A COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY: CONSTRUCTING AN ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Educationis at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

January 2009

Promoter: Prof MAJ Olivier
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to:

- My promoter, Professor Tilla Olivier, for first of all believing in me, her expert advice, unconditional support, encouragement and patience;
- My co-promoter, Professor Alette Delport, for her invaluable guidance, support and advice;
- My language practitioner, Dr Patrick Goldstone, for his services;
- The research participants, without whose co-operation this study would not have been possible;
- My husband Eric, for his love, understanding, unconditional support and advice;
- My Mom, for always being there for me and taking care of my husband and children when necessary;
- My Dad, for always being there and believing in me;
- My children, Simthembile, Tsosoloso and Motheo, for being understanding and encouraging;
- My friends, for directly and indirectly providing support and encouragement;
- My colleagues for encouragement and motivation; and
- My Almighty God, for His continuous blessings and for giving me strength and courage to take up every challenge that I come across in life, and for His mercy to reveal to me that He will lift me up when I am down and stay with me against all odds.
Dedicated to my husband and children.
ABSTRACT

The restructuring of higher education through incorporations and mergers has attracted a lot of attention over the past few years in South Africa. These incorporations and mergers have displaced institutions of higher education and positioned them in new organisational homes, thus subjecting faculties, schools and departments to a process of relocation, new knowledge acquisition, identity change and meaning-making processes. The merger has resulted in three types of universities; i.e. traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology.

The introduction of the comprehensive university as a new institutional type has brought with it questions about the idea of the university and the purpose of higher education in general. Mergers in particular have initiated conversations about sense-making and meaning during change. Amidst all this, people within the merging institution have been confronted with a new organisation with which they have to identify. At universities in particular, questions about academic identity and organisational identity have become unavoidable.

The boundaries that gave definition to a university have been (re)moved. The structure of the university, as it was known, has changed. Hence, in the newly merged NMMU, academics are in the process of internalising and giving meaning to the new organisational values and norms of a comprehensive university.

Needless to say, the challenges facing the newly merged NMMU are cultural, structural and geographic. Bringing together different institutional and personal cultures involves a human dimension that needs to be nurtured by trying to form a coherent and cohesive organisation that is created from culturally diverse and
uncomplementary institutions. Another challenge is bringing together different organisational structures, systems and programmes that are informed by different institutional cultures. Furthermore, the challenge of having *multiple campuses* that are *geographically* separated exacerbates the situation. Along with all these challenges, the NMMU has the task of constructing an integrated institutional identity through *organisational forms* and *programme models* that will embody the multiple functions that are typical of a comprehensive university.

The *aim* of the current study was to explore how the meanings that academics assign to the notion of a comprehensive university are instrumental in constructing an organisational identity; describing in detail how at the NMMU academics make meaning of the comprehensive university and how that meaning-making process influences the construction of an organisational identity; and formulating recommendations based on the qualitative findings and quantitative results of the research.

In an effort to achieve the aim alluded to above, this study employed the *mixed methods* approach that used a sequential, exploratory, transformative design. The complexity of the study was such that it required to be investigated through qualitative and quantitative analytical methods in order to confirm, triangulate and obtain a holistic picture of the situation under investigation.

The sample for the qualitative interviews consisted of thirteen purposefully selected academics from all levels at the NMMU. The interviews were transcribed and coded into themes, categories and sub-categories. These themes were then developed and translated into statements for the questionnaire that was administered randomly to all NMMU academics. A total of 108 academics responded to the questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire were analysed using the SPSS programme.
The findings and results of the study revealed that there was a fairly common understanding of the term comprehensive university among academics. However, the details about its procedures appeared to be the privileged ownership of management. This situation mitigated the necessity for a sense-making process that would allow for negotiation, modification and alteration of already held assumptions.

A pertinent concern amongst academics was the neglect of the ‘human factor’ during the change process. The management style also came under scrutiny, especially in terms of the facilitation and mediation of change. There was a consensus on the call for cohesion and unity that was believed to be one of the main features that would make the construction of the NMMU organisational identity possible.

The vision, mission and values of the NMMU were believed to be central to the creation of cohesion and unity, which would subsequently result in the birth of an organisational culture that could inform the organisational identity of the NMMU. Strategies to actualise and realise the organisational identity were proposed by participants.

Notwithstanding, the impact of the merger was identified as having a major influence in shaping the organisational identity of the NMMU.

**Key words**: Comprehensive University, higher education, merger, identity, organisational identity, organisational culture, organisational change, university.
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<td>CHET</td>
<td>Centre for Higher Education Transformation</td>
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<td>CPID</td>
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<td>DNA</td>
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CHAPTER 1


1.1 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

After the elections of 1994, South Africa was faced with the challenge of transforming a higher education system that had previously encouraged an unequal distribution of access and opportunity for students and staff along lines of race, gender, class and geography (Government Gazette, 2002; The Herald, 2002). In 1995, President Nelson Mandela appointed the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) to draw up a framework for transformation in higher education.

The Commission submitted its report in August 1996, in which it envisaged a transformed system that would be able to play a role in the enhancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship. This system would place South Africa academically and scholastically on the same level as other countries, while at the same time affording it an opportunity to compete internationally. The Commission suggested that the anticipated transformed system would be made possible by creating and maintaining standards of academic quality that would be sensitive to the diverse problems and demands of Southern Africa and the African context (Department of Education - NCHE, 1996:4)

The process of the systematic restructuring of higher education in South Africa has been motivated by several factors. Among these were:

---

1 Nelson Mandela was the first democratically elected president of South Africa from 1994-1999.
• the attempt to deal with institutions of higher education that were not viable;
• the effort to broaden access and implement broad equity strategies;
• the overall direction of higher education by government to provide for national, regional and social objectives; and
• the creation of fewer, larger and more effective and efficient universities (Harman and Meek, 2002:1).

Keeping in line with the recommendations made by the NCHE, the national Department of Education (DoE) engaged in policy planning and design, which aimed at restructuring the institutional landscape of the higher education system. One of the goals stipulated in the White Paper 3 (Department of Education, 2001:68) was to build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities and cultures as integral components of a single coordinated national higher education system. The Ministry of Education reasoned that the end goal of a transformed higher education system must be the creation of higher education institutions whose identity and cultural orientation should be neither black nor white, English or Afrikaans-speaking, but manifestly and palpably South African (Department of Education, 1996: 12).

In order to respond to the goals stipulated in the White Paper 3 of 1997, the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) was introduced in 2001 to provide a framework for the proposed restructuring of higher education (Department of Education, 2001:1). The NPHE proposed that an investigation be made into the feasibility of consolidating the provision of higher education through the reduction of the number of higher education institutions, how these institutions could be reduced and what form they would take. The investigation was to be undertaken by the National Working Group (NWG) with the intention of advising the Minister of Education on the appropriate institutional structures that would be informed by and reflect the principles and goals of this White Paper 3 (Department of Education, 2001:3).
Subsequent to the report of the NWG on restructuring in 2001, the Ministry of Education followed a more systematic restructuring programme that would effect change by initiating a process of mergers between various institutions of higher education, as well as the incorporation of a few campuses into some universities (Department of Education, 2004a:4; Muller, 2006:198). For example, the Vista university campuses all over South Africa were unbundled and incorporated into different universities before these universities merged with other institutions of higher education. Before the NMMU merger took place, the Vista University campus in Port Elizabeth was incorporated into UPE in January 2004.

The suggested mergers were between universities, and at times between a university and a technikon. The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) came into being as a result of the merger between the Port Elizabeth Technikon (PET) and the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) in January 2005, thus creating a comprehensive university. The merger between the two institutions resulted in seven campuses; two of which are in George, while the rest are in Port Elizabeth.

The establishment of comprehensive universities as a new institutional type was intended to address a variety of goals. These goals, as stipulated in the NPHE, were to provide:

- access to higher education - the idea here is for prospective students to be able to enter higher institutions of education with varied entry requirements and to be able to choose from a variety of programmes;
- enhanced articulation between career-focused and general academic programmes, thus promoting student mobility – the intention is to enable students to move between different programmes with ease;
- strengthening of applied research – the objective is to link emerging foci of the technikons to the current research strengths of the universities; and
- a higher level of responsiveness to regional and national human resources, skills and knowledge needs, which would be made possible by
the improved capacity through broader expertise and foci (Department of Education, 2004a:3).

The intended outcome of the planning that would go into this would be, as a result, a new institutional type that would be “innovative and enhance the institutional diversity of higher education” (Department of Education, 2004a: foreword).

Another leg to this new institutional type relates to institutions that became comprehensive universities, although these institutions did not merge with any other institutions. These institutions are required to refocus their mission and subsequently reconfigure their academic programme offerings (Nel and Stumpf, 2007:2). Institutions of this nature would offer both diploma and degree qualifications. Such universities are the University of Zululand and the University of Venda.

It is important at this point to highlight the fact that the human dimension of the NMMU merger constitutes the fusing together of campus cultures that historically and symbolically did not complement one another. The Vista University predominantly catered for Black students in the townships and the PET and UPE catered for the middle-class Blacks and predominantly Whites in the suburbs along the coast.

On the other hand, as much as UPE and the PET socially catered for a similar kind of student, academically their student populations were very different. Furthermore, the programmes offered by universities and technikons were different and were based on different academic cultures. Therefore the kind of student that would typically apply for admission to these academic institutions would be different. The Technikon normally offered vocational programmes that were more practical and career-oriented, while the university offered degree qualifications that were more theory-based and academic.
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The merging of institutions of higher education in South Africa has brought about many changes and challenges. These mergers are a result of the restructuring of higher education, which in the past ten years has resulted in the disruption of the traditional identities of the university, academics, other staff members and students, for reasons touched on above. The academic institutions that existed previously had their own organisational values and norms with which academics could more easily identify.

The boundaries that traditionally gave definition to a university have been (re)moved. The structures of universities, as they were known, have changed. The mergers have resulted in three types of universities: i.e. traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology.

Hence, in the newly merged NMMU, which came into being as a new comprehensive university, all staff members (and for the sake of this study, specifically academics) have been in the process of internalising and giving meaning to the new organisational values and norms of a comprehensive university. Given the complexities of curriculum harmonisation and job redefinition, academics in the newly merged comprehensive university are trying to make sense of what it now means to be an academic.

Needless to say, the challenges facing the newly merged NMMU are cultural, structural, geographic and curriculum-based:

- Bringing together different institutional and personal cultures involves a human dimension that needs to be nurtured by trying to form a coherent and cohesive organisation that is created from culturally diverse and traditionally uncomplementary institutions.
• Bringing together different organisational structures, systems and programmes that are informed by different institutional cultures, also poses a challenge.

• Furthermore, the challenge of having multiple campuses that are geographically separated exacerbates the situation.

• Along with all these challenges, the NMMU has the task of constructing an integrated institutional identity through organisational forms and programme models that will embody the multiple functions that are typical of a comprehensive university (DoE, 2004a:5). It is thus my opinion that these challenges will have a great impact on the actualisation of the construction of the NMMU identity.

The notion of a comprehensive university requires an investigation into the traditional understanding of what a university is. Traditionally, universities and technikons have, in the past, subscribed to a different academic vision and mission; they rendered services to people with different needs; they followed different qualification structures; and they also had a different approach to research (CHET, 2004:9).

Technikons generally directed their programmes towards careers or professions and their intention was to provide students with skills that would be immediately applicable to the job market (CHET, 2004:9). Their programmes had a strong technical and vocational orientation. Universities, on the other hand, offered a wide range of degree programmes, with a more academic or theoretical orientation at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with a strong focus on research.

The above explanation provides the traditional understanding of both institutions of higher education. It is thus evident that the creation of a new institutional type
invites a new perspective on what a university entails and therefore what kind of an academic is required in this new comprehensive university.

This study will therefore investigate the meanings that academics assign to the comprehensive university and how these meanings shape the construction of the organisational identity of the NMMU. In this study I also argue that the construction of an organisational identity in the NMMU depends on the personal and shared experiences of staff members.

Thus this study draws from literature concerned with social and organisational experiences to provide an analysis of the dynamics involved in the construction of the identity of a comprehensive university. It will also examine the complex patterns of identification experienced by the various academic staff members.

Based on the above, the research question and areas of inquiry that this study attempts to address are as follows:

**Primary research question:**

How are the meanings that academics assign to the notion of a comprehensive university instrumental in constructing an organisational identity at the NMMU?

**Secondary research questions:**

- What meanings do academics attach to the concept ‘comprehensive university’?
- Do academics take ownership of and relate to the organisational identity of the NMMU?
- Do strategies, structures and opportunities that encourage academics to construct the organisational identity of the comprehensive NMMU exist?
• How does the experience of the merger assist or hamper the construction of an organisational identity?

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The intention of this study is to gain an understanding of the meanings that academics assign to this unfamiliar and fairly new kind of university, i.e. a comprehensive university. This study attempts to explore the ideas and feelings that members of the NMMU have about their identity as the new comprehensive university. Furthermore, the study will also focus on how the meanings that they attach to this concept of the university shape and inform the construction of an organisational identity.

Each different institution that merged had their own cultures that were considered to be particularly valuable to each of them. However, as one university, the staff members now need to be part of a cohesive and integrated institution. Basics that will promote the character and ethos of the new institution are therefore crucial.

Having discovered and determined the above, the study will hopefully inform future policies and strategies on how to improve and promote internal cohesion that will be informed by the academics themselves.

1.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Identity is important for individuals, as well as for organisations. We live in a dynamic society in which change is happening all the time and people frequently have to redefine their identity. In this study it is argued that identity is not static or fixed, but rather it is being continually constructed.
Firstly, this study is significant in the sense that it looks at the human side of how change, especially a merger, can influence one’s identity. Certainly organisational cultures are reshaped when change takes place; hence the importance of investigating how people reshape their identities in such situations.

