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CHAPTER 1 - THE CURRENT SITUATION

CONTEXT

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National Commission for Higher Education: Task Team 1

Current Situation - provide a statistical and analytical overview of the existing system with identification of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The first task team of the National Commission for Higher Education will deal with an analysis of the current situation of the system of higher education.

In the first chapter of the presentation of the Potchefstroom University to the Commission, the system of higher education is described in the context of five guidelines which were accepted in the macro-investigation of the Committee of University Principals in 1987. Although this investigation had been carried out a number of years ago, the five guidelines which were formulated were of a really basic nature. This presently offers one of the best contexts within which the strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats of the present system can be assessed. These guidelines primarily address the following aspects of the system:

- The **relevance** of higher education in response to the unique requirements of the time and environment within the characteristics that are unique to higher education itself.
- The **universal** nature of higher education and the relationship of institutions in their social context and in their association with their own particular support communities and stakeholders.
- **Institutional autonomy** and academic freedom and their relationship with accountability.
- **Quality of education** at universities as centres of learning and teaching and its relation to the effects of massification due to increases in prospective learners.
- The **legal status** of universities as centres of free and open dialogue and social responsibility.

The present position of the PU for CHE in the system of higher education is described against the background of the five guidelines. Because the PU for CHE is the only Christian university in South Africa, the particular role which it fulfils in the system is highlighted. Next, the occurrence and organisation of Christian institutions of higher education in the international context is dealt with. Because the PU for CHE is the only Christian university in South Africa, this University offers the only opportunity by means of which the South African university system can be represented in that cadre.

To conclude this chapter, a few comments are made regarding the demographic profile of the students in higher education. The Committee of University Principals decided in 1994 that the system of higher education should reflect the demographic profile of South Africa. Every university should contribute to this. The contribution of the PU for CHE in this regard is discussed, as well as future expectations which can be extrapolated from the present situation.

CHAPTER 2 - FUTURE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

CONTEXT

National Commission for Higher Education: Task Team 2

FUTURE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES - implications for higher education of the Reconstruction and Development Programme; human resource needs; demographic trends; labour market trends; estimate of costs to meet rising demand; future scenarios; global economic trends and the impact of new information and education technology; sport and culture; distance education.

The second task team of the National Commission for Higher Education will focus on the implications of future needs and priorities for higher education.

The viewpoints of the PU for CHE on the future needs for higher education in South Africa are linked to the outcome of the process of transformation as outlined in the Introduction and elsewhere in this submission. In essence the elements of **quality and relevance, strategic management, autonomy and accountability, social responsibility and global involvement** within the institution's own mission should underpin the future role of individual universities as well as that of the university system.

The position of the PU for CHE presented in this chapter covers three aspects within the context of the terms of reference of the task group:

The point of view of this University regarding the **Reconstruction and Development Programme** are discussed, giving an indication of how each higher education institution can make a contribution with regard to the creation of competitive advantages, addressing socioeconomic needs and through supporting capacity building. The specific contribution which the PU for CHE already makes is dealt with in detail. As the PU for CHE is the largest university in the North-West Province, the role which this University plays in a regional context is also discussed in detail.

In the light of the special role which distance education will have to play in future through the model of "**open learning**", the contribution which the PU for CHE is already making is discussed. It is further shown that the PU for CHE intends through distance education to make a greater contribution to higher education in future by changing to an institution in which the 'dual mode of education' will become more strongly established.

From the **cultural** point of view the policy of the PU for CHE with regard to its Christian and Afrikaans character is finally discussed. The conclusion which is drawn is that the PU for CHE makes a unique contribution in this regard within the system of higher education in South Africa, which is of particular importance in the present and future context of the cultural diversity and nation building in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3 - GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

National Commission for Higher Education: Task Team 3

GOVERNANCE - democratisation; the relationship between government, higher education and stakeholders; planning; evaluation and governance structures at national, sectoral and institutional levels. Task teams will be established to advise on National System and Institutional Governance.

The third task team of the National Commission for Higher Education will deal with governance. In 1994 the staff of the Law Faculty of the Potchefstroom University carried out an extensive investigation into the position of higher education in the new constitution of South Africa. The position of education in the new constitution of South Africa was set out, with particular reference to higher education. This investigation also involved research into the constitutional position of universities in the international context in several countries.

In addition, governance is also very directly linked to transformation at the universities. Against this background the following contributions by the PU for CHE are discussed in this chapter.

- Institutional autonomy and academic freedom and what they mean to the institution as well as to the system of higher education are set out.
- A point of view is given regarding the meaning of transformation and the process in this regard which is taking place at the PU for CHE.
- Milestones on the path of transformation is presented, which resulted *inter alia* in the appointment of four members on the Council of the PU for CHE. The involvement of the Transformation Forum in this respect is outlined.

