been more on the curriculum side rather than planning, she says: "We can't foist it on them. They have to earn their own respect. Some have, some haven't." And she added: "It's a hell of a time to take on all these things."

The stress of the times was remarked on by a number of other people interviewed, particularly in September 1997. Professor Mike Kahn, Dean of Architecture, spoke in terms of various "overlays" imposed on academic staff, which had left them emotionally and physically drained.

Between gearing themselves to respond to the VCR II document and the current restructuring crisis, Professor Kahn said, the staff had been responding to a host of other initiatives. These included a move to semesterisation to try to increase flexibility in the system, equal opportunity and affirmative action, and remedial work for under-prepared students which meant "extra tutorials, extra studio sessions, extra pressure, extra work". Staff had had to rethink and restructure the whole teaching process.

In the case of each initiative, Professor Kahn said, there had been a lack of "substantive communication". Although the executive, or a working committee or task team, might have had major debates on an issue, other people were in every case presented with a *fait accompli*. This often included the Deans, who were expected to take an initiative down to their staff. People were not given an opportunity to ask how a task group had arrived at its recommendations. If an initiative was questioned, this evoked a testy response from those who had gone through their own internal debating, which in turn made the staff irritable. This started to lead to a breakdown in communication and trust.

Professor Kahn said some people had reached the stage, with the latest overlay of the financial and restructuring crisis, of saying: "Just tell us what to do and we'll do it, within reason."

For Professor Ari Sitas, Dean of Social Sciences, Senge's learning organization theory fails to address a fundamental organizational issue: "What happens to organizations in crisis, where conflicting interests emerge?"

In an interview in September 1997, Professor Sitas said he saw three distinct phases in the University's planning activities:

- The Vice-Chancellor's Review, effectively a strategic planning process, which started the debate around transformation of structures and curriculum.
- The learning organization, which was seen to be a more participatory method of bringing about change. It was meant to get the staff to the vision which the VCR represented.
- Restructuring, which had nothing to do with the other things. This was largely an undemocratic and non-participatory executive process, driven by fiscal constraints.

Professor Sitas said:

The first two phases had much more participation and discussion, but they didn't get us very far. The money side seems to have shoved things forward.

The executive process is beginning to happen. It is not possible to have people participate in cutting their jobs. There is no way you can have a participative process between faculties, when one half says, 'My side of the boat is not leaking, your side is leaking.' Those who are threatened are now trying to mobilize support both within and outside the University.

Both Professor Sitas and Professor Kahn see the Deans as caught in the middle. On the one hand, they are expected to go along with a process mainly driven by top management in order to balance the books; on the other hand, they are expected by staff to defend the status quo or to improve their conditions of service.

Professor Sitas sees two fundamental changes between the vision of the VCR and the emerging restructuring picture. Whereas the VCR had spoken of Durban as a unique laboratory of social issues, reflecting a complex society in transition, the talk now echoed the Education ministry's emphasis on the natural sciences and engineering. This was a technocratic response to getting the budget right.

The second change related to the student population of the University. In the decade between 1987 and 1996, the use of external funds for financial aid had allowed for the inclusion of many black working class students. This was in line with the demographic transition envisaged by the VCR. But the current emphasis on the economic bottom line would reverse this trend in the interim period, with the University increasingly taking those students who could afford to attend while it hoped for the rapid development of the African middle class. Funding would not necessarily go to those faculties which had a majority of African students.

In a paper entitled "Senge's Learning Orgworld" (1997), Professor Sitas says that management – in Senge's learning organization – becomes a humanistic project, with the focus on the lifelong learner. Professor Sitas writes:

Like Elton Mayo, Senge seems to believe that the world of work, its accumulation paths and corporate goals are rational and self-evident. He is not there to question organisational purposes but to clarify their visions, to make their visions attainable after a serious self-reflection and learning about organisational current reality. (Sitas, 1997:3)

Professor Sitas questions Senge's tacit acceptance of the imperatives of organizations; Senge's assumption that "communication within institutions is *undistorted* by power dynamics and personal and social discord"; his "idealised version of the market and competition"; his assumption that "norms and values are extrinsic to organisational cultures and the social and ecological responsibilities of organisations are by implication, invisible"; and his assumption that "modern capitalist firms can be horizontal institutions with equal claimants to knowledge". (1997:3)

Nevertheless, Professor Sitas finds Senge's managerial approach useful in providing a methodology of teamwork, even though the team workers may be unequal in power and status; it provides "a vision of the modern employee as a human being whose self-development and lifelong learning are central to working life"; and it provides for "a different culture of corporate and organisational leadership". (1997:4)

The redeeming factors which Professor Sitas finds in Senge's learning orgworld notwithstanding, it is clear from the interviews reported above that people at various levels of the University were suspicious of the learning organization as something foreign to an academic institution (despite the apparent common interest in "learning"). The learning organization, this response says, is an import from the world of business; business is more market driven than a university; the currency of business is profit, but that of a university is something more like student development.

From the perspective of organizational structure, the learning organization presupposes a situation in which "all the barriers come down", whereas universities are based on separation of disciplines and individual (not team) effort.

Approaching the structural mismatch from the perspective of Mintzberg's account of organizational structures, a somewhat different gloss could perhaps be put on the lukewarm reception of the learning organization at the University of Natal. In Chapter Four, it was argued that the strategic planning approach adopted by the University in the earlier phase had mis-cast the University as a Machine Bureaucracy, rather than the Professional Bureaucracy which it is. In the case of the learning organization, it might be argued that the University is again mis-cast, this time as an *Adhocracy*, rather than a Professional Bureaucracy.

Earlier, Mintzberg was quoted as saying that "the building of new knowledge and skills requires the combination of different bodies of existing ones. So rather than allowing the specialization of the expert or the differentiation of the functional unit to dominate its behavior, the Adhocracy must instead break through the boundaries of conventional specialization and differentiation.... Thus, whereas each professional of the Professional Bureaucracy can operate on his own, in the Adhocracy the professionals must amalgamate their efforts...." (Mintzberg, 1979:434)

This is, at least in part, the vision of the learning organization. And it picks out some of the key areas of contestation between the professionals in the operating core of the organization, as explicated above, and the restructuring of the University envisaged by

the executive. The Adhocracy must "break through the boundaries of conventional specialization and differentiation" and the professionals must "amalgamate their efforts". These are not the ways of the Professional Bureaucracy.

To some extent, this captures the dynamics of change at the University of Natal, against a perceived need for innovation. Although it would be fanciful to suggest that the University was deliberately being steered in the direction of an Adhocracy, the notion of Adhocracy could serve as shorthand for a thoroughgoing re-arrangement of academic "pigeonholes" in the cause of developing innovative, multi-disciplinary programmes.

However, in the concluding chapter of the case study, a more sociological rather than organizational explanation will be advanced, which provides a different context – within a social and political approach to pedagogy – for the fears expressed by staff members around "importations from business" and "barriers coming down".

In the remaining sections of this chapter, the University's 1997 financial crisis and its restructuring proposals in response to the crisis are examined.

## **5.5 THE FINANCIAL CRISIS**

As mentioned earlier, one of the driving forces behind the University of Natal's efforts to bring about institutional change over the past decade has been its unfavourable financial situation. But despite the importance of the financial plight of the University, and despite the drawing up of plans to address it, there has also been a failure of implementation, as referred to by Professor Leatt. Anyone wishing to support the case that implementation of plans has been problematic at the University of Natal could do worse than to compare the 1988 Walker Report (University of Natal 2, 1988) with the 1997 Structures and Funding document presented to the University's Planning and Resources Committee (University of Natal 13, 1997). Although nine years apart, the concerns are remarkably similar.

For present purposes, the Structures and Funding document is clearly the more important document as it is central to the financial and restructuring crisis which preoccupied the University in 1997; and there is not much to be gained, in the present context, by a detailed comparison of the two texts. (A brief account of the Walker Report's findings and recommendations was provided in Chapter 4.)

Like the Walker Report, the 1997 Structures and Funding document situates its analysis within the context of the latest planning document: in this case the 1994-1998 Planning Guidelines which resulted from the Vice-Chancellor's Review II. A financial crisis is described, with the conclusion that "in effect, in real terms, the level of University resources is at present at least 5% below a sustainable level of expenditure, and this situation is likely to worsen in future years because dramatic changes in the financing of universities are likely". (1997:10) The document calls for a reduction of 22% in the staffing compensation budget, or 645 posts over the next five years (about 200 academic posts and 450 non-academic posts). (1997:17)

A complicated restructuring is proposed for the academic side of the institution, which will be examined in more detail shortly, but key elements are still missing. Recommendation 3, for instance, says: "A formula should be devised for staffing and resource allocation to viable teaching programmes. This formula should take the research output of the teaching staff into account and should make provision for the employment of teaching assistants." (1997:21) On the administrative side, some recommendations (accompanied by organograms) are made for the University executive and middle management. But like the Walker Report, the document does not deal in detail with the administration. It says:

The Task Group did not have the time and does not have the necessary expertise to undertake a detailed investigation in the functioning of individual administrative and support service departments, including the libraries and CSD with a view to effecting staffing cuts. A small special Task Team (or a number of Task Teams) should be appointed to oversee the necessary process, with the specific brief of achieving an overall reduction in non-academic staff levels in line with the target indicated in the Report (450 posts). (1997:24)

The Structures and Funding Task Group favours the appointment of "external management experts to review the administration and support services activities", as opposed to "involving managers and administrative and support service departments in a review of their departments". (1997:24) The Medical Faculty, as in the Walker Report, is largely left alone, to be either a School or College of Medicine in terms of the proposals. "In the time at its disposal, the Task Group was not able to review the Medical School. It believes, however, that as in other parts of the university, it should be possible to establish a target figure for staff savings of at least 15%." (1997:29)

Given the similarities between the handling of the financial crisis facing the University in 1988 and financial crisis facing it in 1997, the question arises of whether there is much difference between the two crises. Is the University of Natal, as it were, simply crying "wolf" once again? Will the 1997 report, like that of 1988, be put to one side while the

University embarks once again on an exercise of deciding *what* it really wants to do and draws up a new Mission Statement?

Professor Chris Cresswell, for one, believes that the University of Natal faces a different magnitude of problem in 1997. He said in a September 1997 interview:

The Walker Report came out at a time when the Government subsidy started declining for the first time. Before that, the University could rely on the subsidy. But now, the declining subsidy is coupled to the whole question of financial aid as well. The University did not have that problem at the time of Walker.

After you have selected students, you have to put your own money in, as well as Tefsa [Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa] money, to assist them. Substantial amounts of money have been put into Financial Aid, and this year it became difficult to put money in.

Financial Aid is tricky. As the fees rise, so you have to put more money in to assist disadvantaged students. With fee increases of 15%, that's a substantial difference. And those already in the system have first priority. You might find that the money may only be enough for second year and third year students.

There was a R28-million cut in subsidy this year [1997], and the University's reserves are being depleted. Whether the staffing cuts will make the required savings, time will tell.

On this view, one can argue that a critical factor in the expansion path which the University of Natal embarked upon was the extension of financial aid to students from the disadvantaged communities whom it admitted: in the first instance against the wishes of the then apartheid government which, as the Walker Report made clear, was against any growth; and in the second place against the financial logic of the Walker Report, which accepted the scenario of no growth and reducing government subsidies.

Without the provision of financial aid, and a whole range of other student support services which it developed, the University would not have been able to move so quickly from being a predominantly white institution, to one which has more or less equal numbers of African, Indian, and white students. The change of the University's residences from a "bastion of whiteness" in the 1980s to a 98% black residence population (Phillips, 1996:113) reflects the dramatic change. But it also put greater demands on financial aid, as the costs associated with living in residence are higher than for students living at home; and even under the Tefsa scheme, the fee and residence costs of a student would be well above the level of Tefsa funding. Clearly, the provision of financial aid, even though it was in many cases in the form of loans, had to be financed from somewhere and much of the finance came from the University's reserves; with the effect, as noted in the Structures and Funding document, that the University is "extremely vulnerable to subsidy cuts because its free reserves are less than only one month's operating expenditures". (1997:10)

## 5.6 THE RESTRUCTURING CRISIS

The second question posed above was whether the 1997 report, like that of 1988, would be pushed to one side while the University again deliberated on *what* it wanted to do. This is not an easy question to answer. The fact that the University faces a very different financial crisis from that of 1988 might lead one directly to the conclusion that history will not repeat itself, and that *this time* the University will "bite on the bullet". The approval by Senate and by Council in September 1997 of a range of cost cutting measures, including retrenchments in academic departments, would tend to support this view, although there is still considerable support for an approach which calls for a new plan before any structural changes are made.