These identities are individual, collective, social and organisational. The comprehensive university, as an organisation, will unquestionably have its own identity, as the organisation continues to develop. However, people who form part of this organisation need to determine what this identity is going to look like in the future, and how they will relate to it.

Secondly, this study will contribute towards a clearer understanding of the concept of a comprehensive university, because the concept of a comprehensive university is currently used rather loosely in the South African context. Thirdly, this kind of research will be significant in informing future endeavours in organisations generally, as well as in institutions of higher education. With the National Department of Education’s attempt to establish an identity that is neither black nor white in institutions of higher education, and an equal and democratic system that contributes to social and economic development, this study can serve as a point of departure or a foundation for further research.

Fourthly, the value of this study is that it can contribute to the transition and transformation processes in higher education in South Africa. By making use of existing research information upon which the philosophical framework of this study is grounded, possible strategies that could be used as a frame of reference by institutions of higher education will be documented.

The plan is to provide the NMMU management with the findings of the study so that they can look at ways in which academics’ needs, their views and concerns can be taken into consideration, as well as ways to devise strategies that will enhance internal cohesion.
1.5 THE DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, I have decided to focus on the academic members of staff of the NMMU as participants who will share their ideas and views on the meanings that they assign to the notion of a comprehensive university and the construction of that organisational identity. The rationale to study academics only does not by any means suggest that academics alone are important in the giving of meaning and the construction of an organisational identity. Nor does it suggest that other stakeholders have a lesser role to play.

I have decided to examine the phenomena of organisational identity and the comprehensive university from the perspective of the academics, because to a large extent, the activities of a university involve the expertise and participation of academics, especially its core business, which is teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

Moreover, academics are in an advantageous position to critically engage with issues concerning their jobs through their teaching, research and community engagement. An equally important reason for only looking at the academics is that the scope of the study would have been too broad had I included administrators and students.

This approach is considered to be important due to the structural and procedural complexities of the university as an organisation. I believe that members of a university are informed by the position that they occupy in terms of giving meaning to who they are, and also who they are aspiring to become, within a university. My study therefore puts emphasis on one of the categories of the members of the university.
I have decided to focus on the *Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University* as a case study. Within the setting of the NMMU I have decided to study the academic as a case that will provide an in-depth description and understanding of a small organisation. They will do this by responding to scholarly research questions (Stake, 2005:443).

The defining characteristic of a case study is said to be the focus on one instance of a thing in order to understand its complexities. The aim is to explicate the general by looking at the specific (Denscombe, 2003:30). Case studies investigate real-life events in their natural setting. They capture both the real life event and its context (Yin, 1994:13). From the experiences of the NMMU and the academics, in particular, other comprehensive universities could possibly learn some valuable lessons.

*Identity*, in this study, is viewed firstly in terms of social identity, because academics are social beings that act and interact with one another and their organisation, thereby forming relationships (Snow, 2001:1). Secondly, it is viewed in terms of an organisational identity, because academics are a collective in an organisation and share ideas, assumptions and values (Schöpflin, 2001:1) that help them to identify with their institution.

Research shows that in general, theorists agree that identification plays a central role in the dynamics that take place in diverse organisations (Stout, 2001:2). Thus, it is important to investigate how the identification of academics with the new comprehensive NMMU will shape the construction of its organisational identity.

The *location* of the study is convenient for me, because I am an academic at the NMMU.
1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Identity

According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary, identity stems from the Latin word identitas, which is derived from the word, idem, which means the same (Jenkins, 2004:4; Fowler and Fowler, 1990: 585). It refers to “something in the individual which causes him to remain the same, to his sameness and continuity” (De Levita, 1965: 129). The word identity involves similarity and difference, which means that it is concerned with classification and association (Jenkins, 2004:4).

Identity assists in looking for answers to frequently asked questions like, “Who am I?” “Who do I want to be?” “Who could I be?” What is my place within society?” Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:29) therefore suggest that identity can be viewed as referring to different meanings that people attribute to themselves.

Organisational identity

Organisational identity at an individual level embodies the distinctive attributes which individuals associate with their membership of a particular organisation. It consists of those attributes that members feel are fundamental to the organisation. Organisational identity is thus formed by the fusion of the unique attributes of individual members. Organisational identity is also perceived to be a source of the cognitive and emotional foundation on which members of the organisation build meaningful relationships with the organisation (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006:30).

Members of an organisation share an understanding of what their organisation means to them and thereby collectively share a sense of: “Who we are as an organisation” (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006:30). When members agree upon or
even share a purpose, they inherently share values, assumptions and agreed-on codes of behaviour (Tierney, 1991:37).

The above definition informs the manner in which the concept of organisational identity will be approached in this study. It refers to a consciously negotiated identity, based on the sharing of common values, assumptions, and experiences. These attributes define who and what the members of the organisation see themselves to be in relation to the organisation, and they also express aspirations of who they could be in the future as an organisation.

**The comprehensive university**

The term comprehensive university is rather loosely used by higher education institutions and the Department of Education, because there is no indication of the academic character of a comprehensive university (Nel and Stumpf, 2007:2). By their own admission, the Department of Education acknowledges the fact that the term can become confusing (Department of Education, 2004b:3).

In South Africa, comprehensive institutions are expected to work towards meeting the goals stipulated in the NPHE, as spelled out in the introduction (see p.3). A common definition that is always provided for a comprehensive university is that it is the combination of a technikon and a university. What complicates the matter is the fact that the Universities of Venda and of Zululand, which are both comprehensive universities, do not fit this commonly used definition, because they are not the result of this type of merger.

However, for the purposes of this study a comprehensive university is an institution that offers a wide range of diverse programmes, study fields and degrees, from vocational to academic qualifications (Dalbey, 1995:1).
Merger

According to The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (Webster, 1989:116 and 365), the term merger refers to a consolidation, a combination or an amalgamation of two or more organisations and is usually accompanied by a new name. In The Pocket Oxford Dictionary, the word ‘merge’ is defined as, among other things, that which can cause one to lose character or identity in something else (Branford, 1989:472).

Vaara (2000: 82) argues that the term merger can refer to any form of combination of organisations that is initiated by different types of contracts. He contends that what separates a merger from an acquisition is that a merger is a combination of organisations, which are rather similar in size and which create an organisation, where neither party can be perceived to have acquired the other.

Along the same lines and with more characterisation, Harman (2002: 94) defines an institutional merger as the ‘amalgamation’ of two or more stand-alone institutions that give up their independent identities to take up a new common identity under the control of a single governing body.

In this study, the term merger refers to the amalgamation of UPE (which incorporated the Port Elizabeth Vista University campus in January 2004) and the PET that took place in January 2005. The merger resulted in the establishment of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan according to which the researcher intends to investigate the research problem (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:57-58; Mouton, 2002:55-57; Huysamen, 2001:10). Its function is to ensure that evidence is obtained which will be instrumental in answering the research question
unambiguously, and as accurately as possible (De Vaus, 2001:9; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:31).

Before one takes on a study of this nature, it is crucial to reflect thoroughly on the objectives of the study, as well as the philosophical assumptions on which the study is grounded. This reflection will facilitate a thought process that will generate clarity and creativity about the purpose of the study before embarking on it (McFarlane, 2000:13). This will then assist in the formulation of the research design, approach and methods, as well as one’s intention with the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 1994:76).

1.7.1 Philosophical foundations

This study will be grounded in the critical theory, the interpretive paradigm and social constructivism.

The critical theory argues that all facts are determined and interpreted by humans and are therefore subject to change by human means (Higgs and Smith, 2002:80; Gibson, 1986: 4). This means that people are capable of creating their own identity through action and interaction and that they have the capacity to change or even choose their identity. This argument could also go the other way; an identity could be created for people by others, in order to serve their (the others’) own interests.

Providing an explanation about critical theory and organisations, Peca (2000:31-34) states that in critical theory, organisations are viewed as social structures that are created by people. She reveals that organisations are one of the aspects that result in human alienation in that they uphold and encourage historical and political power from which people seek to emancipate themselves.
Critical theory attempts to promote critical consciousness and awareness. In that process it breaks down traditional institutional structures (the *status quo*) and arrangements that reproduce oppressive ideologies, as well as the social inequalities that are produced, maintained and reproduced by those social structures and ideologies (Henning, 2004:23).

In the case of this study, the organisation is newly formed, and is still in the process of being formed by its members. The members of this organisation are fairly new to the idea of their organisation being comprehensive, and are thus creating an organisation with which they can eventually identify. The fact that these members come from different institutions complicates matters in terms of creating an organisation that will be representative of everyone.

Critical theorists believe that people can construct and design their own improved worlds and that they can engineer their future through action and critical reflection (Henning, 2004:23). This they do in relation to others and the world around them. Hence it is also important to take into cognisance the fact that in any social setting people have their own experiences with regard to the relationships that they have with others and the world around them. It is thus crucial in a study of this nature to take into consideration the experiences that people have had, as well as the social relations that have structured such experiences.

The nature of this study also calls for an *interpretive* theory. The researcher in this paradigm holds the view that different viewpoints interpret the world through different processes of observation (Henning, 2004:20). This paradigm assumes that people’s actions are meaningful and that these meanings have to be interpreted in the context in which they take place (McNeill and Chapman, 2005:184; Usher, 1996:18). Participants thus interpret their own meanings that they attribute to their organisational identity in a newly formed institutional context.
The phenomenon of identity construction is understood through the eyes of the participants and their subjective views. It is thus crucial that the academics are viewed as the ones who provide their understandings of what a comprehensive university is and the meanings they associate with being academics in a comprehensive university.

These meanings are shaped and informed by their interactions with other academics, administrators, students and management, as well as their personal histories (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:22). The intention is to understand reality in order to attain the ideal. The social constructivist theory provides an explanation of how the ideal could be constructed by the participants, allowing one to look at reality from a more practical viewpoint.

Due to the fact that this study utilises a mixed methods approach, it will also be approached from a post-positivist perspective, which highlights the importance of multiple measures and observations (Trochim, 2006:2). The post-positivist believes that all measurement is fallible and so multiple methods are necessary in order to reduce the error, in which case triangulation is applied.

The post-positivist perspective also believes that all observations are theory-laden and researchers are inherently biased by their experiences, worldviews and assumptions. Researchers therefore cannot see the world perfectly, as it really is.

Gale and Beeftink (2005:345), cites Crossan (2003), who argues that from a post-positivist perspective, reality is believed to be multiple, subjective and socially constructed. Most post-positivists are constructivist and they believe that we each construct our view of the world based on how we perceive it (Trochim, 2006:2). The post-positivist research endeavour is thus not after absolute truth, but it rather believes in research that produces findings that capture the meaning
and understanding of the situation under investigation (Crossan, 2003, cited by Gale and Beeftink, 2005:346).

1.7.2 A mixed methods design

In an attempt to better understand the research problem this study is using a mixed methods approach. An exploration of how academics give meaning to the concept of a comprehensive university and the consequent influence that it has on the construction of an organisational identity requires a qualitative approach. The intention of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the feelings and experiences of academics, as well as the context in which these experiences take place; therefore, a qualitative approach is essential.

However, this study intends to provide a complete picture of the situation by presenting more comprehensive and multiple perspectives on these feelings and experiences (Denscombe, 2008:272; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:9; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007:113; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17), as well as conveying ‘magnitude’ and ‘dimensionality’ (Greene, 2008:7).

After the initial gathering of data by means of interviews to explore how academics give meanings to their situation, the data was analysed to develop a questionnaire based on the findings. The questionnaire was then administered in the next phase to a larger sample from the NMMU population, to validate and confirm the findings quantitatively (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:11). The study therefore followed a sequential exploratory transformative process (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:121; Gilbert, 2006:209).
1.7.3 Research methodology

1.7.3.1 Data gathering

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews have been used to
gather data. Questionnaires based on the findings, were then used as a follow-
up to the interviews. The two sets of data are interdependent and build on each
other (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:121; Gilbert, 2006:208). This process of
data collection is sequential and involves three stages.

The stages have been conceptualised in the following manner, as suggested by
Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:121):

Stage 1
  Qualitative data collection and analysis

Stage 2
  Designing a questionnaire, based on the findings of stage 1

Stage 3
  Data collection (using the questionnaire designed in stage 2) and analysis

The following explanation clarifies the specific steps that were followed when
data were collected and analysed. The choice of the multiple-data collection
methods that are alluded to below was made in order to enhance the
trustworthiness of the study (Mouton and Marais, 1990:91; Guba and Lincoln,
1985:283).

- Interviews

Interviewing is the basic mode of qualitative inquiry. One conducts interviews in
order to understand people’s experiences and the meanings they make of those
experiences. What is involved in an interview is the description of the experience and a reflection on the description (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche’ and Delport, 2005:287).

By and large, an interview is defined as a conversation whose purpose is to gather information (Berg, 2001:66; Guba and Lincoln, 1985:268). However, Denscombe (2003:163) argues that an interview is much more than a conversation, but rather an active interaction between two or more people, because it involves assumptions and understandings that would not normally be present in a casual conversation (Fontana and Frey, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:698).

- **Semi-structured interviews**

It is difficult to get hold of people who are in management positions, because of their work commitments, therefore personal semi-structured interviews were chosen to make provision for the inclusion of all levels of participants. In this study this kind of interview was used to obtain a detailed depiction of the participants' beliefs and insights in regard to the topic under study (De Vos, et al., 2005: 296).

This type of interviewing was conducted with academics from all levels in the institution. Participants were allowed to introduce an issue if they are an expert in it, as well as to elaborate on points of interest (De Vos, et al., 2005:296; Denscombe, 2003:167). Perspectives of academics from both top management, as well as academics with no managerial involvement are important in issues concerning the giving of meaning and identity.

The individual responses of these people are crucial in the sense that they add value to the study in terms of observable similarities and differences between their understanding and making of meanings.
• Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as a follow-up to the semi-structured interviews to validate the findings of the research. The themes and categories that emerged from the qualitative data formed the basis of the questions. The purpose of a questionnaire is to gather information by asking directly what the researcher intends to discover or understand about a particular group or subject across a wide spectrum of research situations (Denscombe, 2003: 144-145).