With regard to factors influencing change and transformation in higher education in general, three international investigations are of special relevance and are brought to the attention of the National Commission:

1. Campus Life: In search of community. The Carnegie Foundation for The Advancement of Learning, Ed. Ernst L Boyer. (ISBN 0-931050-38-3)
2. Intermediary Bodies, in: Higher Education Policy, Volume 5. No. 3, September 1992 (ISSN 0952-8733)
3. Policy Paper for Change and Development in Higher Education: UNESCO Report, 1995. (ED-04/WS/30)

This University believes that the material discussed in these monographs is of such significance that they may be regarded as addenda to the submission of the PU for CHE.

CHAPTER 4 - FINANCE CONTEXT

National Commission for Higher Education: Task Team 4

FINANCE - funding and financing mechanisms for higher education; effective resource allocation; diversification of revenue sources and financial support for students. Task teams are envisaged to deal with funding the System (sectors and institutions); Student Financial Aid and Non-formal Learning.

In the early years of the PU for CHE this University, as a University College, received a lower government subsidy than other institutions in the Union of South Africa. For this reason the infrastructure of this institution was initially so inadequate that the National Commission for Higher Education of 1927 recommended that the institution be closed. However, the supporters of Christian education since that time have made large material contributions to the PU for CHE, without which the University would not have been able to develop to its present state. This support community still makes substantial contributions to the PU for CHE because it is their continued aspiration to perpetuate an institution for Christian Higher Education in South Africa. A consequence of this is a very close spiritual and material association of the Christian stakeholders with the Potchefstroom University and their commitment to the mission of this institution for Christian Higher Education in South Africa.

In the recent past the subsidy to the PU for CHE was decreased substantially because of the adjustment of the a-factor in the present subsidy formula to equal values for all universities. At a meeting of the Committee of University Principals it was said in this regard: 'Two universities will be financially particularly hard hit: Potchefstroom and Medunsa.' In order to deal with this financial crisis of reduced subsidy the PU for CHE followed a comprehensive process of rationalisation for the term 1991-1995. The compulsory retirement age for all staff was reduced from 65 to 60 years. Salary increases at the PU for CHE were often lower than those at other universities. Various departments were closed, inter alia Speech and Drama, Fine Arts, Geology and Technics. Other departments were consolidated with related departments. The Engineering Faculty as a whole was transferred from the Vaal Triangle Campus to Potchefstroom and some of the support departments for Engineering at the Vaal Triangle Campus were terminated. The Schools of Theology at Potchefstroom and Hammanskraal were consolidated at Potchefstroom and its staff component significantly reduced. These steps were experienced as traumatic by the University and its community, but ensured the financial viability of the University and a sense of commitment of its staff to the mission and values of the institution.

The approach of this University with regard to its financial constraints were therefore two-fold: (1) strict financial management and fiscal discipline and (2) new innovations to strengthen the academic status and relevance of the institution by formation of partnerships with the public and private sector. Against this background the following is presented in this chapter:

- The financial profile and policy of the PU for CHE.
- Student financing and social involvement of the PU for CHE.
- The model and the results of partnerships between the university and private sector.

CHAPTER 5 - PROGRAMME, INSTITUTIONAL AND QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK CONTEXT

National Commission for Higher Education: Task Team 5

PROGRAMME, INSTITUTIONAL AND QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK - composition, size and shape of the sector, functions, programmes, curriculum, quality and qualifications. Initially Task teams will be established to deal with Student and Staff Access, Support and Development; National Qualifications Framework; Mobility; Size, Shape and Functions; Research (Science and Technology) and Post Graduate, Professional and Technical Training; Research; QPU; Library.

The fifth task team of the National Commission for Higher Education will deal with programmes and qualification frameworks.

In this chapter the admission policy of the PU for CHE is discussed, as well as the education policy followed at this University to promote successful study. Attention is furthermore given to:

- The science policy of the PU for CHE
- The teaching policy of the PU for CHE
- The research policy of the PU for CHE

It is furthermore indicated that, apart from the activities at the Vaal Triangle Campus presented at the end of the chapter, agreements for the educational co-operation between the PU for CHE and several other institutions exist, for example:

- School of Theology of the Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika
- Potchefstroom College of Education
- UNISA
- Several Nursing Colleges
- ORT-STEP Institute
- Africa Growth Network

Other selective agreements are also formed with South African and international universities, like the University of the North, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, Free University of Amsterdam and the California State University (DH).

These aspects are not dealt with in detail in this submission but are specifically mentioned should further information on this be required by the Commission.

The chapter is concluded with an overview of the Vaal Triangle Campus of the PU for CHE.

The academic programmes of the University started in the Vaal Triangle in 1968. Since that time the educational needs offered at the Vaal Triangle progressively increased, leading to the establishment of the Vaal Triangle Campus of our University on the banks of the Vaal river in an area bordering Vanderbijlpark, Sharpeville, Vereeniging and Sasolburg. It is clear that a close collaboration between this campus and the other educational institutions in the Vaal Triangle can provide that sub-region of Gauteng with a unique educational framework. This University therefore strongly supports the prospective research project of the HSRC in this respect.

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