On one level, the crisis facing the University of Natal is just about money. The University cannot balance its books; it has very low reserves; subsidies are likely to decline further; it may even be that the student intake is declining, which will reduce the income from fees. Something has to be done. And clearly, as the University's experience of student unrest has shown, it is not an option to do away with financial aid to students, although an effort was made at the beginning of 1997 to limit the aid to new students. The main cost of running the University lies in salaries; so if significant savings are to be made, the salary bill will have to be reduced. A reduction in salaries is not a realistic option; nor can salaries be held static for long, as they were in 1997. So the only option is to reduce the number of posts, both in academic and non-academic areas.

Although this has been a more or less familiar scenario since 1988 (financial aid excepted), the crisis begins in April-May 1997, with the completion of the Structures and Funding report. The report places the financial situation in a wider context, including the University's Strategic Initiatives and proposals for academic and administrative restructuring, but the bottom line is that 645 posts must go over five years and all non-viable courses should be discontinued.

The formation of the Task Team which wrote the Structures and Funding document was made known at an open forum earlier in the year and the Task Team "met all members of the Executive and interviewed Deans, most senior members of administration and the Director of ESATI [Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions]". (1997:1) But its activities first attracted the attention of the wider University community when

details of the report appeared in the local press immediately after the report was shared with the Deans.

Amended proposals went to a Senate meeting on 4 June and were accepted by an overwhelming majority, effectively appointing the Executive as the implementation team for making the staffing cuts. At the beginning of July, it became known that Executive members had visited certain academic departments on both the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses (Classics, European Languages, Afrikaans) and announced that they would be closed down and the staff retrenched. As one observer put it: "The image was created of the Executive going out and telling departments: 'You are under arrest'."

In the view of Dr Alan Matthews, a lecturer in Physics, this was the point at which the internal crisis began, as far as people on the ground were concerned. "I saw it as an attack on the University," he said in an interview in September 1997. His response, along with others attached to the Timetabling Committee who met to discuss the matter, was the formation in July of ARC, the Academic Restructuring Committee – an unofficial and informal group which became a focus for resistance to the proposed cut-backs, mainly through the establishment of a discussion forum on the University's local area network (LAN).

"ARC was opening up a critical public sphere," said Dr Matthews. "It became for most people an electronic newspaper for the expression of opinion. We had a flood of letters." In the last week of August, ARC met with the campus principals and held a public meeting. "At the public meeting, a motion was put that the community wants more information on restructuring from the executive," said Dr Matthews.

A cursory glance at contributions to the ARC website reflects a high degree of anger and dismay. To take only a few examples among many, the Executive is accused of becoming "more and more high-handed in its dealings with the University community"; other writers say that its approach is "dictatorship rather than any attempt at rationality"; that it seems determined to "ruin and ransack Humanities"; and that the process it has embarked upon is "a recipe for the descent of a fine University into a glorified Technicon (sic)".

Overall, however, the tenor of the resistance to the restructuring process is not one of a blunt call to defend the barricades. Although, significantly, the learning organization is entirely missing from the debate, there is some awareness of the Vice-Chancellor's

Review II. For example, it is referred to in one submission to ARC as "the University's long dormant plan for a vast and creative revamping of the University in the name of the liberal arts".

Dr Matthews (who has worked at the University since 1992, on the Durban campus since 1993) said he was aware that there had been the Vice-Chancellor's review. He added:

My impression is that it was Leatt who started that. I was in Pietermaritzburg when some documents were coming out. We went through a departmental review and SWOT analysis. But I don't recall any educative process around the Vice-Chancellor's Review process itself. I knew there was a document floating around, but I don't recall any workshop or seminar that accompanied it.

We were aware of the curriculum reform initiative, although a number of people in the Science Faculty were dismissive of it. They saw it as people not doing teaching talking to people who are involved in teaching.

Dr Matthews said the Principal had come to speak to the department about the strategic initiatives and about income generation, but this had not been linked to the VCR. He argued:

There is not a comprehensive, holistic approach which gives support to new initiatives. It is important to inform people, to make sure that they are informed and discussing it. Not just a few authority figures; we need to involve every single person in the University, at least to be aware of what's happening, and if possible to participate.

It's a good strategic step to have communication and education – with everybody involved; then they agree with initiatives rather than oppose them. It is difficult to do things piecemeal, to introduce new things without an overall planning framework.

Janet Frame made a similar point:

My understanding is that the last of the documents out of the Vice-Chancellor's Review was the 1994-98 Planning Guidelines. They are called 'planning guidelines'. They are not the plan. We missed the final step. We never get to the actual plans.

The 1994-98 document is written in a very discursive style. It seems like a good idea. But it needed to be translated into actual plans of the different faculties and newly created schools. Only then should we get to questions like: 'Who do we really need on the staff?' The detail comes from actual plans, not from planning guidelines. Because we missed that step, we don't have a plan in front of us which provides the rationale for seeing why we are closing this and that down.

If the Executive were to say: 'If you can't come up with courses pertinent to where we want to position ourselves, we can't justify keeping you'; that is very different from coming in with 1995 figures and saying the course is not viable.

There is no doubt merit in what both of these observers are saying, and many others are making similar points. But what can be seen when these responses are examined in the light of the earlier analysis?

Firstly, one can see the response of the Professional Bureaucracy to threatening change. There is a strong sense that the professionals in the operating core have not been properly consulted on matters which either affect them directly (as in the case of some of the ARC correspondents) or indirectly, and which are seen as threatening their autonomy. The Structures and Funding Task Team, for example, did not (directly) go any lower in their consultations than the Deans. Heads of Department and the mass of professionals below them in the hierarchy were not consulted, although there was an invitation on the LAN to make suggestions on cost-cutting.

Secondly, one can see in the charge that the "overall plan" is missing the same hankering after specificity which characterised the earlier phases of the strategic planning process at the University for Professor Gourley and others. There are planning guidelines, but these are not specific enough; they do not have the teleological power which an overall plan should have, revealing clearly for all to see why Department X should go and Department Y should stay.

For Professor Gourley, the plan is in place. It is found in the 1994-98 Planning Guidelines. And, she argued in a September 1997 interview, nothing which was being proposed in the current restructuring exercise was inconsistent with the plan. The demand for another "overall plan" was, of course, the move which sank the Walker Report: We cannot make any decisions on *how* we are going to do things until we have decided *what* it is we want to do – with the assumption, which conventional strategic planning models have led us all to accept, that everything else will then fall into place.

One of the tensions in the restructuring crisis is between a straightforward cost-cutting exercise, on the one hand, and changing the structural arrangements of the institution on the other. The criticism of Frame and others is that the response of the Executive to the mandate which it received from Senate seems to be driven entirely by financial considerations: those departments or, on the weaker version, those *courses* which do not have an adequate number of students are not (financially) viable and must be shut down.

Professor Ahmed Bawa, previously Vice-Principal at Pietermaritzburg and now Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Durban centre, observed in a September 1997 interview that it was a pity that the University had to be engaged in restructuring at the same time as down-sizing. The down-sizing, he said, was absolutely necessary, given the University's deficit budget and its depleted reserves.

Professor Bawa continued:

We could have said: Let's just down-size. But we thought that was risky – to do the down-sizing without a major effort at restructuring, in a way which affects the final outcome and which does not synergise with the restructuring proposals when they are made. We felt we had to engage both processes at the same time.

From a human resources or learning organization point of view, that is almost the worst possible option to take. Down-sizing has banged people up against the wall. There is learning going on, but in the context that people have their backs to the wall.

A more cynical view, expressed by one middle level manager in the Administration, is that the Executive is using the financial crisis as a means of pushing through structural changes which would otherwise have no chance of flying.

Leaving that aside, what are the structural changes being proposed? A distinction needs to be drawn here between the proposals as contained in the Structures and Funding document and the amended proposals which went before Senate on September 17.

There is a distinctly critical and adversarial approach adopted by the Structures and Funding Task Group to the existing academic structure of the University. In a section on The University Context, the group assesses the effects of the Vice-Chancellor's Review process. It refers to the major restructuring of the University's faculty, administrative and committee system arising out of VCR1; but it says that few of the objectives set out in the VCR's vision of academic development have been met. (1997:5) It goes on:

In the absence of a mechanism whereby faculties could be required to conform to university policy, most of its proposals were ignored, while in some faculties they were misunderstood.

- Although several plans for faculty amalgamation have been discussed and although a number of interdisciplinary schools have been launched, these developments fall far short of expectation that by 1996 new faculties would be established, that new quality assessment and monitoring procedures would be in place, and that substantial changes would have been made to curricula and teaching methodologies, including the incorporation of a core curriculum
- The mounting of the new teaching programmes, including interdepartmental foundation programmes, a distance teaching programme and a Winter School, has been hampered by centre, faculty and departmental structures and progress has thus depended largely upon the enthusiasm of interested academics. (1997:5)

Referring to the "large degree of suspicion of and opposition to university management" which was revealed to the Task Group during interviews, and to a mutual lack of appreciation of each other's efforts by the Executive and academics, the Task Group says that the explanation should be sought not in the enormity of the changes taking place, but "in the fact that the existing structures isolate members of staff from each

other and require that members of the Executive devote too much of their time to management." (1997:5-6)

Dealing with structural change in the section on Basic Principles, the report says:

The Task Group believes that existing departmental, faculty, centre and administrative structures prevent the most economical use of resources and have discouraged academic innovation. The committee structure that was put in place by VCR1 has resulted in some duplication and to[o] many bottlenecks, not least because there is no central committee which can make decisions for the university as a whole. The University's management structure has resulted in the serious distancing of the Executive from the university community. Without structural change, therefore, it is extremely unlikely that the University will be able to respond to the challenges that confront it. (1997:7)

Against that background, the Task Group recommends on the academic side:

- That the present 14 Faculties be replaced by the establishment of 7 Schools, each containing about 100 members of staff (with the exception of Medicine)
  - That the present Departments be replaced by the establishment of fewer new enlarged Departments, containing at least 25 members of staff.
- (1997:18)

Each School would be administered by a Dean, each Department by a Head; and academic Programmes would be co-ordinated by a Chair. "Each school will constitute a Board (similar to the present Faculty Boards) through which the affairs of the School will be conducted. The Schools will extend over both centres and Dean's Offices will be located either in Durban or Pietermaritzburg with a small administrative office in the other centre." (1997:19)

The Task Group further proposed that the six Schools (excluding Medicine) should be grouped into two Colleges, each containing three Schools, with the Medical School constituting a third College. Two models for grouping the Schools into Colleges are proposed, but the details need not detain us.

The Task Group says:

The key feature of the proposed structure is that academic administration will shift in two directions towards a more central role for the Deans of Schools. The Deans will assume responsibility for much of the academic administration presently performed by the Campus Principals (top-down), and the Deans' Offices will also absorb many of the administrative functions presently performed by academic Heads of Departments (bottom-up). The total operating budget, including staff compensation, will devolve to the Office of the Dean. Student records, operating expenses and other administrative functions including SAPSE, Calendar entries, etc., will be performed by the Dean's Office. While the proposed structure retains Academic Departments as organisational units, they are not the primary locus of administrative activity. The functions of Academic Departments should be limited to the management of the programmes offered by the departments. As far as possible, academic staff, especially if their numbers are to be reduced, must be relieved of non-academic administrative functions. It

should be clear that the proposed new structures entail a different or expanded role for the Dean of a School that is similar in conception to that of a Dean at many American Universities.

Another important feature of the proposed structures is that the Schools may extend across both the Durban and Pietermaritzburg centres. The School structure is intended to allow for flexibility as regards the location of Departments in the two centres. Each School should determine how best to organise the Departments that together constitute the School and the Programmes it offers....  
(1997:19-20)

By the beginning of September, a number of features of the original proposal had dropped out or been altered, as became apparent in discussions with Professor Gourley, Professor Bawa, and others. The idea of grouping the proposed Schools into Colleges had fallen away. Instead, larger and re-arranged Faculties would be the biggest building blocks in the structure, each to be headed by a Dean. The notion that these Faculties (or School structures in the original proposal) would necessarily cross the Durban and Pietermaritzburg centres had been modified in the face of resistance from some Faculties in Pietermaritzburg which (as one observer put it) were afraid of "sliding down the hill to Durban". While cross-centre Faculties will not be excluded in the new proposal, it is more likely that Faculties will re-group on a centre basis. Within each of the new Faculties will be located a number of Schools. Each School will contain a mixture of disciplines, each headed by a Chair, and inter-disciplinary programmes, each with a Co-ordinator. The Academic Department, as an administrative unit, will fall away. Financial management will be devolved down to the Faculty and School level, with Schools responsible for financial management other than staff salaries. Heads of disciplines within the Schools will be responsible for academic management, but not financial management. (Cf. Section 3 of the Discussion Document on Restructuring on the Durban Centre of the University of Natal, University of Natal 15, 1997.)