In other words, the use of questionnaires depends on information supplied directly by the informed people in response to the questions asked by the researcher (De Vos, et al., 2005:166; Denscombe, 2003:145). I have used the questionnaire because I was interested in determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude, perspective, belief, opinion or viewpoint (De Vos, et al., 2005: 166; Denscombe, 2003:146).

1.7.3.2 Sampling

For the qualitative investigation, participants were ‘hand picked’ for the interviews, which means that purposive sampling was used (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:112; Denscombe, 2003:15). They were selected by the researcher, because they could serve a specific purpose and were considered to be experts on the topic, and thus sufficiently informed and knowledgeable to provide the best information (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:112; Teddlie and Yu, 2007:80; Denscombe, 2003:15; Berg, 2001:32; De Vos, 1998:198).

In this study, the method of snowball sampling was also utilised. Here participants were asked to nominate people who would be able to provide relevant and rich information for the purpose of the research (De Vos et al., 2005:330; Denscombe, 2003:16; Sullivan, 2001:207).
The sample for the *quantitative* investigation was selected as follows, as suggested by De Vos, *et al.* (1998:193):

- The research population comprising all academics of the NMMU has been obtained from the Human Resources department of the NMMU.
- A number was assigned to each academic.
- 20% of the population were drawn as a representative sample.

The above sampling technique assisted in obtaining a partial list that had a high chance of being representative (Dunne, 2007:24).

### 1.7.3.3 Data analysis

De Vos, *et al.* (2005:333) describes data analysis in *qualitative* research as a process that brings “order, structure and meaning” to the data that have been collected. In qualitative analysis the data that are analysed are unique, namely language and texts (Gibbs, 2002:1). Creswell (1994:153) suggests that data analysis should be understood as a process that takes place simultaneously with the collection, interpretation and reporting of such data. It is with this kind of understanding in mind that the data were analysed in this study.

Citing Tesch (1990), Creswell (1994:154) claims that in the process of data analysis, data are ‘decontextualised’ and ‘recontextualised’, when the text is reduced, in order to generate themes and categories. Taking this point further, Berg (2001:35) suggests that data reduction occurs throughout the process of research, through transcriptions, written summaries, coding and the identification of themes.

As suggested by Berg (2001:35), data have been displayed so that understanding and observation of patterns could be made. Finally, Berg (2001:36) suggests that after data reduction and data display, analytical
conclusions may emerge. These conclusions, however, need to be verified in order to ascertain whether all of the procedures used to reach the conclusions have been clearly enunciated (Berg, 2001:36).

Data collected from the interviews have been broken down into significant units of meaning. These units were further categorised for analysis (Denscombe, 2003:271). This process also involves discovering the methodical meanings of the data, as well as the manner in which they are interconnected (Dellinger and Leech, 2007:318).

By means of open coding, topics were discovered, named and categorised (Denscombe, 2003:271). Data were then classified into a limited number of themes and categories, thereby reducing the data, while retaining the words and their essential meanings (Sullivan, 2001:453).

Themes, categories and patterns were generated by coding the data (De Vos, et al., 2005:338). In qualitative research coding goes beyond mere measurement, because as Sullivan (2001:453) suggests, it is an integral part of conceptual development and theory building. Due to the qualitative nature of the first phase of this study, I was guided by the eight steps provided by Tesch (1990) in Creswell (1994:155). These steps are expanded on in Chapter Four.

However, this is a mixed methods study; therefore qualitative and quantitative ways of knowing are juxtaposed (Delinger and Leech, 2007:319). Meaning is thus a consequence of the interpretation of data rather than being a function of the type of data (Delinger and Leech, 2007:319).

In *quantitative* research data analysis involves the classification of data into separate parts to find answers to the research question (De Vos, 1998:203). In order to confirm the findings of the qualitative part of the study, the completed
questionnaire was sent to the Statistics Department of the NMMU, where the information was statistically processed and computer-analysed.

1.8 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In order to ensure that the findings of this study are significant and trustworthy, the researcher decided to answer four questions that Guba and Lincoln (1985:290) claim to be useful in this regard. The questions are as follows:

1. How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of the study for the respondents with whom, and the context in which, the study was conducted? – depicting the “truth value” of the research.

2. How can one determine the extent to which the findings of this study have applicability in other contexts or with other respondents? Guba and Lincoln (1985:298) assert that it is not the responsibility of the researcher to prove that the findings of the study are transferable, but that of the person who intends to apply these findings elsewhere. The responsibility of the researcher, according to Guba and Lincoln (1985:298), “ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgements possible”.

3. How can one determine whether the findings of the study could be repeated if the study were replicated with similar respondents in a similar context? Guba and Lincoln (1985:316) suggest that a demonstration of credibility in the study takes care of this dependability.

4. How can one establish the degree to which the findings of the study are determined by the respondents and conditions of the study and not by the
biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher? By answering this question, the neutrality of the data is exposed.

In terms of the quantitative aspect of this study, content validity was employed to ensure trustworthiness. When employing this type of validity, two questions are usually posed: Is the instrument really measuring the concept we assume it is? Does the instrument provide an adequate sample of items that represent the concept? (De Vos, 1998:84). Furthermore, for the quantitative investigation validity and reliability were ensured by means of statistical calculation.

This process involves judgement, and thus the questions in the questionnaire were assessed by me, as the researcher, my promoter, my co-promoter, as well as the statistician, to ensure the representativeness of the content. The content in the questionnaire was derived from the themes that surfaced from the qualitative findings.

1.9 ETHICAL MEASURES

According to The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (Webster,1989:211), the term ethics refers to the “code of conduct or behaviour governing an individual or group”. When conducting research, social scientists enter into the private lives of their participants (Berg, 2001:39). Researchers therefore have to make sure that the privacy, the rights and the welfare of their participants are all guaranteed (Kumar, 1999:191). Researchers have a duty and an obligation to abide by the code of conduct that governs most professions.

Christians, in Denzin and Lincoln (2003:217-219), provides elements to serve as guidelines for dealing with ethical concerns in research. These are informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality, autonomy and accuracy. This research adhered to these principles. In terms of transparency, I confidently
gave my true identity as an academic member of the NMMU. Furthermore, ethical clearance was applied for and granted from the university research office.

Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point when they felt that the intentions of the research made them feel uncomfortable. Participants will receive feedback in terms of the findings of the research.

1.10 THE DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The dissemination of results will be done through a seminar presentation where all academics from the NMMU will be invited. Knowledge of the attitudes of some of their colleagues may also enrich and ameliorate the conditions within the institution, thereby leading to a commonly understood purpose and mission.

Results will also be made available to the management of the University for their understanding of how and what academics are thinking about and expect from the University. This kind of dissemination will be done by making available recommendations via a condensed document. For the broader academic and research community, the results will be published in an accredited journal and presented at scientific conferences.

The participants benefited from this study in the sense that in the process of sharing their thoughts and perceptions, they expressed their feelings, and thereby found some comfort from the stress and frustration that inevitably accompany any change.

There was constant engagement with the Centre for Planning and Institutional Development (CPID) during the research process, so as to share information on new and developing information. The CPID will use the information to inform its
strategies and structures in order to better plan for the wellbeing of the staff and the institution as an organisation.

1.11 THE RESEARCH OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Research orientation, problem statement and purpose of study, concept clarification, research design, methodology and research plan
Chapter 2: The restructuring of higher education institutions through mergers and subsequent organisational change
Chapter 3: The impact of change on identity and the consequent construction of an organisational identity
Chapter 4: An explication of the selected research design, the philosophical foundations and the methodology
Chapter 5: Report and interpretation of the qualitative findings
Chapter 6: Report and interpretation of the quantitative results
Chapter 7: Conclusions, implications, limitations and recommendations

1.12 CONCLUSION

This study sets out to understand the meanings that academics assign to the concept “comprehensive” university and investigates how these meanings are instrumental in the construction of an organisational identity. The reason for the inquiry is the status quo as a result of the mergers and incorporations that have recently challenged the purpose and identity of the university.

To explore the research question, it is crucial to understand what other research has done so as to determine the complexity of the phenomena under study and position the research problem within existing theory.
CHAPTER 2

THE RESTRUCTURING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH MERGERS AND SUBSEQUENT ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter will be multi-pronged. I will firstly present an overview of the evolution of the merger phenomenon through time. I will recapitulate the leading views of literature specifically linked to mergers and the restructuring of higher education institutions, comprehensive universities and the idea of the university. This literature study will form the foundation of the theory of this study.

This study is furthermore grounded in a conceptual framework taken from general scientific literature on organisational culture and organisational change. Some models of change management proposed in the literature will also be explored, to examine their applicability and level of appropriateness to this study. This theoretical foundation will then assist in arguing for the possibility of the construction of a shared organisational identity.

The consequential impact of the merger on the creation of the comprehensive university internationally and in South Africa will finally be teased out. This will shed some light on the notion of the ‘comprehensive university’ against the framework of the traditional ‘idea of the university’.
2.2 THE RESTRUCTURING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH MERGERS

2.2.1 Concept clarification: *Merger*

According to *The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus* (Webster, 1989:116 and 365), the term ‘merger’ refers to a consolidation, a combination or an amalgamation of two or more organisations and is usually accompanied by a new name. In the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, the word ‘merge’ is defined as, amongst other things, that which can cause to lose character or identity in something else (Branford, 1989:472).

Vaara (2000: 82) argues that the term merger has two meanings in the context of combining organisations. Firstly, it can refer to any form of combination of organisations that is initiated by different types of contracts. Secondly, a merger is a combination of organisations which are rather similar in size and which create an organisation where neither party can be perceived as an acquirer.

Skodvin (1999:65) defines an institutional merger as the 'amalgamation' of two or more stand-alone institutions into “one new single institution”. The link between mergers and identity is stressed by Harman (2002: 94), who asserts that merging institutions “legally and culturally give up their independent identities in favour of a new joint identity under the control of a single governing body”.

In this study, the term merger is used with the focus on the contents of the emerging organisational identity of academics in a comprehensive university. The term is therefore defined as a combination of two or more separate institutions with separate cultures and identities into one new institution with a shared identity and culture.
2.2.2 Mergers in higher education institutions

Higher education has in the recent past been marked by a continuous state of transition, both locally and globally (Brown and Humphreys, 2003:123; Harman, 2002:91; Hildreth and Koenig, 2002:126). Very often mergers are a typical result of wider social change (Amuwo, 2004:65; Jansen, 2003: 30). The merger policy in the restructuring of higher education has attracted much scholarly attention worldwide over the past two or three decades (Harman and Meek, 2002:1).

Many public and private institutions in a number of countries have gone through such change, either through incorporation, take over, or other forms of consolidation. Germany, Australia, Great Britain, the United States of America (USA), The Netherlands and New Zealand are a few examples of countries that have gone through the merger process in higher education (Harman and Meek, 2002:1; Skodvin, 1999: 67).

Mergers take place in different places and sectors and come about for different reasons. Research shows that it is often assumed that there is something to gain when a merger is undertaken and that one of the intentions of mergers in higher education is to create better academic institutions (Skodvin, 1999: 68, 73).

In South Africa, one of the reasons was to transform the higher education system in terms of increasing accessibility for the majority of its citizens, thereby achieving equity and diversity (DoE, 2001:5). In the USA, most mergers in academia were thought to address “educational enhancement, viability, and economies of scale…” (Hildreth and Koenig, 2002:126). In the United Kingdom (UK) most mergers were intended to enhance academic compatibility, thereby ensuring that the institutions would be financially viable and that they would survive (Beasley and Pembridge, 2000:41).
There seems to be a pervasive view that a merger is not an occasion or an event, but it is a long-term process and requires planning (Fullan, 2007:68; Muller, 2006:198; Skodvin, 1999: 69). In other words, mergers are “ongoing, evolving, and cumulative” (Weick and Quinn, 1999:375). Experience from the USA, Australia and The Netherlands demonstrates that it can take up to ten years before the situation is normalised after a merger (Skodvin, 1999: 70).

Skodvin (1999: 77) furthermore argues for the necessity of viewing a merger or the option thereof, as a long-term strategy that should be accompanied by development plans. In a study conducted about lessons to be learned from the London University mergers, Fielden and Markhan (1997:8) recommend that enough time be allowed for the merger process, so as to establish trust and good relationships between the previously separate institutions. Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:30) cite Atkinson and Butcher (2003), who describe trust as “social glue” that can bring different structures of the organisation together.

Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:30) further claim that trust can be expressed at three levels within an organisation; that is the individual level, the group level and the system level. They explain that “at the individual level, trust is based on interpersonal relationships; at the group level, trust is represented through collective values and identities, while at the system level, trust is institutional and is based on roles, systems or reputations, from which inferences are drawn about the trustworthiness of the organisation” (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006:30). Trust is thus an important element that binds the whole organisation together. It is therefore understood in this study through all these three levels.

2.2.3 The South African perspective on mergers

South Africa has only recently embarked on merging institutions of higher education. Quite a few studies and public comments have responded to this fairly new phenomenon. In South Africa, these mergers were “forced”, and were in
reaction to educational policy, where the government was the initiator of the process and the institutions had little say in this regard (Skodvin, 1999:66, 67).

The reasons provided by government for restructuring range from equal access to education, to the non-viability of institutions. History proves that the higher education system in South Africa has been characterised by structural inequalities that were a result of systemic and institutionalised discrimination during the apartheid years. Higher education was subsequently seen as a problem area for not delivering on its mandate, because the government believed that it (higher education) had failed to produce quality graduates and diplomats, while at the same time it was wasting financial and human resources (Winberg, 2004: 95).

Jansen (2003:28) claims that in South Africa, studies that have dealt with mergers are more descriptive of events that have taken place, thereby affording an insufficient theoretical explanation of the meaning and the path of institutional mergers in context. He makes an obvious and significant observation that mergers are politically loaded and that not enough attention has been given to this fact in the literature on mergers, particularly in South Africa.

Sehoole (2005:163) shares the same sentiments, and this author highlights an even more pertinent point, namely that in the South African context, institutional identities of universities are "racially fractured, financially unequal and historically recent in formation". It is important to acknowledge these stark realities when proceeding with this study.

2.2.4 Mergers inevitably bring about change

It is evident from the literature that a merger brings about change and it is one of the most important activities in which any institution can participate (Muller,

In terms of change in general, Fullan (2007:7) warns against putting the latest policy into place and assuming that this acts as or equates to reform. He therefore argues that change is much more complex, because it is played out in social settings and involves people’s understanding of what it is that needs to change and how it can best be achieved. However, in the USA, Skodvin (1999:66) reveals that mergers occurred in private and public higher education institutions from the 1960s and they were mostly voluntary mergers.

It thus seems crucial that managers and staff members should view mergers as complex phenomena in terms of change management (Muller, 2006:198). Pepper and Larson (2006:53) indicate that attempts made by leaders of organisations to create common values, beliefs and behaviours are on occasion fruitless, because it is not easy to manage culture from the top.

This view is taken further by Skodvin (1999:77), who asserts that mergers are complex, time-consuming and difficult processes that require thorough planning before, during and after the process. He thus suggests that this requires negotiation and detailed planning.

Furthermore, researchers claim that mergers seldom take place without disruption, and a merger is one of the most disruptive happenings in the workplace (Pepper and Larson, 2006: 49; Skodvin, 1999: 68). In a study that looked at similarities and differences between mergers in higher education, Rowley (1997:261) argues that higher education mergers are similar to mergers in general, for the reason that they are “costly, both before and after the event, and ‘messy’”.
Fullan (2007:21-22) suggests that change “involves loss, anxiety and struggle … it involves passing through zones of uncertainty … the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle”. The merger process should thus be understood as a process that takes a lot out of people as it has the potential of unsettling and disturbing them.

Literature on mergers reveals that merger failures and problems over the past decades have been attributed to cultural differences and the failure to manage practical challenges of cultural integration during and after change (Pepper and Larson, 2006: 49; Vaara, 2000: 82). A similar view is held by Harman (2002: 92), which he expresses as culture being elusive. He maintains that this elusiveness complicates and lengthens the process of culture building and consolidation in a newly formed institution.

Skodvin (1999: 74) argues that in higher education, problems regarding culture are related to issues concerning different competency profiles, identity and autonomy, teaching versus research, and professional education versus academia. He further argues that in the mergers where the main strategy was to increase academic integration and collaboration, problems were often created between different academic cultures, and this problem in particular, hindered positive academic development. Muller (2006: 204) therefore cautions that the change process is likely to fail if the challenges that people encounter at the onset of change are not planned for and properly addressed.

The question of merging unequal partners is raised by some authors as a challenge that hinders integration. The inequality in partnership is evident when one of the partners plays a dominant role during the merger process (Harman, 2002:93; Skodvin, 1999:71). This phenomenon Riad (2007:29) terms a “submerger”, where the other partner lives through a “loss of culture”. Jansen (2003: 36) refers to such a process as “subsumed integration”, where a smaller institution is taken over and absorbed by a larger established institution.
However, it is not always doom and gloom in merger situations. There are some success stories and some authors have shed light on the necessary ingredients for these successes. The following is a brief account on what some researchers have hailed as imperative.

Skodvin (1999:77-78) claims that a successful merger is characterised by visible and strong management, which is able to collect the different subcultures, as well as to create a joint feeling of identity and organisational structure. This is what Harman (2002:92-96) refers to as the managing of culture by competent senior executives who ensure integration and create a sense of loyalty to the new institution. Pepper and Larson (2006:50) maintain that if cultural integration is not handled well, that in itself aggravates the seriousness of the disruption that naturally occurs in mergers.

Moreover, Fullan (2007:11) observes that change that occurs through a top-down approach does not succeed in attaining ownership. He suggests a reconciliation and combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches for change. He thus views change as a “people-related phenomenon for each and every individual” (Fullan, 2007:170).

Hence, Skodvin (1999:78) asserts that integration is only possible through developing goals or objectives that can be shared and bought into by the majority of the staff during change. Shared goals and objectives are usually underpinned by shared values. In other words, effective integration depends on the staff members’ level of identification with the cultural value principles (Pepper and Larson, 2006:50).

Through a process of identification, members of the organisation associate themselves with these values. They thus realise that there is a synonymity that they share with other group members (Forsyth, 1999:76). Furthermore, Hildreth
and Koenig (2002:127) cite Nahavandi and Malekzadeh (1988), who claim that an appropriate ‘acculturation process’ is essential for a successful merger. In other words, members will have to unlearn their present culture and learn a new culture by adopting new ways of doing things, thereby accepting change.

Another important component that is crucial in any organisation that is undergoing change, especially after a merger, is to bring new blood into the system to dampen cultural conflicts and tensions in the new organisation (Skodvin, 1999:78). This idea holds the belief that a new person who does not belong to any of the merged institutions will be trusted more easily, because she will not necessarily have any allegiance from any of the past institutions. Kotter (1995:60) suggests that transformations go well when there is a new head that is a good leader and sees the need for change.

How institutions react to this change is important (Harman, 2002:92). More specifically, how individual members of the organisation react and cope with change is significant. It is therefore critical that the importance of the ‘human factor’, as Harman (2002:93) mindfully puts it, in any change process, is handled as a priority and with sensitivity. Muller (2006: 204) claims that if these issues are handled in the right manner, then the new organisation can emerge with a stronger set of capabilities and a healthy attitude towards change.

Referring to a merger as a change process, Muller (2006:200) concurs with Skodvin’s (1999: 76) assertion that when employees do not have a say in the matter, they view change as something that is not of their own making, and thus such change is feared.
2.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

2.3.1 Concept clarification

2.3.1.1 Organisation

Organisations are social systems that are an inherent part of the social world and are organised by some means (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001:980). According to Talcott Parsons (cited by Hassard, 1993:24; Dunkerly, 1972:35; Etzioni, 1964:3), an organisation is a social system within a larger system that consists of individuals, groups and departments intentionally constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals.

Jenkins (2003:145) defines organisations as networks of people – “distinguished as members from non-members, following coordinated procedures: doing things together in interrelated and institutionalised ways”. Furthermore, organisations are networks of individual and collective identification (Jenkins, 2003:145).

The study of organisations in the past has taken a central place in the social sciences (Dunkerley, 1972:1). As changes have taken place in society, sociologists have responded to the challenges, from Karl Marx’s explanation of the relationship between organisations and society, to Michels’ concern about the internal structuring of activities within organisations (Dunkerley, 1972:16).

The human relations approach taken by these theorists, however, has mostly emphasised the role of the individual within the organisation, rather than the organisation as a whole (Dunkerley, 1972:16).

This study will add value to the existing literature on the study of organisations, because it investigates the relationship of the members of the organisation, taking into consideration the human relations of the organisation as a whole.
2.3.1.2 Organisational culture

According to Painter-Morland (2002:114), organisations are places that mould the experiences of individuals, while organisations themselves are shaped by the experiences of individuals. She claims that this process is an invitation to structure multiple interpretations of organisational culture. She then urges that it be acknowledged that the members of an organisation are heterogeneous. She also cautions that when interpreting organisational cultures, it is essential to take cognizance of the specific historical context. Furthermore, she argues that the responsibility of an organisational culture is one of structuring the “memories, identities, analogies …” of members, which she claims carry meaning within its context (Painter-Morland, 2002:113).

Pepper and Larson (2006:52) cite Eisenberg and Riley (2001), who explain organisational culture as that which refers to “patterns of human action and its recursive behaviours and meanings”. This includes day-to-day practices, values, assumptions and expectations (Pepper and Larson, 2006:52; Harman, 2002:97). The organisation is therefore viewed as the potential carrier of a multiplicity of separate, overlapping, superimposed, or nested cultures, with the organisation’s participants maintaining simultaneous membership in any number of [these] cultural groups (Sackmann, Phillips, Kleinberg and Boyacigiller, 1997:33).

Masland (1997:143) quotes Pettigrew (1979:572), who provides a rather broad definition of organisational culture as “the amalgam of beliefs, ideology, language, ritual, and myth”. To elaborate on his definition, Pettigrew (1979) explains that organisational culture promotes purpose, obligation and order. It offers meaning and social unity, and spells out how people are expected to behave.

Pascale and Athos conducted a study on Japanese management in 1981 and they defined organisational culture as the “glue that holds an organisation
together” (Masland, 1997:144). Riad (2007:27) also uses the “glue” metaphor that takes the perspective of viewing culture as that which is shared and holds the organisation together.

When examining organisational culture, Irrmannn (2002:2) explains that it has a complex and multidimensional nature. He states that organisational culture is usually presented as a set of values and ideas to be shared by the whole organisation. He however cautions that members of an organisation may develop a shared set of assumptions, but it has to be taken into account that people bring with them different sets of assumptions that they obtain outside of the organisation (Irrmannn, 2002:7).

2.3.2 Constructing an organisational culture

Riad (2007: 28) takes a social constructionist perspective in her study when she argues that meaning is constituted in relationships and that interaction is the site of construction. This therefore means that through interaction, relationships are built and this platform gives people the space to construct their organisational culture, which will in turn, inform their identity. Riad (2007:38) asserts that how people relate to each other assists in the construction of an organisational identity, and that identity will be sustained by the endurance of such relationships.

Given the nature of mergers in general, different cultures of different organisations and disciplines come together to form one unit, which in itself requires the integration of diverse academic orientations. Inevitably, two (or more) social groups are confronted by one another (Van Knippenberg and Van Leeuwen, 2001, cited by Brown and Humphreys, 2003:125).

Typically, the groups that come together have their entrenched norms, values and procedures that can complicate matters and hinder negotiations (Brown and
Humphreys, 2003:125). Vaara (2000:84) believes that changes that are especially difficult are those that are concerned with the beliefs and practices that form the core of the organisational identity.

Schein (2004:11), who is a prominent writer and researcher on the construction of an organisational culture, argues that any social unit that has some kind of shared history will have evolved a culture. It is normally argued that a group’s survival is threatened when elements of its culture have become unsettled (Schein, 2004:11).

Members of the new organisation therefore are trying to make sense of their new reality. Vaara (2000:86) claims that this sense-making process is a quest for constructing a new organisational identity that is characterised by questions such as, “Who are we?” and, “Who are the others?” In a new organisation, members confront a new culture, and the image of their own culture needs to be adjusted (Vaara, 2000:87).

Very often it is assumed that when an organisational culture is constructed, some form of cohesion (or bonding) will result (Riad, 2007:27). Clark (1997:121) points out that sociologists generally refer to two broad classifications of social bonding. Firstly, structural bonding consists of patterns of relation and interaction of persons and groups. Secondly, normative bonding comprises shared beliefs, attitudes and values. From the above assumption, it can thus be inferred that integration has to happen at different levels and all these levels are important during the construction of an organisational culture.

Riad (2007:28) refers to the construction of a cohesion/pluralism binary that is needed to explore ‘interpenetrations’ between the two positions. She claims that very often the literature on mergers overlooks the internal plurality of organisational culture. Plurality implies difference, and Riad (2007:38) claims that in a merger, people are both united and divided at the same time. She
argues that the word “difference” in the merger context has two meanings: the opposite of “sameness” and “dispute or quarrel” (Riad, 2007:39). The challenge, according to Riad (2007), is to determine or devise organisational foundations that communicate such differences constructively in the post-merger process.

Schein (2004:32-35) suggests that there are two keys to successfully constructing an organisational culture. These are the management of the large amounts of anxiety that accompany any relearning (and even unlearning), and the assessment of whether the genetic capability for the new learning is present.

As the new group acquires its own shared history, it will develop amended or brand-new assumptions in crucial areas of its experience. Schein (2004:35) contends that it is those new assumptions that compose the culture of that particular group. Schein (2004:21) further suggests that we view the shared basic assumptions of an organisational culture as its DNA, so that we can examine some of the individual genes in terms of their significance or strength in enabling certain kinds of growth and behaviour.

2.3.2.1 The role of culture in constructing an organisational identity

Culture refers to those elements of a group that are more stable and less adaptable (Schein, 2004:11). Once a group has achieved a sense of group identity, culture is the major stabilising force that is deeply embedded and cannot be given up or easily unfrozen (Schein, 2004:14; Harman, 2002:97).

Schein (2004:14) argues that when culture is developed, the group becomes less conscious about its values and beliefs, and the individual members then begin to treat them as non-negotiable assumptions that are taken for granted. As assumptions are taken for granted, they become part of the group identity (Schein, 2004:16). Culture, through shared norms that are held by a group, guides and constrains the behaviour of the members of a group (Schein, 2004:8).
However, it must be remembered that the development of new cultures is often a product of a combination of different institutional histories and cultures formed at specific times and places, and subsequently reconstructed by outside factors and the internal dynamics (Currie, 2003:2).

Schein (2004: 3) claims that everyone in an organisation is rooted in her own culture. He therefore suggests that for us to be able to observe organisational culture, we must locate the visible and explicit ways in which it manifests itself. In an effort to make culture more tangible and understandable, Masland (1997:146) claims that there are a number of windows through which one can view both the past and present cultural influences. Masland (1997:146) focuses on four of these windows, claiming that they are easily understandable and applicable, as well as being closely related and still slightly different.

These four windows are:

1. **saga** - a strong self-fulfilling belief, working through the institutional self-image and the public image;
2. **heroes** - important people to an organisation who frequently “represent ideals and values in human form”;
3. **symbols** - can make organisational values explicit, thereby making them tangible. They may include a flag, music, language and sport; and
4. **rituals** - translating culture into action, providing tangible evidence of culture, meaning and continuity with the past. Graduation ceremonies, research conferences and ‘open days’ are good examples of rituals (Masland 1997:146).