It must be said that there was a great deal of confusion apparent at the University on just what was being proposed in the restructuring, much of it no doubt arising from fears and rumours resultant on the Executive's visits to threatened departments in the two centres, and some from the amendments being made to the original Task Group proposals. (For example, one Dean's secretary was overheard telling someone on the telephone that the restructuring would result in courses like Science being offered only in one or the other of the two centres.)

As in the case of the financial crisis, there is nothing that is startlingly new in the discussion around structures, but there is significant movement. The document which expanded on the 1989 Mission Statement, The Role in Society of the University of

Natal, 1989 Onwards, includes a section on Faculty and Departmental Functions and Structures. It says in part:

The present arrangement of 16 faculties (9 in Durban and 7 in Pietermaritzburg) and the attendant 110, or so, departments has arisen by a process of evolution and elaboration of traditional programmes. The structure (Departments and Faculties) has evolved in order to give effect to functions (disciplines, curricula and courses). With the advent of serious financial constraints, the University has to look critically first at its functions and then its structures....

This critical review of new functions may well suggest new structures. New and more appropriate department alignments, fewer larger departments reflecting less undergraduate specialization, new faculty alignments avoiding, where possible, the luxury of small faculties – all these will need to be considered and will flow logically from rationalization of functions. (1989:18)

The organogram attached to the Role in Society document as Annexure 1 (included here as Appendix 3) gives a good idea of the thinking of the Executive at that time. If realised, it might have served as an interim step between the existing structure and the proposed new structure; but the duplication and confusion between the roles of Schools and Faculties, Boards of Study and Boards of Faculty, would no doubt have made the system expensive and probably unworkable. What the organogram shows graphically is a line of thinking which begins to prise authority and control away from the discipline-based academic departments. In the new proposals, with the departments falling away completely as administrative units, a more radical (but probably more realistic picture) of what is intended emerges.

Effectively, the proposals undermine the authority of the disciplinary departments by removing their administrative authority in relation to the members of the department; and they weaken the academic authority of the departments as well because, whatever the discipline, the members of the department may be dispersed through any number of inter-disciplinary programmes in the various faculties. To show graphically the way in which the professionals in the operating core of the University are seen in this model, I have amended the organogram from the Role in Society document by cutting the organogram in half and changing the labels slightly. (The altered organogram is included here as Appendix 5.)

One of the main tasks of the next chapter is to consider the question of *why* the University of Natal is undertaking such a project, given that it goes well beyond the obvious requirements of cost cutting and efficiency.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RECONTEXTUALISATION OF THE CASE

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One of this case study, it was stated that the aim of the study was "to try to understand the complex social phenomenon of institutional change in higher education, as reflected in the University of Natal".

It is submitted that any attempt to resolve the puzzle with which Chapter Five closed has to put the emphasis more on the "*social* phenomenon" in the above formulation than on the "*institutional* change". This means looking beyond the organizational theory which has informed the analysis of the case thus far, to the social implications of the *pedagogic* changes which are taking place at the University of Natal, and in higher education more generally.

The fundamental difficulty here is that pedagogy does not (as it were) wear its social implications on its sleeve. The form of pedagogy is a code for the form of social and political control at work – the social and the political are embedded in pedagogy in ways which are not obvious on the surface. It is the work of this concluding chapter to begin to dis-embed the social and political implications of the pedagogic changes being mooted at the University of Natal.

In taking this route, which is effectively a re-contextualisation of the case, a number of caveats need to be noted. The first of these is that recognising the explanatory limits of the organizational theory which has informed the study does not discredit the theory or make its use in this context inappropriate. It was stated earlier (see Chapter 2.4) that the case study aims at analytic generalization, rather than statistical generalization; and that it is an experiment, in a loose sense of "experiment", which aims to test theory in the real world.

The contention here is that the organizational theory informing the study has been useful in throwing light on the process of institutional change in higher education, but that its explanatory powers have limitations which need to be recognised. Importantly, its overriding concern with the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations *in general* does not contribute to a close reading of the social and political implications of organizational change in higher education *in particular*; indeed, it is submitted, it tends rather to obscure the social and political implications of pedagogical changes.

The second caveat is that recontextualising the case should not be taken to imply that social and political considerations have somehow been absent from the debate around institutional change at the University of Natal. Far from it. Many of the key players are acutely aware of wider political and social forces and they hold various sophisticated interpretations of these forces; and a number of position papers have been written, informing some of the key documents produced by the University. But the emphasis in the earlier discussion has been on the organizational or institutional factors, rather than the political and social.

The third point follows from the second: viz. that it is not the contention here that there is any one definitive view of the social and political forces at work – still less that the definitive view is about to be revealed. The claim is more modest, in accordance with Kemmis' picture (noted in Chapter Two) of the case study researcher "stumbling from lamplight to lamplight in the fog". (In Simons (Ed.) 1980:100)

A view is presented, which leans heavily on work by Basil Bernstein and an interpretation of South African developments, in Bernstein's terms, by Johan Muller. The argument advanced, in brief, is that there is a confluence in South Africa at present of political and pedagogic trends, both moving in the direction of market determination of educational delivery. These trends require scholars to become knowledge entrepreneurs – developing, packaging, and delivering educational products in response to external market requirements, rather than in accordance with the internal logic of the scholar's discipline. For a university to achieve this, given the inherent resistance to change of the professionals in the operating core of the institution, it is necessary either to break down the disciplinary boundaries altogether, or at least – as appears to be happening now in the case of the University of Natal – to weaken the disciplines and the professionals who practice them by prising the disciplines free from the institutional blockhouses which they have traditionally occupied as academic departments within the organizational structure.

The submission is that this view provides a significant elaboration of the organizational theory which forms the framework, or context, for the greater part of this study and permits a more powerful explanation of the case of institutional change at the University of Natal than is possible in terms of the organizational theory alone.

## 6.2 THE NEED FOR INNOVATION

The puzzle which remained at the end of Chapter Five was this: Why do the proposals for restructuring being put forward by the University of Natal's executive go beyond what could reasonably be expected in terms of organizational efficiency and the cost-cutting which that efficiency might require? Both in the 1989 Mission Statement document and in the current proposals being considered at the University there are structural changes being mooted which cannot be justified in terms of the underlying financial crisis alone.

Cost cutting might require the retrenchment of staff in certain departments, or even the closing of certain departments which are unable to meet whatever student:staff norms the University might set. And it might imply a more cost-effective grouping of departments into bigger faculties. But there is nothing in the cost cutting exercise per se which suggests that it would be useful to do away with the faculties as presently constituted and to replace them with inter-disciplinary schools; or that discipline-based academic departments should cease to operate as *administrative* entities, retaining only an academic authority over their members.

In terms of the main actors' conceptualisation of the situation, at least as reflected in the interviews conducted, the answer should be sought in a perceived imperative for innovation. This approach is consistent with the epistemology outlined in the Strategic Initiatives document (University of Natal 8), which is based largely on Senge's world view, and consistent also with a set of values which are Theory Y in nature, rather than Theory X.

This is one way of coding, or interpreting, the pressures being felt by the University leadership for institutional change. On this approach, the resulting scenario looks like this:

On the one hand, there is a perceived need for universities to change very fundamentally the way they go about their business, a need driven at least in part by rapid changes in technology; combined, on the other hand, with the inherently conservative nature of the university as an institution, which conservatism stems at least in part from the inclination of the mass of professionals in the organization's operating core to protect their autonomy, within their disciplines as traditionally defined. In this scenario, Professor Gourley and the University executive are driven beyond the needs of operating efficiency by the need for fundamental innovation and change.

In a July 1997 newspaper article it was reported that astronauts on the struggling space station Mir spoke to a gathering of reporters and university lecturers in Johannesburg in a live satellite link-up. On the face of it, there is nothing startling about that. But the event had been organised by Britain's De Montfort University to demonstrate "the power of satellite technology to transform education across international barriers".

The article quotes Brian Foxon of De Montfort as saying: "The barriers of education are fast breaking down. Making use of the Internet and satellite technology may in 20 years completely transform the structure of universities as we know them today." (*Cape Argus*, 22 July 1997)

There are at least two significant points here. Firstly, the very fact that it was a *British* university which conducted the demonstration and has already established a presence in South Africa as a deliverer of tertiary education is important. While South African tertiary education institutions face increasing financial pressure from declining Government subsidies and increasing demands for quality and accountability, they also face increasing competition both from private educational institutions within South Africa and from entrepreneurial institutions abroad, like De Montfort. These institutions, generally speaking, do not carry the historical baggage which the South African publicly-funded institutions do and are able to respond much more quickly to changing circumstances in the broad educational field, in technology, and in market trends.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly in our context, is the observation that changing technology has the potential to fundamentally alter "the structure of universities as we know them today". Of course, the power of technological changes to create and to destroy whole industries as well as to change the quality of life of millions of people is not new. But we are talking here about an institution which has survived more or less unchanged since the Middle Ages: can it seriously be said to face radical change in terms of its *structure*, or organizational form?

It is a challenge which the University of Natal takes seriously, as reflected in the Planning Guidelines document (University of Natal 7, 1994), and in the January 1996 interviews with Professor Gourley.

"In the whole technology industry, universities have lost their strategic advantage," Professor Gourley said. "They are no longer the repositories and storehouses of knowledge. There are other sources of knowledge, like computer networks, libraries, attendance at conferences."

The difficult question to answer, of course, is *how* universities are going to change. The uncertainty around this is located, for Professor Gourley, in a wider context of uncertainty.

Asked, in the second January interview, whether the adoption of the learning organisation idea represented a shift away from the search for specificity, Professor Gourley said in part: "True. It took quite a long time to evolve into thinking that you will never get enough specificity, if that's what you want. It's not that kind of world any more.

"Certainty has gone," Professor Gourley said, adding a little paradoxically but tellingly, "certainly in South Africa".

"Organisations have to change much more quickly to a world which is changing much more quickly than it did before. You are dependent on people spotting changes... We know that there are different ways of coming to answers."

In terms of this line of argument, the far-reaching structural changes being proposed by the University executive represent an attempt to address the problem of innovation in the Professional Bureaucracy (as outlined in Chapter Three) by breaking down the boundaries which separate the "pigeonholes" of the disciplines. If, as Mintzberg argues, professionals are inclined to force new problems into old pigeonholes, perhaps they must in turn be forced to leave the comfort of their existing pigeonholes and find new ways of coming to answers. And Senge makes the point (also quoted in Chapter Three) that "structure produces behavior, and changing underlying structures can produce different patterns of behavior." (1994:53)

The argument finds its clearest expression, perhaps, in the University's Planning Guidelines document (University of Natal 7, 1994, referred to in Chapter Five) where it speaks of the paradigm shift from seeing the world as "a disassociated collection of parts" to seeing it as an "integrated whole". The document says that the division of the curriculum into disciplines promotes the "old paradigm" of segmentation:

Curricula and research design, if they are to recognise the validity of the new paradigm, need to be organised in such a way that scholars are produced who go beyond the isolated facts, who make connections across disciplines, who help to shape a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated and authentic view of life. (University of Natal 7, 1994:5)

But the weakness of this line of argument, broadly speaking, is that it takes the need for *pedagogical* innovation in the face of change as a socially and politically uncontested given. It is the same problem which Professor Sitas identified in Senge's work, in a different shape. To re-word it in a fairly crude way to emphasise the point: Shell might

be a very progressive and innovative corporation, from an organizational theory point of view, but this does not necessarily mean that its actions (as in Ogoniland in Nigeria) are beyond reproach from a political and social perspective. (See Sitas, 1997:3)

Similarly, "innovation" becomes the University of Natal's attempt to re-code the various pressures which the institution feels in organizational theoretical terms. But the re-coding, while clearly responding in some measure to real pressures, draws attention away from the social and political implications of the problems the University faces. Responding innovatively to the need for change, while an uncontested good in terms of learning organization theory, is not necessarily an uncontested good in terms of other – primarily social and political – concerns.

Some theory which begins to unpack the social and political implications of innovative changes in the field of pedagogy is required.

### **6.3 DOMINANCE OF THE MARKET**

In many of the interviews conducted at the University in September 1997, respondents pointed out that – apart from its immediate and pressing financial problems – the University also had to position itself to respond to developments in the wider field of higher education. The National Commission on Higher Education, the subsequent White Paper, with its emphasis on outcomes-based learning programmes, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) were commonly mentioned.