In an effort to demonstrate the concreteness and abstractness of culture, Schein (2004: 26) refers to three levels of culture. His levels are:

1. **artefacts** – which include visible organisational structures and processes;
2. **espoused beliefs and values** – which include strategies, goals and philosophies; and

3. **underlying assumptions** – which include unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings.

There are those aspects of culture that are invisible and therefore require a certain level of awareness. Tierney (1991:42) argues that within a culture of the organisation, there exists a “dominant ideology”, which informs members of what meaning to give to their organisation’s identity and how culture is to be constituted. He describes ideology as a set of principles and references through which members of an organisation make meaning of their experiences. He argues that members come with conflicting beliefs and practices, and therefore would often contest the ideology that forms the foundation of the organisation’s culture.

Tierney (1991:43) cautions against what he calls “ideological hegemony”, where only one meaning of existence is allowed to prevail. He suggests that it is important for organisations to create opportunities where members are encouraged to take part in deliberations that expose the ideological antecedents of the organisation. He also proposes that members should be allowed to question how different ideologies silence the voices of the powerless and sustain the power of the dominant.

He then asserts that if organisations are places where cultures are socially negotiated, it is crucial for organisations to have a deep-seated framework that guides them (Tierney, 1991:39). Amuwo (2004:72) is of the view that this framework should encourage academics to be the drivers of these negotiations and cites. Giroux (1995:238) asserts that this framework should empower academics to take up their responsibilities as “cultural gatekeeper[s] for dominant values”.

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The arguments made above clearly demonstrate that culture plays an important role in a post-merged organisation. Building a culture in a new organisation is therefore crucial. Once an organisational culture is established, an organisational identity has a firm basis for its construction. Authors emphasise the importance of culture and at the same time caution us of its dynamic nature. They suggest different levels from which culture is to be observed and with which it is to be engaged.

They also suggest different tangibles through which this engagement and observation should take place. Through this process, however, there is a duality of culture that needs to be constantly taken into consideration, namely that of cohesiveness/plurality. This duality is evident in organisations where members work together to build a single organisational culture, while they carry their individual diverse cultures.

2.3.2.2 Dealing with the change

According to The Oxford Dictionary, the word ‘change’ has a variety of connotations ranging from becoming different, alteration, modification, a new experience, substitution of one thing by another, arrival at a fresh start, giving up, getting rid of, converting to a different view or aspect (Fowler and Fowler, 1990:187).

In recent years, quite a number of organisations have gone through significant changes, internally and externally (Lipponen and Leskinen, 2006:671). In his account on change, Fullan (2007:4-11) gives a brief background on changes that have taken place in education from the 1960s and explains why these changes have failed in one way or another.

He claims that since the 1960s, there has not been any significant progress made other than a renewed interest in large-scale reforms that were demonstrated in the 1980s. He thus reveals that these changes largely focused
on accountability. From the 1990s until now, intensified attempts at large-scale reforms, that have tried to remedy the results of past failed reforms, have been made (Fullan, 2007: 4 – 11).

Weick and Quinn (1999:365) assert that the pace of change is important and they therefore examine the difference between episodic and continuous change. Episodic change refers to changes that are “infrequent, discontinuous and intentional”. This means that change occurs as a sporadic interruption that is generated by intention and is stimulated by externally motivated disequilibrium (Weick and Quinn, 1999:365). On the other hand, continuous change refers to changes that are “constant, evolving [and] cumulative” (Weick and Quinn, 1999:366). These changes are ongoing work processes and social practices that take place in small adjustments across units (Weick and Quinn, 1999:375). Considine (2006:255) argues that universities are pressured by environmental forces (local and global) to “reinvent” themselves. Research has markedly shown that the university environment is influenced politically by the transformation processes that are taking place in higher education. These transformation processes raise questions about the purpose of the institution, which Tierney (1991:35) argues is fundamentally a moral question that is to be considered politically and theoretically on a broader scale.

When looking at change in a merger context, almost all of the above-mentioned connotations of change are perceptible. According to Ford and Ford (1994), (cited in Weick and Quinn, 1999:362), “change is a phenomenon of time. It is the way people talk about the event in which something appears to become, or turn into something else, where the ‘something else’ is seen as a result or outcome”.

Considine (2006:256) argues that the merger process as a transformation process has brought about dramatic changes that are complex; hence universities find it hard to explain their distinctiveness. Amuwo (2004:66) asserts that in South African universities, institutional reforms will have to consist of value
and ethical changes in the context and content of learning. In order to be distinctive, one needs something to be known by or to be known for. This distinctiveness informs people of the kind of service or product that one excels in, like branding. This distinctiveness forms part of the university’s organisational identity. De Boer, Einders and Laisyte, 2007:33) claim that ‘being special’ as an organisation is one of the strategies that advances the construction of such an organisational identity.

Given that different institutions of higher education have come together to form one unit, it is obvious that these institutions will need to reinvent themselves as one new organisation. They will therefore need to identify themselves with their newly merged institution and come up with just what it is that makes them unique as a new institution.

2.3.3 Conceptual framework: Models on transformation of organisations

There are different models that have been created in order to explain the transformation that takes place in organisations. There are two models that I have found relevant for this study.

Firstly, I will explore Zittoun’s (2008) model of change and attempt to situate the NMMU’s experience in terms of this model. Secondly, I will consider Kotter’s (1995) eight steps of transforming an organisation, in order to illustrate the path to be travelled when an institution undergoes change.

2.3.3.1 Zittoun’s model

In her attempt to analyse transitions in education, Zittoun (2008:165-167) argues that in moments of change, there is a disruption of the usual processes and a production of newness. She terms these moments of change “raptures”, as she
claims that there is a crisis or disequilibrium in the dynamic system, which calls for “restructuring” or reconfiguration.

She asserts that transitions are interdependent processes of change that follow raptures. The individual in this case is considered in her social world, interacting with others, material objects and symbolic elements. These processes of transition involve identity processes (identity change), knowledge acquisition (learning) and sense-making (meaning-making).

Firstly, identity processes include processes of repositioning or relocating of the person in her social or symbolic fields. At the same time, repositioning and relocating can create new goals, orientations, possibilities, constraints on action or losses. Furthermore, relocation causes a person to occupy positions previously occupied by others.

In view of that, through one’s own trepidation and the mediation of others, repositioning implies the transformation of identities. Change, in the case of the NMMU, has resulted in some people being relocated and repositioned physically by being moved to different offices, buildings and campuses.

The relocation also takes place mentally, where people are expected to make mental shifts from being an academic from a traditional university or technikon to becoming an academic in a comprehensive university. They thereby occupy positions previously occupied by others, and thus a transformation of identities occurs.

Secondly, knowledge acquisition implies that the relocation of people might need social, cognitive and expert forms of knowledge and skills. This will allow the individual to understand the new institution’s social rules and values. This means that there are certain skills that group members will need to acquire to be able to behave and thus to be validated as members of a particular group.
Certainly, members of the NMMU need to acquire knowledge in terms of understanding what a comprehensive university means and how that meaning affects their day-to-day activities. It goes without saying that the values espoused in the vision and mission statement of the university will have to be understood in order for them to be internalised.

Thirdly, sense-making means that through relocations, encounters and interactions the individual tries to make sense of and attribute meaning to what is happening to her. Put differently, sense-making involves processes of the elaboration of emotions and experiences through the mediation of signs, for example, verbal language.

Individuals at the NMMU try to make sense of what is happening to them and they express this through language. They try to make sense of the 'label' of being employed at a comprehensive university. They are also on a journey of trying to understand their encounters that are informed by their experiences as they interact with their colleagues and management. They are trying to make sense of the policies and procedures of the new institution.

### 2.3.3.2 Kotter's model

Kotter (1995:59) claims that in any change process there are different phases that the organisation and its members go through. He further cautions that any change process needs time. He argues that organisations often have relatively little experience in reconstruction, and as a result they commit “errors” (Kotter, 1995: 61).
He formulated the following eight steps required for transforming an organisation:

1. **Establishing a sense of urgency**: The market needs to be examined in order to discover competitive realities. This involves the identification and discussion of crises, potential crises or major opportunities. Ways to communicate these crises and opportunities require the cooperation of different people who can motivate others. Managers are thus crucial in this step, because they have the task of talking frankly about latent unpleasant facts, as well as “driving people out of their comfort zones”.

2. **Forming a powerful guiding coalition**: In successful change processes, the leader assembles a group with enough power to lead the change effort and encourages the group to work together as a team. This team needs to “develop a shared commitment to excellent performance through renewal”. Key line managers need to be part of the team so as to drive the process and communicate with staff members.

3. **Creating a vision**: A vision needs to be created so as to help direct the change effort. The vision needs to be sensible and should give clarity to the direction towards which the organisation wants to go. If not, the vision could “dissolve into a list of confusing and incompatible projects that can take the organisation in the wrong direction or nowhere at all”. Strategies for achieving that vision need to be developed.

4. **Communicating the vision**: The transforming organisation must make sure that they use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies. Teaching new behaviours through the example of the guiding coalition is crucial, as this will prevent sending out mixed messages. It is important to guard against under-communicating the vision by using lively and exciting newsletters and conversations.
5. **Empowering others to act on the vision**: Management needs to get rid of obstacles that will hamper change. Systems and structures that seriously undermine the vision need to be changed. Risk-taking and non-traditional ideas, activities and actions need to be encouraged.

6. **Planning for and creating short-term wins**: Planning for visible performance improvements and creating those improvements are both important strategies for creating short-term gains. Recognising and rewarding employees involved in the improvements is another strategy that encourages short-term gains. Employees should be encouraged to commit to short-term ‘wins’ that assist in keeping the levels of importance up and allow thorough thought that is clear, that can help in up-dating the vision.

7. **Consolidating improvements and producing still more change**: It is important to use increased credibility to change systems, structures and policies that do not fit the new vision. Hiring, promoting and developing employees who can implement the vision is necessary. It is advantageous to reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes and change agents. What is worth noting is that change needs to be internalised into the organisation’s culture. Thus any new approaches will be “fragile and subject to regression”.

8. **Institutionalising new approaches**: Articulating the connections between the new behaviours and corporate success is important for employees to internalise. The means to ensure leadership development and succession must be developed. This effort ensures the ‘anchoring’ of changes and the continuity of organisational culture and identity.

The above steps are relevant for any organisation that is going through change. It is especially important for a newly merged institution that almost overnight
found itself a comprehensive university to examine its strategies of change according to these steps. Strong leadership is necessary to direct such change. It would be advisable that the NMMU should take cognizance of these steps so that it can pull together its staff members and direct the institution towards a transformed institution with a single culture and identity.

The processes of transition suggested by Zittoun (2008) and the steps to transform an organisation suggested by Kotter (1995) are indicative of the fact that change needs to be understood as a process that takes different forms and takes place at different levels of social interaction. Most importantly, Zittoun (2008:169) questions the role of the institution in the facilitation, or the hindering of the transitional processes.

2.4 THE EMERGENCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY

It is evident that, globally, the concept of a comprehensive university is not a new phenomenon in higher education, however, the terms used in different countries (Polytech, Gesamthochschulen, Ammattikorkeallkoulu) (Skodvin, 1999:65) to indicate the comprehensive nature of these institutions warrant an investigation into whether there is a common understanding of the concept across countries, including South Africa.

Moreover, comprehensive universities are a new kind of university in South Africa. It would therefore be wise to provide a brief historical background to show how comprehensive universities have emerged.

2.4.1 Concept clarification: Comprehensive university

As was discussed in Chapter One, in South Africa, comprehensive universities have been established to meet the requirements espoused in the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). Comprehensive universities are frequently
described by the general public as institutions that offer a wide range of different disciplines and subjects. Some of these institutions have a large number of students, while others have fewer students. Some have doctoral programmes and others only offer up to Master’s level, while others do not have postgraduate programmes at all (Dalbey, 1995: 1).

A common definition that is always provided for a comprehensive university is that it is the combination of a technikon and a university. However, what complicates the matter is the fact that, in South Africa, the University of Venda and the University of Zululand, which are so-called comprehensive universities, do not fit this commonly used definition, because they are not the result of this type of combination. They did not merge, and the idea from the Department of Education is for them to work towards becoming comprehensive universities.

The review of existing literature on the term ‘comprehensive university’ confirms the lack of a commonly held definition, and consequently the tendency is to define it in a very simplistic way that depends on the context.

The dubious nature of this term however, makes it intangible and thereby harder for a recently formed university, such as the NMMU, to tap into already established concepts of comprehensives to assist in its endeavour to define itself. However, it is evident from literature that there is a common trend that comprehensive universities are established to meet the immediate social needs prevalent at a certain time (DoE, 2004b:6; Arbo and Eskelinen, 2003:2; Smith and Langslow, 1999:113 and 114; Gieseke and Eilsberger, 1977:7). It can thus be argued that comprehensive universities are uniquely placed to make a difference, where other universities would be restrictive and constrained by their mission, structure and operations.
2.4.2 Historical trajectory

There are evident similarities between several countries on how their governments have brought about major structural change in higher education (Harman, 2002:94). Skodvin (1999:65,66) provides a brief international track of mergers as a means for bringing about structural changes in higher education:

- In the late 1970s, Australia, Great Britain and The Netherlands used mergers to rationalise teacher training education in order to make it efficient.
- Australia and Great Britain used mergers to create a binary system of higher education in the 1960s and early 1970s, thereby resulting in the establishment of Colleges of Advanced Education in Australia and polytechnics in Great Britain, as alternatives to universities.
- The Australians transformed their binary system into a unified higher education system (Unified National System) from 1987-1990.
- Germany experimented with the creation of Gesamthochschulen (combined universities) in the 1970s.
- The Swedish used mergers to reform their higher education system in 1977.
- The Dutch authorities restructured their college sector (HBO) from 1983-1987.
- The Norwegians reorganised their college sector in 1994.
- The Flemish college sector amalgamated in 1994, and

The following is a detailed account of the summary provided above.
2.4.2.1 The Land-Grant Colleges in USA

The enabling Morrill Act of 1862 facilitated the introduction of land-grant universities that were designed specifically to promote access and opportunities through making practical forms of higher education available to the general population. This act required the government to provide each state with a grant of land that could be sold to finance the establishment of a college. Originally, land-grant colleges were established to improve American agriculture and to broaden services to the surrounding communities (DoE, 2004b:6). Their intention was to serve a single population or to offer a single type of curriculum (Finnegan, 1993:2).

From 1960 to 1980, comprehensive universities in the USA went through major changes, which resulted in a distinctive element across the sector: that of the offering of practical education at the Baccalaureate and Master’s levels (Finnegan, 1993:2). This type of university has evolved and it now includes teachers’ colleges, state colleges and universities, historically black denominational and public land-grant colleges, technical institutes, women’s colleges, and metropolitan and regional independent and denominational colleges (Finnegan, 1993:2).

2.4.2.2 The Gesamthochschulen in Germany

The Gesamthochschulen emerged as a consequence of the reform of higher education in Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s (DoE, 2004b:9; Huisman, 2003:19; Gieseke and Eilsberger, 1977:2). These comprehensive universities were founded in regions that were underprivileged (Gieseke and Eilsberger, 1977:7).
In 1967, a paper from the German Ministry of Education used the concept of a comprehensive university very flexibly by referring to it as a differentiated comprehensive university. That meant that a combination of a whole area of hochschulen\(^2\) programmes was thereby made possible (Gieseke and Eilsberger, 1977:3).

Two models were developed later. These models were the cooperative comprehensive model and the integrated comprehensive model. The cooperative model was based on the autonomy of the various different institutions within a combined system. The integrated model meant that various institutions were united in a common organisation, under a common administration and with common decision-making bodies (Gieseke and Eilsberger, 1977:3).

Eventually, the integrated comprehensive model seems to have been the one that was accepted and used. However, there are only seven remaining comprehensive universities that are found in the area of the Land of Hessen and Nordrhein-Westfalen (Huisman, 2003:19).

These comprehensive universities provide programmes that are also offered by Fachhochschulen (vocational and technical colleges). They also offer integrated courses that grant qualifications after three or four years (Huisman, 2003:19). In 1974, comprehensive universities that offered distance education programmes were established in Hagen. These institutions offered programmes up to diploma and degree level (Huisman, 2003:25).

\(^2\) This term is used interchangeably to mean university or institution
2.4.2.3 Polytechnics in Great Britain and the Colleges of Advanced Education in Australia

In the 1970s, the British and Australian governments made use of mergers to create polytechnics and Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs). These were created as alternatives to the universities, because of growing economic and social pressures (Harman, 2002:95; Skodvin, 1999:65). These institutions offered vocational and professional programmes.

In Britain the rationale for the binary system was laid out in the White Paper of 1966: A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges (Smith and Langslow, 1999:108). About thirty polytechnics were to be designated by selecting them from already existing institutions and colleges. These institutions had to meet specific academic and physical criteria.

These institutions would be smaller than universities, accommodating about two thousand (2000) students, with a ‘comprehensive’ range of courses at the higher education level. ‘Comprehensive’ meant that the institutions would have a wide range of students spread across full-time and part-time programmes and across various levels and subjects of study (Smith and Langslow, 1999:111).

The polytechnics were multifunctional, in the sense that they introduced modular courses to offer students courses with some flexibility. Credit transfer schemes were constructed for easier vertical and horizontal articulation, and work-based learning was recognised with the development of schemes for the prior accreditation of experiential learning.

These institutions catered for under-represented groups such as women, ethnic minorities and mature students. Interestingly, polytechnics also saw a growth in their intake of working-class people, even though that was not the initial intention of the White Paper (Smith and Langslow, 1999:113, 114).
In the 1980s, however, there was a decline in the size of the polytechnics’ 18-year old cohort. As a result, these institutions were obliged to broaden their access and admit students without a General Certificate of Education (GCE). As a result, new courses were introduced for applicants with no qualifications or inappropriate qualifications.

In the White Paper of 1991: Higher Education: A New Framework, it was announced that polytechnics would receive degree-awarding powers and university status (Smith and Langslow, 1999:118). The British polytechnics were granted university status in 1992 (DoE, 2004b:8; Harman, 2002:95).

Harman (2002:95-97) gives a detailed account of the changes that took place in Australia from the 1970s to the 1990s. In Australia, single-purpose professional training institutions like teachers’ colleges merged with vocationally-oriented institutions to form Colleges of Advanced Education that created a binary system of higher education.

These colleges could offer programmes up to the Master’s degree level, but were not funded for research. In the late 1980s, the White Paper of that time: Higher Education: a policy statement (1988) proposed mergers in order to reduce the number of higher education institutions; all these institutions would get university status.

The binary system was terminated and the United National System (UNS) of higher education was introduced in the late 1980s. The rationale for introducing the UNS was to strengthen and diversify academia, as well as to provide ‘economies of scale and management’ (Harman, 2002:95). Nineteen (19) public universities and about forty-four (44) CAEs were merged to produce thirty-five (35) universities.
Similar to the countries discussed above, issues of broadening university access to the underprivileged communities seem to be some sort of serendipity, especially in Britain. Another reason that seems to resonate across all the cases reviewed is that of responding to the economic and social needs of the particular time. The intention, in these cases, was to train and provide students with skills that were needed to improve the status quo and also make the students employable. In Norway and Finland comprehensive universities were founded as welfare state projects that could take the university to the people at the periphery (Arbo and Eskelinen, 2003:2).

2.4.3 The idea of the university in a comprehensive university context

Mergers in higher education have rendered universities a field of clashes in epistemologies, as well as that of a contest of interests – not that these were not prevalent before, but the driving force was now different. Having argued the uniqueness of the comprehensive university, it is essential to see how it (being a university) represents the characteristics and the ideology of the traditional idea of the university.

Generally, researchers refer to Newman (1959) when they sought a definition of what a university is. Henry Newman was a Bretan Catholic peasant who became the Rector of the Catholic University of Ireland in the middle of the nineteenth century. He resigned in 1858 (Newman, 1959:22).

For Newman, the university is “a place of teaching universal knowledge” (Newman, 1959: 7). Newman believed in the cultivation of the intellect to reach its perfect state (Ker, in Smith and Langslow, 1999: 21). For him, the university’s purpose was to emancipate the Catholic ‘gentleman’ and expose him to universal knowledge, part of which, he argued, was theology (Newman, 1959:61). He argued that a university does not have a restrictive nature where one kind of knowledge is professed to the exclusion of others (Newman, 1959:61).
Newman's idea of a university was based on his observations at a time when the poignant question was to ask whether the Irish bishops wanted a university or not. He intended to clarify that the university that he intended to build was different from those non-Catholic Universities that Catholics were forced to attend (Ker, in Smith and Langslow, 1999: 13).

Karl Jaspers (1960) was also a prominent author who sought to clarify the idea of the university. His work was produced a hundred years after Newman’s discourses were published. In 1921 he became the president of the Heidelberg University in Germany, until 1937, when he was suspended by the Nazis (Jaspers, 1960: 6). He was reinstated in 1945 and accepted the challenge of rebuilding one of Germany’s great 19th century universities (Fincher, 2000: 1).

For Jaspers, the university is an institution that is typified by loyalty to the idea of truth, no matter how uncomfortable the intellectual or social outcomes are (Jaspers, 1960:13). In his quest to define the university, Jaspers (1960: 51) distinguishes between three functions of the university, namely, research, the transmission of learning, and the education of culture. He claims that there are three core functions that are essential to a university. These are professional training, because a university is a professional school; education of the holistic human being, because the university is a cultural centre; and research, because the university is a research institute (Jaspers, 1960: 53).

He further states that the university has often been challenged to choose between these three functions and he contends that “one cannot be cut off from the others without destroying the intellectual substance of the university” (Jaspers, 1960: 54). Jaspers’ view represents a clear move from Newman’s conceptualisation of the university as a space that is detached from research, to a place that recognises research as part of the idea of the university. As Jaspers...
suggests, research is purposefully united with the other functions of the university.

In an attempt to explain the functions of the university in a democracy, Jurgen Habermas (1971:1) identifies four functions of the university. He takes Jaspers’ idea further and adds a very interesting function – that of transmitting technically exploited knowledge, so that through teaching and research the university will remain connected to the functions of the economic process. Secondly, he talks about ensuring that the extra-functional abilities of the students are catered for so that graduates are equipped to meet professional standards. Thirdly, he asserts that the university has to transmit, interpret and develop the cultural tradition of the society. Fourthly, the university is to shape the political consciousness of its students (Habermas, 1971:1-3).

These functions take further the idea of the university that should be extended to society. Similarly, it is the idea of comprehensive universities to make the university relevant to the prevailing economic and societal conditions of the time. The NMMU, through its vision and mission statements, is an engaged university that has community involvement high on its agenda (http://www.nmmu.ac.za).

A rather brave move was taken by Hashimshony and Haina (2006:8), when they suggested a design for a future university. In their study, they made suggestions of the physical and conceptual shapes and sizes for a future university. In an attempt to define the idea of a university, they cited Delanty (2001), who argued that the university is the only institution in society that has a blend of research, education, professional training and intellectual criticism (2006:8).

These authors therefore argue for the imperative of re-evaluating the above-mentioned activities, due to the recurring changes in universities. They thus maintain that the distribution of spaces within the university will be crucially impacted on by the decisions to balance these activities (Hashimshony and
They claim that the nature and future of the university will be defined by inter alia, financial challenges, collaborations with industry, increasing student numbers and learning, the growth of interdisciplinary fields of knowledge and openness to the community.

When presenting the discussion document on the idea of a South African University, Professor Kader Asmal cautioned that the identity of a university should not be about branding only (Department of Education, 2003:4). He then discussed a few elements of an “alternative legacy” that include the following:

- A university as a place for transnational exchanges.
- A university as a place for building national leadership.
- A university as a place for advancing both human rights and human development.
- A university as a place for critical reflection on social conditions (Department of Education, 2003:4-5).

In the light of the explanations alluded to above, it is appropriate to summarise the main objectives of the university as generally being threefold; firstly, the mission of teaching (transmission of knowledge), secondly, the mission of research (creation of knowledge), and thirdly, the mission of services to society (community service and engagement) (De Boer, et al., 2007:28; Perkins, 1973:3-10).

Having reviewed the literature on the idea of the university, it is important to ask where the comprehensive university fits into the definitions provided above. It is however evident through the literature reviewed on the emergence of the comprehensive universities and the idea of a university, that Habermas’ additional core function of the university matches perfectly with what

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3 The former Minister of Education who initiated the restructuring of South African Higher Education.
comprehensive universities intend to do, at least in South Africa. The idea is to make comprehensive universities respond to economic and social needs.

Although in theory, Habermas’ view seems to be close to the above idea, we still need to discover if academics hold the same view in practice. Chapter Five will shed more light on this question, since accounts of academics’ own definition of the term ‘comprehensive university’ will then be analysed.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have surveyed the literature dealing with the complexities surrounding giving meaning to the restructuring of higher education institutions through mergers, organisational change and organisational culture. The historical course of the comprehensive university was also delineated. I did this to locate my study in the international and national literature on organisational change, mergers and comprehensive universities.

In the process, I have documented the broad theoretical background against which the study is conducted. The intention was also to put my main research question into perspective.

In Chapter Three I will examine the concepts of identity, organisational identity, and also explore the social identity perspective. The next chapter will assist in theorising identity construction and further contribute to the theoretical basis of the study.
CHAPTER 3

THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON IDENTITY AND THE CONSEQUENT CONSTRUCTION OF AN ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

What does being an academic in a comprehensive university mean? On a personal level, becoming an academic at a comprehensive university has a great effect on how academics define themselves. They begin to ask themselves questions like, ‘What kind of an academic am I?’ The demands and responsibilities of teaching in both vocational and academic streams become more intense. The complexity of this duality is intensified by the inevitability of having to balance teaching, research and community engagements. Academics thus have to adjust and accommodate these different aspects of their academic life that shape the development of their personal social identities.

Before one embarks on an attempt to explain the interactions that take place and the relationships that are formed in any social setting, one needs to understand thoroughly the processes through which individuals and groups interact. It is thus important to investigate the meaning of identity, the role of identification in identity, the evolution of identity, how it manifests itself at different levels and its dynamism in relation to change.

The discussion in this chapter thus builds on and expands some of the threads of thought developed in contemporary studies on identity, identification, identity construction, social identity, identity and change, and organisational identity. An attempt is made here to explore the meanings that people give to themselves when they differentiate from, identify with, or associate themselves with, others.
The aim here is to conceptually explicate some of the major factors that impact on *identity construction* amidst change, as well as the conditions necessary for the construction of an identity.

In an attempt to understand how people interact and how they identify with their organisation, I will explore the social identity theory and the Self-Categorisation theory. I believe that these theories provide an intellectual foundation and *conceptual framework* for understanding inter-group relationships and group identification.

### 3.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION: ‘IDENTITY’

*Identity* has varying meanings, and is defined differently by the various theories that attempt to explain it (Reay, 2003:51; De Levita, 1965:3). The term stems from the Latin word *identitas*, which is derived from the word, *idem*, which means the *same* (Petersoo, 2007:117; Jenkins, 2004:4; Van Tonder and Lessing, 2003:20; Fowler and Fowler, 1990:585). According to Siebers (2004:76), the concept of identity has solid scientific foundations that have developed from several theoretical debates. It refers to “something in the individual which causes him to remain the same, to his sameness and continuity” (De Levita, 1965: 129).