The Structures and Funding document refers to all of these factors and lists a number of implications for the University of Natal. Then it turns to the international context. "Universities all over the world," it says, "are responding to the dual challenge of curriculum change and the reduction in government funding." (University of Natal 13, 1997:3) It adds:

The universality of the financial problems which are presently being experienced by universities in all Commonwealth countries (with the exception of Malaysia, Mauritius and Hong Kong) lies in the fact that their governments talk to one another and listen to the advice of donor agencies concerning relative priorities of basic and higher education. Their responses follow several common patterns:

- cost reduction exercises focussing on administrative and support costs
- income generation drives, seeking to replace government income with funds from a range of external sources
- restructuring the academic and administrative organisation to reduce costs and improve managerial efficiency. (University of Natal 13, 1997:3)

This approach begins to bring the developments at the University of Natal into wider perspective, but it is still operating at the level of cost-cutting and efficiency.

The line of argument to be developed here seeks to locate the proposed changes at the University of Natal at another level of abstraction, within a wider context of political and social trends, including trends in tertiary education both nationally and internationally. As mentioned earlier, this view is based on recent work by Basil Bernstein and its application within the South African context by Johan Muller.

In his paper "A harmonized qualifications framework and the well-tempered learner: pedagogic models, teacher education and the NQF", Muller (1996) applies concepts developed primarily in Bernstein's *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity* (1996) to the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Much of the discussion revolves around two different models of pedagogic practice, referred to by Bernstein as a "competence model" and a "performance model". It should be pointed out, before going any further, that there exists considerable confusion among the educational policy makers in South Africa (the "official pedagogic recontextualizing field" or ORF, in Bernstein's terms) around the use of "competence" and "performance".

While, on the strength of the terminology used, the NQF appears to fall squarely within a "competence model" of pedagogic practice, it does not always mean "competence" as defined by Muller, following Bernstein (see page 119 below), and often veers in fact in the direction of "performance". This is at least partly the result, as Muller suggests, of the policy makers trying to accommodate both the social project implicit in the competence model and the economic, market-driven imperatives of global competition in one all-embracing qualifications framework. There are unresolved tensions around the use of terminology like "competence" which still have to work themselves out, perhaps (as Muller suggests) through the process of actually setting unit standards for qualifications.

The argument developed here largely follows Muller's interpretation of how "competence" and "performance" are to be understood in the South African context; but it is also based on the view (further developed below) that the dominant discourse in South African higher education will tip the balance in the direction of a *performance* model, as described by Muller, whatever the current terminology might suggest.

In his analysis, Muller is looking at the entire field of education in South Africa, but with a particular interest in the implications of the pedagogic models being considered for teacher education. With regard to teacher education, for example, he argues that a more radical shift is taking place there than in other areas of education, because teacher education had embraced the "competence revolution" more wholeheartedly than other sectors and was now being affected by a shift towards a performance model. He says:

Teacher education, via agencies like the NQF, at least in terms of stipulated outcomes, is being asked to move from one or other model of competence to a market-oriented performance pedagogy – or lose students and close down. This is a shift of a relatively drastic order.... (1996:21)

With regard to tertiary education in general, Muller argues, a shift is taking place "from the curriculum of disciplinary singulars to market-responsive curricula, which are 'targeted' and 'niched', often transdisciplinary, to capture some or other 'market segment' and to respond to some real or perceived market need. This will always be a partial shift, and will always be contested. Nevertheless, higher education is also feeling the effect of the twin imperatives of accountability and market relevance, and responding, enthusiastically or reluctantly, as the case may be." (1996:21)

This shift, which Muller says is taking place "as we enter reflexive modernity" (1996:21), represents in the briefest of shorthands what we have seen occurring at the University of Natal in the case study – in particular with regard to the restructuring proposals, which might be said to represent an "enthusiastic" response to the shift. In order to make proper sense of what Muller is suggesting however, and perhaps to strengthen the point before looking at some of its implications, it is necessary to unpack some of the key terms being used and to provide some account of the argument supporting it.

Muller's analysis is based upon Bernstein's account of pedagogic models which, although rooted in the UK experience, has wider applicability. Bernstein (1996) distinguishes between two basic pedagogic models: a competence model and a performance model.

The competence model, he says, grew out of a "remarkable convergence" in the social and psychological sciences in the 1960s around the concept of competence. (Bernstein, 1996:54) The social logic of the concept, he says, includes "an in-built procedural democracy, and in-built creativity, an in-built virtuous self-regulation" (1996:56), which appealed to influential players in the educational field – occupants both of the "pedagogic recontextualizing field" and of the "official pedagogic recontextualizing field". (1996:57)

Contrasting the competence model to the performance model, Bernstein says the performance model "places the emphasis upon a specific output of the acquirer, upon a particular text the acquirer is expected to construct, and upon the specialized skills necessary to the production of this specific output, text or product." (1996:57-58)

Reproduced below is Muller's summary, in tabular form, of the different specifications for "acquisition, transmission, and evaluation" of the models, and the different ways in which they "specialise the roles of acquirers and transmitters". (Muller, 1996:19)

### PEDAGOGIC MODELS

	Competence (acquisition-competence)	Performance (transmission-performance)
<b>learner</b>	control over selection, sequence and pace of learning	little control over selection, sequence and pace of learning
<b>teacher</b>	personal control transmission not pedagogically regulated rules implicit	positional control pedagogically regulated rules explicit
<b>pedagogic text</b>	ungraded and unstratified performance competence read through the performance	graded and stratified performance the performance itself
<b>assessment</b>	general competence criteria 'presences' in terms of difference	specific performance criteria 'absences' in terms of deficit
<b>learning sites</b>	anywhere	clearly marked learning sites
<b>role of the state</b>	increased	decreased
<b>class sponsors</b>	professional educational middle class	economic sector and entrepreneurial middle class
<b>costs</b>	higher teacher training costs hidden time-based costs less efficient with large classes	lower teacher training costs economies of external control can deal with large numbers

Complicating the picture somewhat, however, is a sub-category or mode of the performance model which Bernstein calls the *generic* mode. Generic modes, Bernstein says, are "constructed and distributed outside, and independently of, pedagogic recontextualizing fields". (1996:66) In the UK context, these modes originate from the Manpower Services Commission and the Training Agency under the aegis of the Department of Employment (Bernstein, 1996:66), whereas their South African equivalents issue from the National Training Board, where unions and employers found common ground around the hold-all concept of "lifelong learning" (cf. Muller, 1996:23). (Muller refers to "lifelong learners" as "the new generic label for the presumptive worker-citizen of late modernity". (1996:26))

Generic modes, Bernstein says, are essentially directed to the extra-school experiences of 'work' and 'life' and have been found predominantly, but not exclusively, in Further Education. They are often misrecognised as competence modes, Bernstein suggests, because they are "produced by a functional analysis of what is taken to be the underlying features necessary to the performance of a skill, task, practice or even area of work" and these "underlying apparently necessary features are referred to as 'competences'". The misrecognition, he adds, gives rise to a "jejune concept of trainability". (1996:67)

Of more direct relevance to the present study of Natal University, however, are the other two modes which Bernstein identifies within the performance model, distinguished according to their "knowledge base, focus and social organization" (1996:65): *singulars* and *regions*. This is how Bernstein describes them:

#### *Singulars*

Singulars are knowledge structures whose creators have appropriated a space to give themselves a unique name, a specialized discrete discourse with its own intellectual field of texts, practices, rules of entry, examinations, licenses to practice, distribution of rewards and punishments (physics, chemistry, history, economics, psychology etc.). Singulars are, on the whole, narcissistic, oriented to their own development, protected by strong boundaries and hierarchies. (1996:65)

#### *Regions*

Regions are constructed by recontextualizing singulars into larger units which operate both in the intellectual field of disciplines and in the field of external practice. Regions are the interface between disciplines (singulars) and the technologies they make possible. Thus engineering, medicine, architecture are regions. Contemporary regions would be cognitive science, management, business studies, communications and media. (1996:66)

Bernstein then argues (referring to the UK):

Regionalization in higher education has proceeded at a rapid pace in the new universities, as any glance at their brochures will testify. Which disciplines enter a region depends upon the recontextualizing principle and its social base. Thus the singulars entering medicine have expanded to include the sociology of medicine. Regionalization as a discursive procedure threatens pedagogic cultures dominated by singulars and raises issues of legitimacy for such cultures, e.g. journalism, dance, sport, tourism, as university studies. However, changes in the reproduction of singulars from course base to modular form facilitate regionalization. Regionalization necessarily weakens both the autonomous discursive base and the political base of singulars and so facilitates changes in organizational structures of institutions towards greater central administrative control. The regions have, perhaps, autonomy over their contents in order to be more responsive to, more dependent upon, the market their output is serving. Increasing regionalization of knowledge is then a good indicator of its technologizing, of centralizing of administrative control and of pedagogic contents recontextualized according to external regulation. Increasing regionalization necessarily is a weakening of the strength of the classification of discourses and their entailed narcissistic identities and so a change of orientation of identity towards greater external dependency: a change from introjected to projected identities.... (1996:66)

The resonances between Bernstein's account of increasing regionalization in UK universities and the restructuring being proposed for the University of Natal are, it is submitted, very strong indeed. The institutional, organizational base of the academic departments, at least as administrative entities, is weakened and the academic staff within the departments are to be deployed in various programmes being offered in inter-disciplinary schools within the faculties. The narcissistic, introjected identity of the academic department and the classification of its discourses are weakened in favour of a projected identity (or range of identities) projected from beyond the department and its discourses, according to the perceived needs of market-related inter-disciplinary programmes. This is precisely the shift "from the curriculum of disciplinary singulars to market-responsive curricula" (Muller, 1996:21) noted in the 'shorthand' above.

The development is consistent with a message which, Professor Gourley said in a January 1996 interview, the University was receiving from the employers of its students, and with trends in employment:

People said we were turning out scholars who were too narrow. We were producing students in fairly finite areas, for example accountants and doctors. This is a first-world environment, which is a shrinking part of the economy. A lot of people will be self-employed, or they will find work in the informal sector, or in NGOs, or in Government. What are we doing about producing people in those areas?

And it ties in with the perceived need to provide cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary courses. In the first January 1996 interview, Professor Gourley said:

We had got into little boxes in terms of disciplines. As one of our professors said: Problems in the real world are seldom so accommodating as to divide themselves up into disciplines. Nothing is solved by a single discipline in a community setting.

There is, however, a problem which has to be faced here before this recontextualization of the case can be pressed home with any confidence. To recontextualize the restructuring exercise at the University of Natal as an instance of increasing regionalization being driven by market forces, it should be clear that the higher education sector is in fact part – or at least is becoming part – of a performance model, as regions (in Bernstein's scheme of things) are a mode of the performance model. But the problem is that higher education in South Africa, along with all other educational sectors, is meant to be part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the NQF is supposedly *competence* rather than performance based.

Muller comes to the conclusion in his paper that we have to "take seriously the possibility of competence practices in a performance regime". (1996:23) The purpose here is to give an indication of how Muller arrives at this conclusion, and then to push the argument a little further. The contention here is that the dominant discourse in higher education is that of the market and competitiveness, and that there is a fundamental mismatch between the direction that higher education is taking (essentially that of a performance model) and the competence model of the NQF which is supposed to accommodate it.

These two models, says Muller, "distribute roles differently, project different subjects, and specialise discourses differently" (1996:17); and he proceeds to discuss them in ideal-typical terms. In the course of the discussion, he observes:

Competence pedagogies, driven by an egalitarian project, are not geared to specialised futures. Performance pedagogies, on the other hand, are. These models move the focus from the learner to the learning course and to the learning outcome. The learner here may still be active, but her activity is more goal-directed, rather than driven from within. The emphasis, in other words, is here more upon the instructional than upon the moral order, more upon the order of objects in the discourse acquired than upon the authority and autonomy relations of the process of transmission and acquisition.

Performance models consequently offer learners well stipulated curricula with explicit rules of acquisition, little control over the learning course, and definite criteria for the judgement of right and wrong, adequate or inadequate. Pedagogues thus exercise a good deal of control over the process in an invisible way, and evaluate performances on graded scales.

Performance models are geared to be accountable to something outside of the learner. We must distinguish between 2 rather different forms of performance model: the 'autonomous' and the 'market-oriented'. The former is the traditional elite tertiary (and schooling) model where learners are subjected to the disciplinary regime of subjects; the latter is skilling tailored to specific needs, tasks, and slots in the occupational hierarchy.... (1996:20-21)

At stake here, says Muller, "is the form of symbolic control appropriate to education, in other words, the technology itself. The class sponsors of competence are what Bernstein calls the professional agents and agencies of symbolic control – the new knowledge and educational professionals whose struggle is over the conditions of their own reproduction and expansion (in our case, NOLA, SAIDE, IEB, the INSET NGOs etc.). The class sponsors of market-based pedagogics are by and large the economic middle class. The educational professionals want an enlarged role for the state and an increased growth of public expenditure; the economic sector wants a reduced role for the state, wants greater decentralisation, and greater local, industry-specific or even firm-specific autonomy." (1996:21)

The sponsors of the NQF, argues Muller, "are an alliance of sections of both fractions, and the resultant model beginning to emerge is a mixed or hybrid one. To the degree that the competence sponsors prevail, therefore, is the degree to which the role of the pedagogue will be 'de-regulated' and assessment un-graded. The degree that the performance sponsors prevail will reflect the degree to which unit standards, at least in the form successful in vocational systems, prevails...." (1996:22)

Discussing the idea of mixed modes, Muller says:

It would seem that the NQF is trying, as so many technologies in reflexive modernity are, to respond to conflicting tendencies, requirements and imperatives. First is the project of social justice, egalitarianism, redress and empowerment. Scrupulous attention to this imperative prescribes the 'similar to' relations of the competence model with its attendant techniques of ungraded assessment.

Second is the instrumental discourse of flexibility, mobility and re-trainability that comes from the employer sector as well as from post-fordist and post-modern theorists. In the South African case, the sponsors of these two social discourses, the unions (abetted by their educational professional allies) on the one hand, and the employers on the other, declared common cause in the NTB. From there, the conjoint social agenda was carried forward into national education policy discourse and into policy. The semantics of the case have helped to obscure the differences: 'lifelong learning' is, after all, loose enough a concept to inhabit comfortably enough both discursive realms. It is only in the nitty gritty of writing the unit standards that the scales will tip, and in the debate around gradable assessment, which has so far not occurred. It is, for instance, not at all unlikely that some of the industry board projects are writing their outcomes in performance terms, while others in the ABET field, for example, will almost certainly be trying to write them in competence terms. The stage of development of the policy is such that the difference has not so far come to the fore, but surely must quite soon. (1996:22-23)

The appropriate focus here is not so much on questions of how the different models project subjects (be they learners or teachers), nor on the form of symbolic control appropriate to education, important though these questions are. It is rather on the conflicting discourses of empowerment and market-responsiveness which underlie the

two pedagogic models; and to a lesser extent on the failure to recognise clearly the discourses at work because of confusion around the implications of key terms like "lifelong learner".

In its Draft White Paper on Higher Education (1997) the national Department of Education spells out its vision of a "transformed system of higher education" and the first two points embrace both discourses. Its vision is of a system that will:

- promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all – irrespective of race, colour, gender, creed, age or class – seeking to realise their potential through higher education
- meet, through well-planned and co-ordinated teaching and learning programmes, the high-skilled employment needs presented by a growing economy aspiring to global competitiveness (Department of Education, 1997:12)

Under the heading "A Qualifications Framework for Higher Education", the White Paper says that "the establishment of SAQA with the full and active participation of higher education providers is a milestone and puts the evolution of the NQF in the forefront of such systems world-wide". (1997:20) But it adds in the next clause:

The precise modalities of integrating higher education qualifications into the NQF, that is, through unit standards or whole qualifications or otherwise, are being analysed and discussed within the higher education sector and SAQA structures. (1997:21)

It is of course the requirement of the empowerment discourse, or the project of social justice, that higher education should be brought into the National Qualifications Framework, with its underlying competence-based pedagogic model. But the difficulty of doing so is already presaged in the uncertainty around "the precise modalities of integrating higher education qualifications into the NQF".

It is surely not too fanciful to see the South African experience following more or less the course of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), on which the NQF is to some extent modelled. If a serious effort is made to write unit standards for all tertiary education qualifications, the burden and cost of doing so is likely to result in the same sort of resistance from the tertiary education sector which Muller mentions, with a consequent shift to registering only the whole qualifications on the framework.

As Muller points out:

Outcomes-based teacher education is only a small part of an ambitious reform plan to project all certified and [certifiable] learning activities onto a single national qualifications grid, the NQF. The NQF and its parent body the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA, as established by the South African Qualifications Authority, Act of 1995), are set to generalise the outcomes approach through all tiers of the education system, from general education, through further education, to higher education. (1996:5)

Muller adds:

It is evident that the NQF vision is propelled by a strong version of the social project discussed above, driven as it is by the ANC-aligned trade union federation COSATU through the medium of the National Training Board (NTB), from whence the idea of a NQF originates. The watchwords are consequently 'access, portability of credits, flexibility, coherence and articulation', all principles of the NTB.

Specifically, the NQF rests upon a twin-pronged argument, with an egalitarian strand and an epistemological strand. The egalitarian argument takes issue with the high exclusivity and selectivity of the present qualifications system which restricts both access and progress. The NQF, by contrast, will promote access and maximise progress. It will foster the former by accrediting prior learning by permitting multiple re-entry, and multiple sites of delivery. It will foster the latter by permitting multiple re-assessment on a pass/fail basis. This means, as Young 1996 says, that "... in theory, therefore, all students can pass" (5). This will mean a move away from content-defined curricula and norm-referenced assessment, to competency-defined curricula and criterion-referencing, ... "from information (content) to a focus on skills and competences" (DOE, 1996:41). Furthermore, in theory, anyone can start anywhere in the NQF and proceed to any other level, since they are all interconnected: 'from sweeper to engineer', or 'porter to doctor', as the COSATU slogans have it. ...

The epistemological argument takes issue with the academic/vocational tracks of traditional education which are premised on a strong divide between mental and manual labour. The NQF, by contrast, sees all knowledge and skills as interleaved. Consequently, in place of learning tracks, the NQF offers 'learning pathways' which are learner-selected and learner-driven. 'Learner-driven means that learners proceed at their own time and pace through the learning pathway which is facilitated by arrangements of re-entry, re-assessment, and credit transfer and accumulation.

A serious dream of integration and social justice propels this epistemological elision. If it is a faulty epistemology that underpins the hierarchical division of skills and qualifications into mental and manual, academic and vocational, blue collar and white collar, then the epistemology must change. The NQF thus assumes that all skills and competencies are essentially and in principle on the same epistemological footing, which they have to be to be exchangeable in terms of a transferable credit value. (Muller, 1996:5-6)

Referring to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Muller notes that its general features are "remarkably similar to the emergent features of the NQF" (1996:11) and remarks on the "vociferous campaign" which the tertiary education community has mounted in recent years against inclusion on the NZQA, "or at least against the writing of unit standards for tertiary education qualifications, including for teacher education qualifications". (1996:11) He argues:

The general opposition to unit standards, the objections deriving from desires to protect institutional autonomy aside, has at root to do with opposition to the epistemological argument of integration. The heart of the problem according to Elley (1993) and others, is that in 'academic subjects' (or in subjects that have 'large bodies of knowledge' ...) skills and knowledge are not separable in the same way that they are in 'vocational' subjects where skills are relatively clear-cut.

Where skills are separable and clear-cut (in 'skill-based' fields), they can be easily stipulated (typing 30 words per minute, for example) and placed on a progressive 'ladder of mastery' which is amenable to the stipulation of unit standards (30wpm, 40wpm, 50wpm, etc.) It is not nearly so easy to establish what learners can 'do' in 'knowledge-based' fields and the 'ladder of mastery' is not nearly so easy to calibrate. If this is so, then it becomes difficult if not impossible to spell out standards in knowledge-based subjects. This is why, says Hall, tertiary education is 'curriculum centred', rather than 'learner centred', contradicting a central premise of the NZQA (and the NQF for that matter).

A second feature of the NZQA which the tertiary critics object to is the form of assessment. As Hall (nd) notes, an outcomes-based system is based on a competency approach to education, which entails pass/fail (ungraded) assessment as part of the unit standard methodology. (11) This is simply inappropriate for most academic subjects, he says, and advocates instead a 'standards-based' system of graded performance via clearly defined 'performance standards' and some form of norm-referenced assessment. 'Performance standards' are specified in terms of content and level, even though this is less easily done for academic subjects. Consequently, the standards should not be overspecified. (1996:11-12)

However the South African experience of the NQF with regard to higher education does develop, the contention here is that the Department of Education's plan for higher education – while no doubt consistent with the NQF – contains a far more powerful organizing principle than the NQF and its unit standards: that of the "programme-based" provision of higher education.

In the chapter on Structure and Growth, under the heading "A Single Coordinated System", the White Paper states:

- 2.1 The Ministry believes that if the legacy of the past is to be overcome and the challenges of reconstruction and development addressed, the higher education system must be planned, governed and funded as a single national coordinated system.
- 2.2 The single coordinated system will be predicated on a programme-based (as opposed to institution-based) definition of higher education.... This recognises that the provision of higher education can and does take place in a multiplicity of institutions, sites and media. (Department of Education, 1997:15)

This is a much more powerful organizing influence than the NQF for a number of reasons. Despite the profound pedagogical implications of a competence-based NQF being established, there is a sense in which the burdensome and costly exercise of writing unit standards for all tertiary education qualifications could be undertaken and completed without changing very much in the way universities go about their business. There is nothing necessarily transformational about writing unit standards for existing courses and registering them on the framework. In theory, the task can be done, and delivery continue much as it did in the past.

But a move to programme-based (*as opposed to institution-based*) provision of tertiary education has profound implications for the way in which higher education institutions go about their business, particularly when their funding is linked to the approval of programmes and an allocation of X-number of funded student places by the central Council on Higher Education. In theory, on this model, everything is thrown into question. All institutions become competitors for students (and the funding attached to them) in terms of an assessment of national needs and the ability of institutions to meet them, determined by some body outside of the university. Moreover, and this point will be emphasised again shortly, all academic structures within a university also become competitors for the provision of approved programmes.

Quite clearly, the tendency of this innovation is more in the direction of the second leg of the Department of Education's vision for higher education, than the first. It seeks to meet "the high-skilled employment needs presented by a growing economy aspiring to global competitiveness". (Department of Education, 1997:12) As such, it is in line with the underlying market-responsive discourse rather than the empowerment or social justice discourse of the NQF. And because it is directly linked to the allocation of resources to the institutions of higher learning, it makes the market-responsive discourse immeasurably the more powerful.

The trend of this argument, and its implications for the restructuring envisaged at the University of Natal now become clearer. However the programme-based approach works out, it is going to be driven by an assessment of national (read "market") needs which lies outside the University and most certainly outside the narcissistic concerns of individual academic departments as presently constituted. The continued existence of the University could depend on its flexible response to perceived market needs, probably requiring programmes of an inter-disciplinary nature in many cases, in an environment in which the Department of Education explicitly states that "the provision of higher education can and does take place in a multiplicity of institutions, sites and media" (1997:15). The need for the institution to respond to this kind of scenario is much greater than the need, outlined in the earlier section of this chapter, to be more innovative.

And there are other forces moving in the same direction. The idea that tertiary education provision should be linked to market needs is much more readily accepted in the technikon sector than the university sector. Indeed, the basic rationale of technikon education is to provide career-specific education to meet market and national needs.

And there is a widely accepted notion that South Africa needs to increase significantly the number of technikon students relative to university students, to meet the need for technologists which competition on global markets will require. So the dice, in a sense, are loaded in favour of technikons and against the traditional discipline-based universities in the move to programme-based education.

The National Commission on Higher Education, against the arguments of Peninsula Technikon Rector Brian Figaji, accepted the notion of a dynamic or "fuzzy" relationship between institutions and programmes, within a single co-ordinated system of higher education. (NCHE Report, 1996:165 and 317-319) What this does, essentially, is to remove any marked boundary between universities and technikons. Some Commission provisos notwithstanding (1996:167,170), any tertiary education institution can offer any course it chooses (or in the proposed programme-based dispensation, can bid for any programme it chooses), whether or not that course was traditionally offered by a university or a technikon. (Ironically, given the above argument on the favoured status of technikon education, one of the first outcomes of this decision has been a motivation by some technikons to change their name to include "university" in the title and to drop "technikon".)

The burden of the argument thus far, then, is that the predominant discourse in higher education at present is not the social justice or empowerment discourse associated with the NQF and the competence model of pedagogy, but the market-responsive or competitive discourse which is associated with future institutional funding, market needs, and a performance model of pedagogy.

To the extent that this is so, the regionalization which Bernstein identifies in higher education in the UK can be expected to occur in South Africa. In fact, as already suggested, it is precisely market-driven regionalization which is beginning to be effected in the restructuring of the University of Natal, driven to some extent by its immediate financial crisis and the perceived need for innovation but, beyond that, by the social logic of the increasingly dominant discourse in South African higher education.