One’s identity assists one in looking for answers to frequently asked questions like, “Who am I?” “Who do I want to be?” “Who could I be?” “What is the significance of my life”? and, “What is my place within society?” Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:29) therefore suggest that identity can be viewed as proposing the different meanings that people associate with themselves. Shi and Babrow (2007:316) argue that the manner in which we live is shaped by our sense of who we are. They accordingly cite Bee and Boyd (2002) who claim that throughout our lives we engage in establishing our own individual identities.
Castells (2004:6) simply defines identity as, “people’s source of meaning and experience”. Wenger (1998:145) argues that our identity involves our ability and inability to shape these meanings. Intriguingly, Bauman (2004:19) argues that it will only make sense for one to ask, “Who am I?” when one believes that one can actually be someone other than who one is, and then only if one has a choice, and if that choice depends on oneself to realise it. This thus implies that the NMMU could construct an organisational identity if they believed that they needed an identity as a new comprehensive university. Furthermore, the creation of the organisational identity depends on the members of the NMMU as an organisation for it to be established.

Identity has always been explored at an individual level, and with the passage of time by its investigation, has been extended to include its activities at a group level (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006:30). According to Kant (1913), identity is not only an individual activity, where the person defines herself, but it is also a mutual transaction, where the person is also defined by others (De Levita, 1965:19).

This idea was later extended by Erik Erikson (1964), who argued that identity is something that one presents to others and that others present to oneself. The term can have meaning only as long as one resides amongst others. The others want to know where they are with one; they want to identify one; and one wants them to be able to identify the self that one is. The individual presents the cues to them, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes involuntarily, sometimes deliberately or quite emphatically. One then assumes a ‘pose’ (De Levita, 1965:6).

The word identity involves both similarity and difference, which means that it is concerned with classification and association (Jenkins, 2004:4). Schöpflin (2001:1, 3) similarly refers to these aspects as inclusion and exclusion. People identify themselves in order to associate/include themselves (attracted by
similarities) to a group, or *dissociate/exclude* themselves (repelled by differences) from a group.

According to Tierney (1991:37), people differentiate themselves from others by defining the category within which they exist. Moreover, Reay (2003:52) argues that identity always, “invokes practices of inclusion and exclusion” and she purports that we often make sense of ‘who we are’, because of the awareness of ‘who we are not’. Throughout the process of identity construction individuals attempt to make meaning of who they are and what others are to them.

The classifications and associations that take place do so through the interaction process within what Jenkins (2004:17) terms, the “human world”. Jenkins (2004:17) identifies the following three orders through which people can understand how the human world can be constructed and experienced: In the first instance, there is the *individual* order. This order is about the interaction that happens in the head of the individual. Secondly, the *interaction* order, involves the interaction that takes place in the form of relationships between individuals. Thirdly, the *institutional* order is the state where the way of doing things is established, and subsequently patterns and organisations are formed.

Stout (2001:2) cites Breckler and Greenwald (1986), who expand on this idea. They state that theories of identity concentrate on manners in which “individuals seek to define themselves through their perceptions of self, their relationships with others and with the larger collective”.

Jenkins (2004:18) suggests that these orders take place simultaneously and share the same space. This means that the individual can experience all these orders at the same time and in the same context. It is thus important to note that these orders may not always take a step-by-step occurrence, but rather illustrate an integrated process of identity construction. Concurring with the above view, Bauman (2004:33) cautions that, “No single-factor model is likely ever to account
for the complexity of the ‘lived world’ and embrace the totality of human experience”.

For the purpose of this study *identity* implies the ability of the individual to be aware of the different meanings that she\(^4\) associates with herself and the meanings that others assign to her. This happens through interactions with others.

The terms *social identity* and *organisational identity* will be explained later in this chapter.

### 3.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL IDENTITY

This study is grounded on the *social identity* perspective. The social identity perspective is based on the assumption of the interrelationship between people and society (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:14). The social identity perspective is approached from the perspectives of the Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) and the Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), developed by Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, (1987) (Rocass, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy and Eidelson, 2008:281; Van Dick *et al.*, 2005:190; Huddy, 2001:132).

The social identity perspective claims that relations between groups should be understood through social psychological analysis (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:259). The social identity perspective has been used widely to explain and understand relations between groups in real social situations (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:260). This perspective is based on the idea that human social action should be understood in its *social context* (Reicher, 2004:921). The social identity perspective assumes that all knowledge (including knowledge about the physical world) is socially derived through social *comparisons* (Hogg and

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\(^4\) The feminine gender is used to refer to both genders
Abramss, 1988:22). Identification is thus a process of ‘depersonalisation’, where people do not view themselves as distinct personalities (Roccas et al., 2008:282).

It is grounded upon the assumption that society is made up of social categories that stand in power and status relations to each other (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:14). Individuals are born into a particular society, and thus social categories, and can belong to several social categories simultaneously (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:14). These social categories divide people according to race, gender, social class, occupation, and so forth. These social categories are then translated into human groups, thus creating a psychological reality from the social reality.

Society is viewed as having a distinctive social structure. This structure is perceived as being in constant change due to forces of history and economics (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:17). People can define themselves as members of these social categories and assign attributes that are typical of these categories to the self (Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, Monden, and De Lima, 2002:234). This sheds some light on how an organisational identity is constructed among a group of people in the face of change in the organisation.

3.3.1 The Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Initially, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed to explain intergroup attitudes and set group-relevant behaviours in relation to the individual’s self-definition (Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, Christ and Tissington, 2005:191). SIT attempts to make sense of intergroup relations in their context and provides a comprehensive theory of intergroup relations and social change in socially stratified societies (Turner and Reynolds in Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:260; Van Dick et al., 2005:190).
Tajfel’s (1974) basic psychological idea of SIT was the notion that social comparisons between groups should focus on the establishment of positive in-group distinctiveness. The focus there was then on how the person “acts in terms of self” versus how the person “acts in terms of the group” (Turner and Reynolds, in Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:261). The in-group is a “set of individuals who share collective features or social experience” (Brewer, 2001:117).

One can view the SIT as providing a new way of approaching intergroup relations. The main predictions of SIT can be summarised in three assumptions, namely:

- People strive for the establishment or enhancement of positive self-esteem.
- A part of the person’s self concept, or her social identity, is based on the person’s group membership.
- To maintain a positive social identity, the person strives for positive differentiation between her in-group and other relevant out-groups (Van Dick, et al., 2005:191).

3.3.2 The Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT)

The Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) on the other hand, tries to explain how people become a group. This theory also aims to explain the psychological basis of group processes (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:261). In other words, it is a psychological process by which individuals as a group are viewed as one entity (Oldmeadow, Platow and Foddy, 2005:270).

Self-categorisation specifies the processes within groups, especially contextual influences on identification (Van Dick et al., 2005:191). This theory assumes that as one moves from defining oneself as an individual person to identifying oneself
in terms of social identity, group behaviour emerges and becomes possible (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:261, Van Dick et al., 2005:191).

In SCT, the self is not purely personal, because we view ourselves as “we” and “us”, as opposed to “I” and “me”. It is thus a shared cognitive representation of a collective body (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:261). SCT provides a new way of thinking about social groups. SCT should not be viewed as a replacement of SIT, but as being complementary to it (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:261).

3.3.3 The relevance of the theories to the study

Both SIT and SCT assume that to explain and predict behaviour we need to understand how people perceive, define and make sense of the world and themselves (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:262). This study will thus be conducted in terms of the social identity perspectives provided by both SIT and SCT. This is because a combination of these theories can provide a prolific theoretical foundation for the conceptualisation of organisational identity (Van Dick, et al., 2005:189) and the explanation of academics’ sense-making and definitions of themselves in a changed organisation.

Academics are constantly engaged in cognitively giving meaning and defining who they are. As such, they are making sense of their world and themselves. According to SCT, this happens through a process of becoming a unity as a new group. Furthermore, according to SIT, in order to construct and establish an organisational identity, positive in-group distinctiveness, where groups share an ideology and act collectively in terms of their shared group membership, is necessary.

The need for a positive social identity is not driven by some fixed “inner” motive, but surfaces from the interaction of social identities, social comparisons, and
social values in specific intergroup relationships (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004:266).

3.4 SOCIAL IDENTITY

According to Jenkins (2004:4), by definition, all human identities are essentially social identities. We invariably belong to a diversity of social groups that are to some degree more prominent to us in different contexts (Reicher, 2004:929). Through her social identity, the individual is defined in social terms.

According to Tajfel (1978), social identity is the knowledge one has that one belongs to a certain group with some emotional attachment (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy and Eidelson, 2008:282; Heere and James, 2007:324; Brewer, 2001:117; Boen, Vanbeselaere and Cool, 2006:548; Niemann, Romero, Arredondo and Rodriguez, 1999:48; Stets and Burke, 1998:2; Hogg and Abramss, 1988:7). This means that the individual can become one with a certain group, be like the others and view the world from the group’s perspective (Stets and Burke, 1998:3). Citing Brewer (1991), Pedersen and Dobbin (2006:902) describe social identity as a “reconciliation of conflicting needs for assimilation and differentiation”.

Hogg and Abramss (1988: 7-17) provide a clear explanation of the assumptions that underpin social identity. They assert that members of a group possess characteristics that they share with others, thus helping them to perceive themselves as members of a group (Niemann, et al., 1999:48). Social identity is grounded upon the assumption that society is made up of social categories that stand in power relations to one another (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:14). They claim that in society certain categories have more power and status than others. Social categories refer to the categorisation of people according to certain specific features (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:14). They argue that social categories always exist in distinction from one another.
The former paragraph indicates a process of social comparison through which individuals who are similar, categorise and label themselves as the in-group, while categorising the ones who are different from them as the out-group (Stets and Burke, 1998:3). This means that “there is positive bias towards the in-group and negative bias towards the out-group …” (Willem, Scarbrough and Buelens, 2008:373).

Cited in Pedersen and Dobbin (2006:902), Rovik (1998) observes that comparison lies central to the development of an identity, because one compares oneself with others and is also compared by others. Rovik (in Pedersen and Dobbin, 2006:902) therefore concludes that, continually, identity is defined in relation to someone or something else.

Social identity is thus so deeply personal and yet so irreducibly cultural. The above statement sustains the claim that social identity provides a hinge between the individual and the social context (Reicher, 2004:929). When one behaves in terms of a certain social identity, one is guided by the norms, values and beliefs that define the relevant identity (Reicher, 2004:929).

Brewer (2001:117-119) distinguishes between four different sub-categories in order to clarify the meaning of social identity. In order to further Brewer’s clarification, I will also draw on other authors who have made contributions in terms of some of these distinct aspects.

3.4.1 Person-based social identities

*Person-based* social identities imply that, being a member of social groups or categories and sharing experiences with others, influences certain aspects of the individual. The self-concept is acquired through processes of identification, socialisation and internalisation. What is important here is what the identity
contains, like customs, beliefs, ideologies, expectations, and so forth (Brewer, 2001:117).

### 3.4.2 Relational social identities

*Relational* social identities are concerned with role identities. They define the self in relation to others and are interdependent. They arise from interpersonal relationships, which incorporate occupational, familial and close personal relationships. The societal norms and expectations that are associated with the roles or social positions have an influence on the self. This influence is reflected in relational identities (Brewer, 2001:118).

### 3.4.3 Group-based social identities

A group comes into being when a number of people perceive themselves to be members of the same social category (Van Dick *et al.*, 2005:191). Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:30) posit that people are naturally inclined to belong to a group, due to the need they possess to understand themselves as being part of something. When an individual connects to a group identity, the explanation of self is stretched beyond the individual person to a more inclusive social unit (Brewer, 2001:118). Brewer (2001:118) thus argues that *group-based* identities refer to the awareness of self as a connected part of a larger group or social unit.

Brewer (2001:119) further maintains that the boundaries between the self and other group members are overshadowed by the greater ‘salience’ of the boundaries between the in-groups and out-groups. The qualities and the conduct of the individual self are assimilated to the representation of the group as a whole, enhancing those features that make the group distinctive from other social categories and at the same time enhancing uniformity and cohesion within the group (Brewer, 2001:119).
In other words, as Lipponen and Leskinen (2006:673) contend, people make an effort to distinguish their in-group from other groups, using aspects that promote comparison. The members of the group thus strive for ‘positive in-group distinctiveness’, through ‘inter-group differentiation’ (Lipponen and Leskinen, 2006:673).

3.4.4 Collective identities

Similar to group-based identities, a collective identity involves common representations of the group, based on shared interests and experiences. In addition, a collective identity also refers to an active process of shaping and building an image of what the group represents and how it wishes to be perceived by others (Brewer, 2001:119). In an attempt to illustrate the historical progress of collective identity, Cerulo (1997:386) pointed out that:


As is evident from the above quotation, the concept of collective identity has been deployed in various ways (Munday, 2006:91).

Hogg and Abramss (1988:15) also refer to Durkheim’s view, arguing that this philosopher presumed individuals to be affected by society and thus they mutually construct a “collective consciousness” that morally regulates behaviour. The concept of collective identity speaks to the “we-ness” of a group, putting emphasis on the similarities or shared characteristics around which group members relate (Cerulo, 1997:386). It includes “shared representations of the group, based on common interests and experiences” (Brewer, 2001:119).

[a] social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives ... are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals, and emphasise their connectedness to the members of these collectives.

A collective identity also facilitates mobilisation in the public sphere as a cohesive unit with agreed aims and interests (Munday, 2006:91). A collective identity represents an achievement of collective efforts and provides a critical link between social identity and collective action in the political arena (Brewer, 2001:119).

Posing a complementary argument, Cerulo (1997:393) states that identity politics generates “new social movements, collective initiatives that are self-reflexive and sharply focused on the expressive actions of collective members”. Through the collective identity, Roccas et al., (2008:282) contend that individuals become connected to others via their mutual attachment to the group. A collective identity moves a step further from group identity in the sense that it always involves collective initiatives and collective action to achieve collective efforts, whereas group identity does not necessarily have to involve action, but could only offer belonging and identification.