Returning for a moment to Muller's argument, where he distinguishes two different forms of the performance model, one could say that what is happening at the University of Natal is a shift from the "traditional elite tertiary ... model where learners are subjected to the disciplinary regime of subjects" towards "skilling tailored to specific needs, tasks, and slots in the occupational hierarchy". (Muller, 1996:21)

Referring to the rather different UK situation, Bernstein says that there is "no official recontextualizing field (ORF) for the construction of an official higher education discourse" (1996:74), whereas we have seen that there is in South Africa. He adds:

However, there is strong indirect regulation on the recontextualizing process by the Higher Education Funding Council Executive (including the crucial research selectivity exercise) and by the Research Councils, and in the case of some institutions by their industrial niche. Within these constraints higher education institutions have to optimize their outputs with regard to teaching and research. Whilst each institution has its own recontextualizing field and particular management structure, each institution is in competition with significant others. Thus the higher educational field takes on an internal stratification of institutions which provides its referent group for internal recontextualizing.

Those at the top, or near the top, of this hierarchy may maintain their position more by attracting and holding key academic stars than by changing their pedagogic discourse according to the *exigencies of the market*. This is not to say, of course, that developments in the intellectual field are not provided for, and especially those which have a technological pay-off, but that they are less likely to regionalize their discourses. On the other hand, those institutions which are much less fortunate in their position in the stratification are usually in no position to attract stars, and so will be more concerned with the marketing possibilities of their pedagogic discourse. Thus these institutions are likely to develop projected identities. What they are is a function of the exigencies of the market context which signifies the resources out of which their particular identity is constructed. Regionalization here is likely to be a crucial recontextualizing procedure, and the contents and names are likely to shift with what is taken to be the demand. If these institutions develop projected identities, then those near the top are perhaps able to maintain their traditional introjected identities, albeit rather more *ambiguous and ambivalent* now, owing to their more applied orientations. Thus in higher education not only is there a stratification of recontextualizing contexts and of regionalization but also a stratification of identities not only of institutions but also of staff and students." (1996:74, original emphasis)

It can be argued that in South Africa there is a significant stratification of higher educational institutions. The distinction between "historically advantaged" and "historically disadvantaged" institutions (and the consequent debate around redress funding) is premised on such a stratification, although one arising out of the peculiar historical aberrations of apartheid. But there is not the same sort of divide within the South African situation as there is between the Oxbridge universities and the others in the UK, where it is the universities like Oxford and Cambridge which are able to resist the pressures towards regionalization "more by attracting and holding key academic stars than by changing their pedagogic discourse according to the *exigencies of the market*," as Bernstein puts it.

The point should also be made, explicitly, that universities like Oxford and Cambridge have enormous financial resources at their disposal, independent of government allocations, which gives them a degree of autonomy not shared by universities in South Africa. But to the extent that there are disparities between the South African institutions

in terms of their endowments, the University of Natal is not in a favourable position, if the basis of the financial crisis is being accurately reflected.

In the South African situation, as opposed to that in the UK, there *is* an official recontextualizing field in higher education. And the funding matrix which is being prepared around the notion of programme-based delivery of tertiary education is inevitably going to affect all of the institutions to a very significant extent. All of the institutions of higher education in South Africa will be forced to look to the "marketing possibilities of their pedagogic discourse", with the consequences of regionalization as "a crucial recontextualizing procedure" and increasingly projected (rather than introjected) identities for the institutions. It is the beginnings of that process, it is submitted, which can be discerned in the restructuring proposals being pursued at the University of Natal.

#### **6.4 DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY**

To a large extent, then, it may be said that the recontextualization of the case resolves the puzzle with which Chapter Five closed, of why the University of Natal is pushing for institutional change which goes beyond the simple requirements of cost-cutting and efficiency. It is, whether consciously or otherwise, following the dictates of the dominant discourse in the field of higher education, as outlined above. But before closing this discussion, there is a subsidiary puzzle to be resolved, which arises out of the preceding argument.

In his discussion of regionalization, Bernstein remarks that regionalization "necessarily weakens both the autonomous discursive base and the political base of singulars and so facilitates changes in organizational structures of institutions towards greater central administrative control." (1996:66) Arguably, in the case of the University of Natal, one can see a weakening of "the autonomous discursive base" of singulars, or particular disciplines, in the move towards interdisciplinary schools, and a weakening of their political base in the loss of administrative authority in the academic departments. But what about the change "towards greater central administrative control", when the restructuring proposals are explicitly promising greater devolution of authority?

The University of Natal's Structures and Funding document (University of Natal 13:1997) advocates in its section on Organisational Structure a closer association between the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses (effectively a reversal of the

notion of devolution which informed the earlier strategic planning phase at the University), but it promises greater devolution to the new Schools (or newly structured Faculties, in the amended proposals).

The document says:

The key feature of the proposed structure is that academic administration will shift in two directions towards a more central role for the Deans of Schools. The Deans will assume responsibility for much of the academic administration presently performed by the Campus Principals (top-down), and the Deans' Offices will also absorb many of the administrative functions presently performed by academic Heads of Departments (bottom-up). The total operating budget, including staff compensation, will devolve to the Office of the Dean. Student records, operating expenses and other administrative functions including SAPSE, Calendar entries, etc., will be performed by the Dean's Office. (1997:19)

In any organization which is facing a severe financial crisis, some centralization of administration in the interests of cost effectiveness can be expected. So there is probably nothing very surprising in the shift from the earlier notion of devolution (as between the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses) towards greater centralization; although it is unlikely that the fear which the Structures and Funding document refers to, "that Pietermaritzburg interests will be swamped" (1997:18), would be allayed by the vague suggestion of "moving some of the central administrative functions to that centre [Pietermaritzburg], together with the requirement that administration of one of the Colleges and that of certain Schools should be located there". (1997:18)

But in that same context, the greater devolution of authority to the Deans appears odd on the face of it. On the one hand, the Structures and Funding document is proposing a closer association of the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses to "make the optimum use of its resources" (1997:18), but at the same time it is proposing an increased administrative role for the Deans' Offices which would seem to imply some considerable duplication of administrative functions (student records, operating expenses, SAPSE, etc.) which could be more cost-effectively handled centrally.

Such a situation is also paradoxical if one takes seriously the Sengean world view with its corollary, as expressed by Professor Gourley, that problems are best handled by those closest to them and that authority should be devolved as far as possible. On such a view, devolution from the centre to the Deans makes sense, but the "bottom-up" centralization of authority in the office of the Dean does not. Consistent with this view, there should be only a "top-down" devolution of authority, and the devolution should not stop with the Deans.

Of course, there might be internal political considerations at work behind the proposals. For example, some or other deal might have had to be struck to enhance the status and authority of the Deans in order to win their agreement on a reduction of the number of Faculties (and hence the number of Deans). But in the absence of evidence on this score, the views of Professor Kahn – on the various “overlays” under which Deans and others are already labouring – tend to suggest that the existing Deans would not enthusiastically go in search of additional responsibilities.

The contention here is that one way of making sense of the paradox around devolution of authority is by applying the argument on regionalization developed in the previous section of this chapter. On this view, the “bottom-up” centralization of authority, from the Heads of Department to the Deans, is quite understandable. In the interests of changing the introjected identity of the institution to the projected identity required by the market, providing inter-disciplinary programmes to meet perceived market and national needs, the strong boundaries of the narcissistic academic departments must be broken down. Part of this process is achieved by separating the administrative authority from the academic authority of the academic departments, and that administrative authority which is prised free naturally adheres to the now larger Faculty in the office of the Dean.

Such centralization is clearly consistent with the view of Bernstein, referred to above, that regionalization “facilitates changes in organizational structures of institutions towards greater central administrative control.” (1996:66)

Somewhat more difficult to deal with on this view, then, is the “top-down” devolution of authority from the Campus Principals to the Deans. The short answer to this problem is that this devolution is effectively a recruitment of more members to the executive. But some explanation, linked to the previous discussion, is required to bring into focus the nature of the authority residing in this executive, whether in the person of the current executive members or of the Deans in the “enlarged executive” being suggested.

Muller was quoted earlier as referring to the “twin imperatives of accountability and market relevance” being felt in higher education. (1996:21) As the preceding discussion focused on the imperative of market relevance, the discussion around devolution of authority needs to focus on the other imperative of accountability.

In the Draft White Paper on Higher Education, the Ministry of Education says under the heading of Public Accountability:

The principle of public accountability bears upon decision-making, the spending of funds and the achievement of results. Firstly, it requires that individuals and institutions should demonstrate responsible actions to one or more constituencies. Secondly, it requires that individuals or institutions receiving

public funds should be able to report how, and how well, money has been spent. Thirdly, it requires that institutions should demonstrate the results they achieve with the resources at their disposal. (1997:14)

What will this mean in practice? At one level, one can see the implications in the crisis which has affected primary and secondary school education in the Western Cape over the last few years. The central government, in an effort to meet its own macro-economic objectives and operating in terms of a project of social justice and equity, allocates Rx-million to a particular province. It then becomes the responsibility of the provincial government to allocate its resources, with the provincial education department competing with other provincial departments for adequate provision. Assuming, as in the case of the Western Cape, that the provision is inadequate for present needs, and assuming that teachers' salaries are by far the biggest component in the provincial education budget, it becomes the responsibility of the provincial education department to cut back on the number of teachers. Notwithstanding complications in achieving this, occasioned by the activities of stakeholders like teachers' unions and recalcitrant school governing bodies, that is the bottom line: teacher numbers must be reduced, unless either the provincial government or the central government is willing and able to bail out the provincial education department.

(A recent newspaper report indicated that the national Department of Education was scrapping its controversial guidelines for teacher:pupil ratios, whereby provincial departments had to achieve ratios of 1:35 for high schools and 1:40 for junior schools by the year 2000. (*Cape Argus*, 22 December 1997) The headline to the report called this a "reprieve on class sizes"; but it is in fact no reprieve at all: the target ratios can officially disappear, but the same effect be achieved by strict adherence to budgets, as outlined above.)

What we see happening, both in relation to the school sector and higher education, is the setting of much tighter frameworks by the State for the performance of institutions. Management, at the various levels of the system, is being made accountable in a much stricter sense than previously. Inputs are controlled, with fixed budgets and budgets which are set to decline over time. Outputs are controlled by setting and enforcing quality standards, to be achieved in higher education through the planned Higher Education Quality Committee, to be established as a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education and registered with SAQA. (cf. Department of Education, 1997:21)

The tighter budgetary controls and the envisaged funding formula for higher education suggest a fundamental change in the way universities will operate, as we have seen

above. Putting this bluntly, there will be rewards for success and punishment for failure (with success and failure being determined outside of the university itself), whereas in the past there was no punishment for failure.

Still using broad brush strokes for the moment, one can locate this within a global shift in the relations between the State and the economy since the early 80s, as a result of Thatcherism and Reaganism. In the era of deregulation, the State moved back from direct control of the economy and allowed the market to dominate. The State's authority in society was exercised through tighter control of the organs of symbolic control on the one hand (eg. of the pedagogic recontextualizing field); and, on the other hand, through tighter control of the inputs to social services like education and tougher insistence on accountability for the outputs.

Bernstein, referring to the accelerating role of State intervention in education in the UK since the late 1970s, says that "the crucial impetus came under the Thatcher regime". (1996:72) He argues:

At all levels of the educational system a combination of the decentralization in respect of local institutions and their management, and centralization with regard to their monitoring and funding, changed the culture of educational institutions, their internal management structures, criteria for staff appointments and especially promotions and their pedagogic practices. Survival and growth depended now upon optimizing a market niche, upon objective productions, upon value-adding procedures. At the same time centralization of the control over the contents of education, the denuding of the responsibilities of LEAs, the setting up of minister-appointed and directed committees and authorities, reduced the autonomy of the PRF and changed the positions of dominance within it. It also introduced new discourses, e.g. management, assessment. ... The shift to performance models and their modes was initiated by the ORF which now more directly regulated pedagogic practices, contents and research. Clearly which performance modes regulated which practices depended upon the levels of education and curricular distribution within institutions within a level. (1996:72)

Referring in the first instance to schools, Bernstein says:

The management structure's major focus is upon the school's performance, with regard to attracting and retaining students, their conduct and their attainments. From this point of view, although pedagogic discourses are differently focused, the management focus of all institutions at all levels is similar. The management structure has become the device for creating an entrepreneurial competitive culture. The latter is responsible for criteria informing senior administrative appointments and the engaging or hiring of specialized staff to promote the effectiveness of this culture. Thus there is a dislocation between the culture of the pedagogic discourse and the management culture. The culture of the pedagogic discourse of schools is *retrospective*, based on a past narrative of the dominance and significance of disciplines, whereas the management structure is *prospective* pointing to the new entrepreneurialism and its instrumentalities. The State has therefore embedded a retrospective pedagogic culture into a prospective management culture. However, the emphasis on the performance of students

and the steps taken to increase and maintain performance, for the survival of the institution, is likely to facilitate a state-promoted instrumentality....

Thus the State, through greater centralization and new forms of decentralization, has shifted pedagogic models and modes, management structures, and cultures of all educational institutions and sponsored generic modes. (1996:75)

Allowing once again for differences between the UK and the South African situation, the pertinence of this argument to the unfolding developments at the University of Natal is clear. What can be seen in the proposed restructuring, including the devolution of authority to the Deans as described above, is the management structure of the University becoming "the device for creating an entrepreneurial competitive culture" throughout the University.

In order to respond to the "twin imperatives of accountability and market relevance" (in Muller's terms), the executive of the University is faced with the need to be innovative – to introduce new, trans-disciplinary programmes in response to perceived market needs. But the *retrospective* pedagogic discourse of the University, rooted in singular disciplines and defended by the professionals in the operating core of the institution, is antithetical to the *prospective* managerial discourse pointing to the new entrepreneurialism and its instrumentalities (following Bernstein).

Ultimately, the scenario which appears to be developing is this: all institutions providing tertiary education programmes in South Africa (including private institutions and foreign-based institutions like De Montfort) will be in competition for the increasingly scarce resource of government funding. This competition will be reproduced within the institution, with each Faculty competing with others for students and resources. The Deans will become increasingly involved in entrepreneurial activity. To promote entrepreneurial activity within the Faculties, the power of the professionals in the operating core (located in the discipline-based academic departments) will increasingly be undermined. The individual lecturers will ultimately cease to be professionals, professing a discipline whose boundaries are defined in its own terms. They will become "knowledge entrepreneurs" – each one an entrepreneur for his or her subject, responding to perceived needs of the market, and competing with all other lecturers for the diminishing resources available.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

This journey through the fog of institutional change in higher education began with the simple quotation from Henry Mintzberg: "What all of us want is more effective organizations." (1994:381) It is clear from the study that it is no simple matter to bring about fundamental institutional change, in pursuit of such effectiveness, in a complex institution of higher education like the University of Natal.

To the extent that the case study may be said to have a conclusion, or to have reached an "analytic generalization", it is probably to be found in the last paragraph of the previous section. It presents a *view* of the implications of the struggle to bring about institutional change at the University of Natal, based upon the preceding presentation of the case, its analysis in relation to theories of organizational change, and its recontextualization in a wider social context.

The complexity of an institution like the University of Natal is in itself enormous. The complexity of its relations to the wider social and political environment within which it operates is much greater. In approaching such complexity with theoretical tools, in order to bring the complexity within manageable bounds, one is inevitably involved in simplification and possibly distortion. But the hope is that light is thrown on significant patterns within the complexity and that some understanding of the social phenomenon being studied is achieved.

It has been argued that part of the difficulty of bringing about institutional change is attributable to the structure of the University, which has been characterised as a "Professional Bureaucracy". The University, unlike many organizations in the corporate world, has in its operating core a large number of professionals. These professionals, who may have more allegiance to an outside professional organization than to the University where they happen to work, value their autonomy and they value democracy (at least in the qualified sense in which Mintzberg uses the term, where it refers to the dissemination of power to individual workers).

The executive at the University of Natal was faced with the problem, from at least 1988, of how to bring the professionals in the operating core along in a programme of institutional change which – among other important things – had implications for the continuation or discontinuation of certain jobs and even certain disciplines within the University.

The University executive's response, as Professor Gourley put it, was to become involved in strategic planning in a much more specific way than had been the case in the past. Strategic planning would be the process whereby the institution as a whole would decide upon what it wanted to do and how it would do it. Once the plan was in place, the cascade effect of the strategic planning model would see to it that appropriate changes took place throughout the University. But, it was argued, strategic planning was unable to deliver on its promises. As a means of arriving at a "strategy" for the institution, it was unlikely to succeed as the strategic planning process is essentially analytical and the formation of strategy is synthetic. The effect of this was to obscure key elements of the University's strategy while "the plan" was awaited. The cascade, as a mechanism for bringing about change, failed. The process, it has been argued, mis-cast the University as a Machine Bureaucracy, rather than a Professional Bureaucracy.

The emphasis of the executive then shifted from "the strategic plan" to "strategic initiatives" – broad brushstrokes rather than detailed plans – and among the initiatives was the commitment to becoming a learning organization. With this approach, "specificity" as a goal was abandoned. The cascade, lock-step, Fordist notion of strategic planning was effectively abandoned, although never explicitly branded as being inappropriate. But the fundamental message of the learning organization is that "shared vision" is more important than a detailed plan.

In one sense, the learning organization may be a planning model better suited to the Professional Bureaucracy than the conventional strategic planning model which, it was argued, may be applicable in a Machine Bureaucracy. For example, the learning organization theory's emphasis on personal mastery is likely to appeal to individualistic professionals; but systems thinking perhaps less so.

But it is clear from developments at the University during 1996-97, that the learning organization did not provide a short-term answer to the problem of bringing about consensual change. The change agents identified to promote the concept, the corps of facilitators, have not played a central role in developments. And the executive has taken a step back from using "learning organization jargon".

In considering the financial and restructuring crisis which arose at the University in the second half of 1997, a puzzle arose around the type of restructuring being proposed for the University, which, it was suggested, could not be satisfactorily explained in terms of the organizational theory which the actors themselves employed, nor through an examination of the need for innovation, without locating the institution and the need for innovation within a broader social context.

The location attempted provides, again, a view of the changes being effected at the University of Natal which resolves both the puzzle around restructuring going beyond the simple requirements of cost cutting and efficiency, and the consequent puzzle around devolution of authority. The view is, essentially, one of an institution undergoing change, driven by financial crisis and wider social and market forces, from an institution of singulars (the academic departments) with strict boundaries and an introjected identity to one of regions and trans-disciplinary programmes, with projected identities, in which knowledge entrepreneurs compete with each other both within and between institutions for students and the resources attached to them in response to perceived market needs.

It is not a view which everyone will find attractive. Muller has made the point that the shift from "the curriculum of disciplinary singulars to market-responsive curricula" will always be contested. (1996:21) Bernstein, for one, clearly regrets the shift which he so persuasively defines.

In a paper entitled "Thoughts on the Trivium and Quadrivium: The Divorce of Knowledge from the Knower" Bernstein refers to a progressive replacement from the medieval period of the religious foundation of official knowledge by a humanizing secular principle. He then adds: "I want to argue that we have, for the first time, a dehumanizing principle, for the organization and orientation of official knowledge." (Bernstein, 1996:86)

Bernstein says:

Today throughout Europe, led by the USA and the UK, there is a new principle guiding the latest transition of capitalism. The principles of the market and its managers are more and more the managers of the policy and practices of education. Market relevance is becoming the key orientating criterion for the selection of discourses, their relation to each other, their forms and their research. This movement has profound implications from the primary school to the university....

Of fundamental significance, there is a new concept of knowledge and of its relation to those who create it and use it. This new concept is a truly secular concept. Knowledge should flow like money to wherever it can create advantage and profit. Indeed knowledge is not like money, it *is* money. Knowledge is divorced from persons, their commitments, their personal dedications. These become impediments, restrictions on the flow of knowledge, and introduce deformations in the working of the symbolic market. Moving knowledge about, or even creating it, should not be more difficult than moving and regulating money. Knowledge, after nearly a thousand years, is divorced from inwardness and literally dehumanized. Once knowledge is separated from inwardness, from

commitments, from personal dedication, from the deep structure of the self, then people may be moved about, substituted for each other and excluded from the market. (1996:87)

To paraphrase slightly the headline to an article on higher education in *The Times* (reported in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*, 24 August 1997): "The money changers have taken over the temple." The consequences are only beginning to be felt.

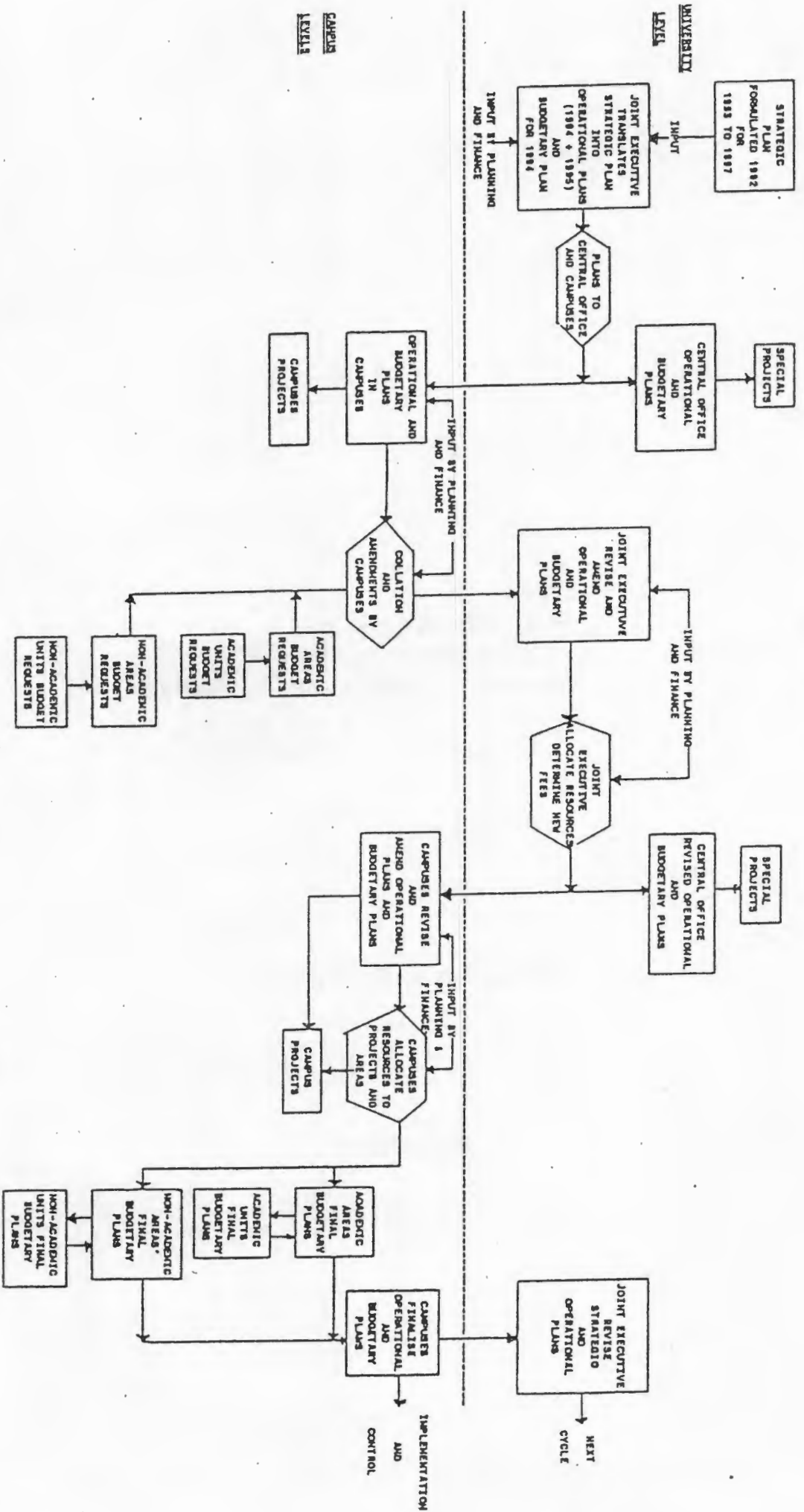


## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Planning Cycle and Process**

**Source: Vice-Chancellor's Review:  
Report, December 1991.  
(University of Natal, 4:140)**

PLANNING CYCLE AND PROCESS



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Mission Statement: 1989**

**Source: The Role in Society  
of the University of Natal  
1989 Onwards.  
(University of Natal, 3:20)**

**(Reproduced from separately  
issued pamphlet.)**



University of Natal

**THE ROLE IN SOCIETY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL  
1989 ONWARDS**

**MISSION STATEMENT : 1989**

*The University of Natal strives to serve all sections of its community through excellence in scholarship, teaching, learning, research and development.*

- It rejects apartheid and, as a non-racial university, its community consists of all people in all social circumstances, developed and developing, urban and rural.
- It seeks to honour its commitment to being an Equal Opportunities/Affirmative Action university and promote, internally and externally, the achievement of a free, just and equitable order, rejecting any form of discrimination based on race, colour, creed, religious conviction, nationality, gender, marital status or sexual orientation.
- It seeks to achieve the highest level of scholarship through academic integrity, pursuit of knowledge, creative endeavour and application of these to the benefit of its entire community.
- It seeks to achieve excellence in teaching by recruiting the best staff, rewarding excellence in teaching and establishing vigorous programmes of staff development.
- It seeks to achieve excellence in learning by admitting students of high academic potential, providing conditions that will enable them to realise their academic potential and offering good courses and curricula leading to reputable qualifications.
- It seeks to achieve excellence in research by recruiting the best staff, encouraging and rewarding the research endeavour and providing the best possible facilities.
- It seeks to achieve excellence in programmes of development by mounting appropriate curricula and undertaking research leading to the advancement of the community in all its diversity.
- It seeks to maintain the highest standards in all its teaching/learning and research/development programmes, whether they be pure, applied or developmental in objective.
- It seeks to protect for itself and other universities the highest levels of University Autonomy and Academic Freedom.
- It seeks to grow so that it satisfies both national and community needs for high quality academic and professional tertiary education.
- It seeks to mount efficient and effective services in support of its academic objective.
- It is committed to the preservation and conservation of the environment and natural resources of the region.

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*The University of Natal  
is an equal opportunities,  
affirmative action University.*

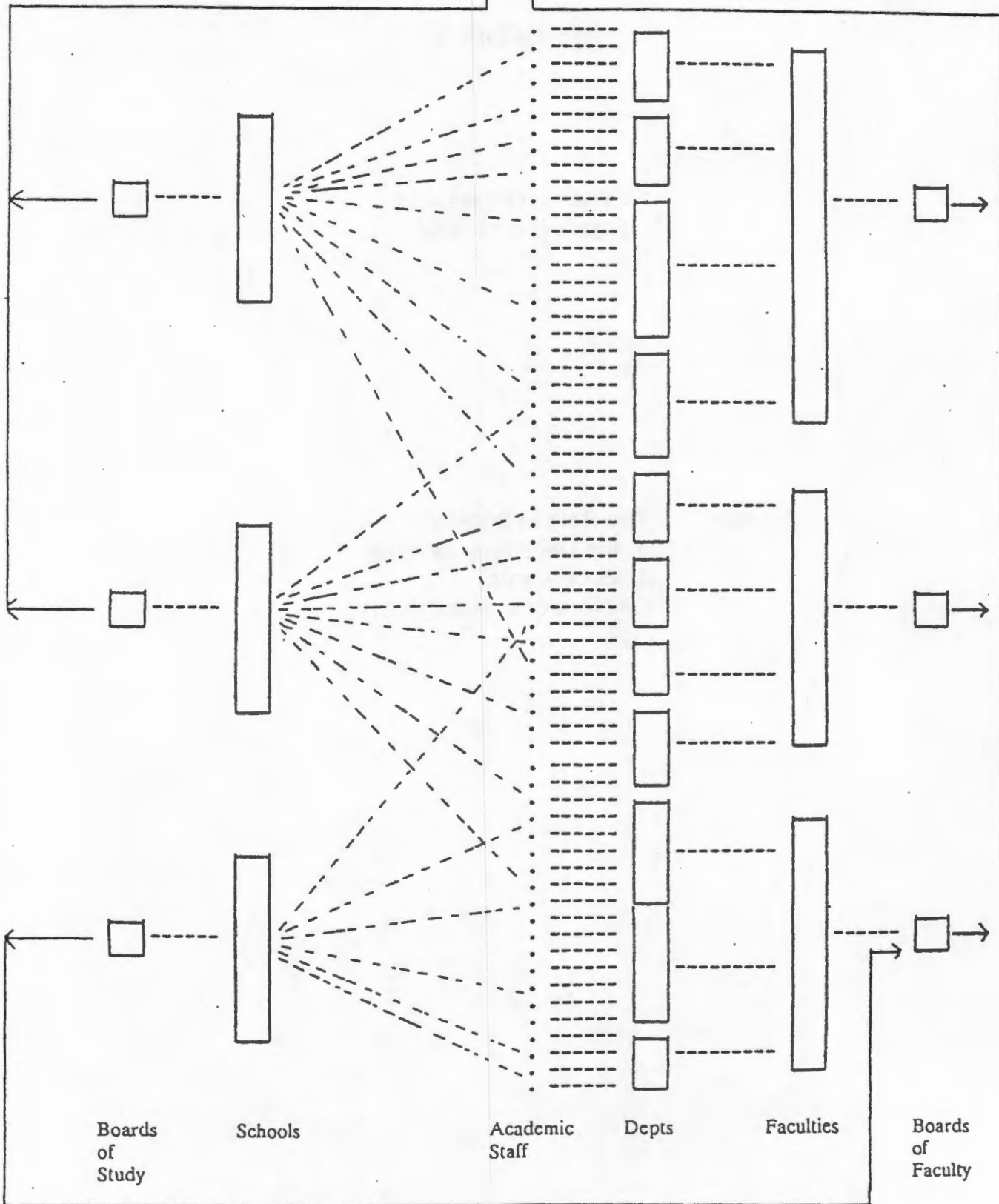
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## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Schools and Faculties organogram (1989)**

**Source:**     **The Role in Society  
of the University of Natal  
1989 Onwards.  
(University of Natal, 3:21)**

COUNCIL  
↑  
SENATE  
↑  
SENATE EXECUTIVE



## **APPENDIX 4**

**Strategies, objectives,  
programmes and measures**

**Source: Vice-Chancellor's Review:  
Working Paper (Phase II)  
September 1992.  
(University of Natal, 5:Appendix V)**

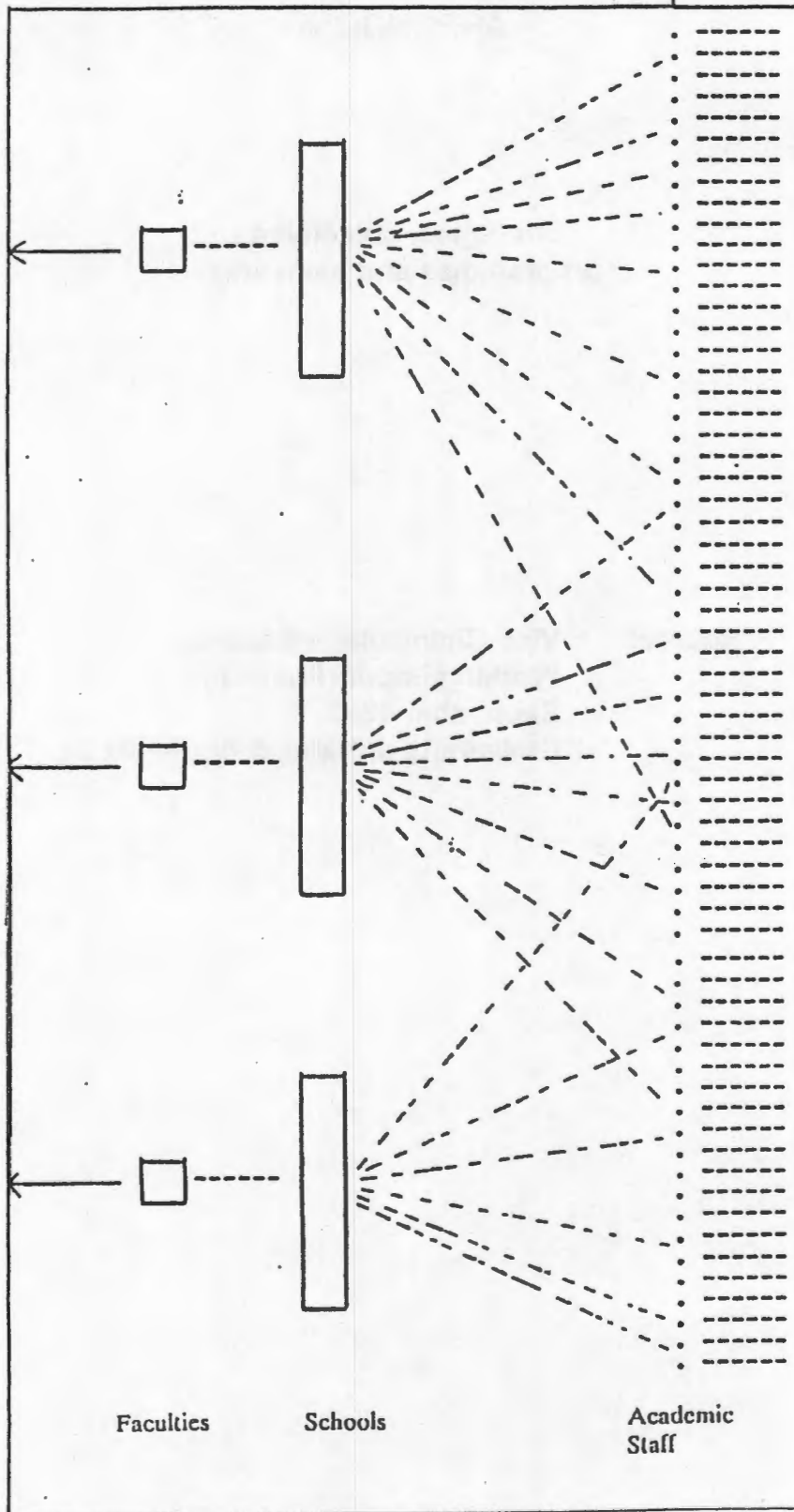
COUNCIL



SENATE



EXECUTIVE



Faculties

Schools

Academic Staff

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Amended Schools and Faculties organogram**

**Source:** My amendment.

**Based upon organogram in:  
The Role in Society  
of the University of Natal  
1989 Onwards.  
(University of Natal, 3:21)**

Strategies, objectives, programmes and measures

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Programme</u>	<u>Measure</u>
1. Changed curricula	Faculty programmes and reform timetables	Achievements
2. Selective growth	Faculty programmes	Achievements
3. EO Policies	Central support programmes	Specific targets ? by subject ? by location
	Faculty programmes and timetables	% achievement in - recruitment - progress of cohorts - graduation rates
	Social/cultural programmes	Achievements Survey findings
4. Quality Maintained and Monitored	Academic audits Peer reviews Student core programmes	Results Student surveys Progress of cohorts
5. Research standards	Peer reviews International collaboration	Results Publications
6. Staff	Short courses Non-formal programmes Innovation Centre	Volume statistics Profit to University Companies established
7. Developmental activities	Faculty programmes	Specific targets and performance indicators
8. Collaboration	Joint academic programmes Sharing of equipment	Statistics Examples
9. Governance	Community involvement Management structures	Numbers of committees
10. Academic links	Research linkage programmes	Faculty statistics Donor fundings
11. Support Services	Faculty administration, Campus/centre administration Library and computing services	Cost per student Cost per student Books purchased per student Periodicals subscribed

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University of Natal, 5	1992	Vice-Chancellor's Review: Working Paper (Phase II), September 1992. ("Choosing a Focus")
University of Natal, 6	1994	Address by Brenda Mary Gourley at her installation as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Natal on April 12, 1994.
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# LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

## 1. INTERVIEWS REFERRED TO:

### JANUARY 1996

- 8/01 Professor Brenda Gourley,  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor.
- 8/01 Mr Ralph Tyrrell, Co-ordinator: Staff Training & Development.  
Ms Megan Seneque, Architecture.
- 11/01 Professor Brenda Gourley.
- 12/01 Professor Ahmed Bawa,  
then Campus Vice-Principal, Pietermaritzburg Campus

### AUGUST 1997

- 12/08 Professor James Leatt, Executive Director: Adamastor Trust  
and former Vice-Chancellor, University of Natal.
- 27/08 Professor James Leatt.

### SEPTEMBER 1997

- 1/09 Mr Ralph Tyrrell.  
Ms Janet Frame, Head: Educational Development Unit.
- 1/09 Professor Mike Kahn,  
Dean of Architecture
- 2/09 Dr Alan Matthews,  
Department of Physics, Science Faculty
- 3/09 Professor Brenda Gourley.
- 4/09 Professor Ari Sitas,  
Dean of Social Sciences
- 5/09 Mr Ralph Tyrrell.  
Ms Janet Frame.
- 5/09 Professor Ahmed Bawa,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Durban Centre.
- 5/09 Professor Chris Cresswell,  
former Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Natal.

## 2. OTHER INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED:

### JANUARY 1996

- 11/01 Mr Tony Leonard,  
Finance Officer.
- 11/01 Mr K.G. Bungane,  
Chairperson of Transformation Task Force; former SRC President.
- 11/01 Mr Colin Reynolds,  
Senior Shop Steward, Nehawu.
- 12/01 Mr Dennis McCarthy,  
Union/Staff Association representative.

### SEPTEMBER 1997

- 2/09 Mr Gerhard Maré,  
Acting Director: Centre for Industrial, Organisational and Labour  
Studies
- 2/09 Professor David Maughan Brown,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pietermaritzburg Principal.
- 3/09 Mr Arnold Shepperson,  
Centre for Cultural and Media Studies.
- 4/09 Professor Andrew Duminy,  
Chairperson: Structures and Funding Task Group.
- 5/09 Professor Emmanuel Ngara,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources)

**NOTE:** The above list includes the structured interviews conducted in the course of the case study research. Other more casual conversations, telephone calls, etc. are not reflected.