In terms of the NMMU, collective identity could be necessary to achieve an organisational identity through collective initiatives and collective efforts.

3.5 THE ROLE OF IDENTIFICATION IN IDENTITY

Stets and Burke (1998:2) claim that an identity is constructed through the process of self-categorisation or identification. They argue that, within the social identity theory, one would refer to ‘self-categorisation’, whereas, within the identity theory, one would refer to ‘identification’
In this regard, Hogg and Abramss (1988:7) argued that individuals psychologically identify themselves with a social group. In that process they evaluate themselves. With a corresponding view, Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:30) refer to identification as an act of members building “mental bridges” between themselves and their organisation. According to Pepper and Larson (2006:51), “identification refers to a feeling of attachment between the individual and the organisation”.

These authors assert that this attachment is illustrated by a link of values that the member attributes to the organisation. Members thus assume the rudimentary attributes of the organisation as defining attributes of themselves (Dutton et al., 1994, cited in Fuller, Marler, Hester, Frey, and Relyea, 2006:703; Kuhn and Nelson, 2002:6).

Furthermore, identification, according to Hogg, Sherman, Diersehuis, Maitner and Moffitt (2005:3), may be motivated by self-enhancement, optimal distinctiveness and uncertainty reduction. Thus, identification refers to the perception of oneness with, or “belongingness” to a social group (Fuller et al., 2006:703; Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006:30; Richter, West, Van Dick and Dawson 2006:1252).

In other words, identification occurs when one identifies oneself with other people with whom one shares mutual qualities (Ethier and Deaux, 1994:243). This identification, Kuhn and Nelson (2002:7) assert, can be psychological, because it can happen in the mind without any actual contact between group members in practice.

From the literature above, identification thus involves Self-Categorisation, in other words, “locating oneself in the social environment”. Identification also involves categorising others through “a cognitive separation and order of the social environment” (Fuller et al., 2006:703).
The categorisation of self and others furthermore creates a sense of in-group identification and belonging (Hogg et al., 2005:4). Hogg and Abramss (1988:107) argue that this kind of identification creates group behaviours such as stereotyping, conformity, inter-group competition, cohesion and discrimination.

Hogg et al., (2005:4) claim that group identification is underpinned by Self-Categorisation that explains how people ought to behave in groups. Roccas et al., (2008:283) suggest four modes of identification. These modes, according to those authors, are both connected and distinct at the same time. These modes of identification are:

- **Importance** – Viewing the group as a significant aspect of one’s self-identification.
- **Commitment** – The willingness to contribute towards the wellbeing of the group.
- **Superiority** – Viewing the in-group as exceptional and more valuable than other groups.
- **Deference** – Obeying all the regulations and rules of the group despite their sensibleness. Being prepared to submit to the headship of the leader and reject any criticism directed towards the group.

According to Pepper and Larson (2006:53), the concept of ‘identification’ has received attention from a relatively fair amount of scholars. They argue, however, that on the contrary, “disidentification” has been neglected and under-investigated. They maintain that disidentification is as important as identification, because it assists individuals in explaining who they are in terms of who they are not. Complementary to the definition of DiSanza and Bullis (1999), they define disidentification as being “associated with feelings of disconnection, separateness, and exclusion from the organisation” (Pepper and Larson, 2006:53). Humphreys and Brown (2002:425) assert that disidentification is the perception by the individual that there is a negative connection between the “self-
narrative” and the dominant “organisational narrative”. Individuals who misidentify themselves often do not want to associate themselves with the values and procedures of an organisation (Pepper and Larson, 2006:53).

3.6 IDENTITY AND CHANGE

For the past few years, society has experienced rapid change in different shapes and forms in all its spheres (Lipponen and Leskinen, 2006:671; Reay, 2003:51). Several theories have attempted to explain what kind of impact change has on identity (Reay, 2003:51). The question of how identity should be understood in relation to changing social formations has triggered much dialogue within contemporary sociology (Munday, 2006:91).

Van Tonder and Lessing (2003:20) highlight how this change has had an impact on the lifespan of the organisation. Citing Offerman and Gowing (1990), they argue that events that involve change like mergers, acquisitions and corporate restructurings, have had an immense impact on the members of the organisation, their stakeholders and on society in general. Van Tonder and Lessing (2003:20) assert that the reason for this is the neglect in affording sufficient attention to identity as an essential aspect in organisations, especially during change.

Jenkins (2004:2) believes that because identity is more than just a routine, change “… can shake the foundations of our lives”. When contextual change occurs, there is a likelihood that it will have some bearing on identity, according to Ethier and Deaux (1994:244). For that reason, Luhrmann and Eberl (2007:117) argue that when such conditions of change prevail, a need to renegotiate identity nearly always arises.

For the same reason, a merger, as a change phenomenon, is assumed to constitute a change of identity in one way or the other (Van Knippenberg et al., 2002: 235). Van Knippenberg et al., (2002:235) contend that members of the
organisation sometimes experience this form of transition as a move to another organisation; and such a move is nearly always accompanied by doubts as to whether it is a continuation or a discontinuation of the old organisation.

In this regard, Brown and Humphreys (2003:125) posit that the boundaries of pre-merger groups are more salient at the beginning, where members still define themselves according to their pre-existing social categories. They therefore argue that stereotypes and inter-group biases become evident in these kinds of circumstances. Blake and Mouton (1979), cited by Brown and Humphreys (2003:125), argue that if the above scenario persists, the perceived differences might be augmented and the cohesion of the pre-merger groups strengthened. The pertinent question to ask then is how such change impacts on the identity of the new or changed organisation.

3.7 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Castells (2004:7) claims that people use various construction apparatus from their past, such as their belief systems, their location in space and time, their genetic composition and their organisations, to “construct” their identity. When constructing an identity, one negotiates the meanings of one’s experience as a member of a social community (Luhmann and Eberl, 2007:117, Wenger, 1998:145). Citing Jenkins (1997), Henkel (2005:157) holds that the construction of an identity is viewed as a continuous and reflexive process, a combination of the internal (self-definition) and external (definitions of oneself provided by others) or an “internal and external dialectic” of identification.

Santora (2003:2) argues that identity formation is an ongoing process of negotiating and resolving conflicts between previously incorporated and new experiences. In concert with this idea, Wenger (1998:154) contends that as people participate and interact within and across their communities, their identities develop trajectories. Through the concept of trajectory he argues that
identity essentially relates to time, is continuous, multifarious and is defined in terms of the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories (Wenger, 1998:154). Congruent to this idea, Luhrmann and Eberl (2007:117) contend that identity is not something that can be found, but needs to be constructed.

Henkel (2005:157) cites Mead (1934), who argued many years ago that, when the individual incorporates the attitudes and values of the community, the self is developed most fully. Schöpflin (2001:1-2) also believes that identities are rooted around a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour. He argues that in a system of identity construction, there has to be a hierarchy of norms, as well as lateral and reciprocal relations that require people to be “judgemental”. They need to have a set of criteria that can help them to either condemn, or approve behaviour or judgments (Schöpflin, 2001:1-2).

Zerubavel (1995:1) sees identity construction as a cognitive process of “mental chunking”, where identities are clustered and differentiated. In the process, boundaries are created around and between clusters. This author claims that this process plays a significant role in “mental rigidity”. To Zerubavel (1995:1), constructing an identity is thus a creative process, where these mental clusters are creatively “sculpted”, rather than just being identified.

Heslep (1998:2) asserts that any identity that applies to a human being consists of a set of properties or characteristics that is affirmed, truly or falsely, about the individual. Similarly, Jenkins (2003:19) maintains that it is important for an identity to be validated or confirmed by those with whom one interacts. Citing Schlenker (1986), Luhrmann and Eberl (2007:117) assert that identity can only be realised through actual or imagined agreed-upon validation.

One can see how Kant’s (1913) idea of mutual transaction in identity construction comes through from the above argument (De Levita, 1965:19). To enable the
mutual transaction, academics in this newly merged institution need to negotiate a set of properties, assumptions or values that can either act as confirmation, affirmation, validation, approval or even condemnation of their fellow colleagues.

During the identity construction process, people act and interact. They recognise themselves as social actors, as well as being recognised by others as a particular type of a person (Munday, 2006:91, Gee, 2001:99). When examining the organisation as a place to which individuals have to attribute their meaning, Brown and Humphreys (2006:232) allege that, as these local actors label and describe their organisation, they are also constructing it.

Organisations operate in a world where image and reputation are essential (Gioia, 1998:22). In times of change and restructuring, Gioia (1998:22) suggests that organisations strike a balance between “stability and fluidity”. At the same time they manage the appearance of stability and order so that change can be managed, while retaining essential qualities of the core identity. He suggests what he calls the “rapid reconstruction of identity”, in order for the organisation to maintain a “light-on-its-feet flexibility” that will enable the organisation to cope with the change that is taking place (Gioia, 1998:22).

During the construction of identity the social actors are in a process of negotiation. This negotiation assists in resolving what symbolically this identity contains. The meaning that people associate with the identity or disassociate themselves from it, makes it what it is (Castells, 2004:7). Luhrmann and Eberl (2007:118) identify four distinct phases of the identity construction process:

- **The validation phase** – In this phase people engage in an interpersonal contract, through which they negotiate and overtly express their expectations, claim, test and revise identities.

- **The stabilisation phase** – Over time, identities constructed will gradually become accepted. Collaborations and interactions will run smoothly as the identities become settled and individuals are relying on them.
• **The crisis phase** – This phase emerges when change occurs. The interpersonal contract that was drawn up and agreed upon may lose its viability and individuals may need to renegotiate their identity.

• **The perception phase** – If there is a perception of an identity conflict, the crisis phase will be a starting point for the construction of a new identity.

Identity is thus a human endeavour that requires the individual or group to take action and be a social actor. The above literature suggests that identity construction is a process that involves people efforts. NMMU academics should therefore become constructors of their own organisational identity.

### 3.8 BASIC FORMS OF IDENTITY

Identity is a complex phenomenon that can take on many forms. Traditionally, identity roles have been employed by sociologists to define these forms. Castellss (2004:6) however argues that there must be a distinction between identity and these roles. He claims that identity has to do with meaning, while the roles have to do with function. Below is an explanation of these roles, expansions and dimensions by Gee (2001) and Castellss (2004).

#### 3.8.1 Ascribed identity

An ascribed identity stems from the representatives of ‘ascribed’ roles, namely age, gender, race, nationality, membership of social categories and collectives. De Levita (1965:183) warns that there is little defence possible against this kind of identity; in other words, one cannot choose an ascribed identity. Gee (2001:101) calls this form of identity the *nature perspective* over which the person has no control. He provides an example of being an identical twin and explains that this is a state that one finds oneself in, and has done or accomplished nothing to acquire this state (Gee, 2001:101).
3.8.2 Achieved identity

An achieved identity is made up of representatives of ‘achieved’ roles, such as a profession, an office, a title, or membership of groups that one can choose, or to which one obtains entry on the basis of achievements (De Levita, 1965:183). To be an academic is an achievement, because one needs to have obtained certain qualifications, skills and qualities that one can work towards and achieve. One could also become a top researcher or emerging researcher based on achievements. These kinds of identities are therefore achieved.

3.8.3 Adopted identity

De Levita (1965:184) argues that the representatives of ‘adopted’ identities emerge through role translations, and lead to role agreements. Sometimes these roles complement each other, for example, supervisor and student, manager and subordinates, helper and the one helped. Gee (2001:102) regards this kind of identity as the institutional perspective, where the institution authorises the position.

He refers to himself as an example: his identity as a professor is as a result of a position conferred upon him by the university. He subsequently plays a certain role within the university and has to fulfil the duties of his position.

Given Gee’s views, we can thus argue that one can also ‘achieve’ an adopted role, if one goes through training or performs certain responsibilities that are regarded as requirements for that position. A good example here would be an academic who promotes postgraduate students, or a Head of Department.

In terms of the mergers that have taken place in South Africa, I would like to place the merged institutions under the above ‘kind of institution’, because the Department of Education (DoE), as an institution, has determined the type and
position of the higher education institutions. As such, the DoE has authorised the type of university the NMMU should be. The DoE thus holds the rights and responsibilities that accompany this particular institutional type.

In addition to the institutional perspective, Gee (2001:103) adds two more types of identity, namely the discursive perspective and the affinity perspective.

3.8.4 The discursive perspective

The discursive perspective on identity puts the emphasis on the individual trait that highlights individuality. Gee (2001:103) gives an example of a 'charismatic' friend and claims that being charismatic is part of that person’s being and is determined by his discourse and dialogue with other people. In other words, one needs rational individuals who talk about and interact with one as a charismatic person (Gee, 2001:103).

3.8.5 The affinity perspective

The affinity perspective involves the existence of an affinity group, comprising “… people spread out over a large space [and] … who share little besides their interest” (Gee, 2001:105). He uses ‘Star Trek fans’ as an example. He explains that these fans would share the same experiences by, for example, attending shows, meeting actors from Star Trek, chatting on the internet, collecting memorabilia, and dressing like a character in Star Trek. The members of such an affinity group must, according to Gee (2001:105), share “allegiance to, access to, participation in specific practices” that provide each of the members of the group with the required experiences.

In terms of the different forms and types of identity, Castellss (2004:8) highlights that in the identity construction process power relations play a big role. He thus
proposes a distinction between three forms and origins of identity construction (Castelss, 2004:8):

- **Legitimising identity** – This kind of identity is introduced by institutions to broaden and rationalise their domination over the social actors.

- **Resistance identity** – This kind of identity is constructed by those individuals who are undervalued or disgraced by the dominant groups, thus building channels of resistance and survival based on an ideology opposed to that which pervades the institutions of society.

- **Project identity** – This kind of identity is constructed when social actors build a new identity that redefines their position in society. They do this by using any cultural material that is at their disposal. They thereby transform the whole social structure.

The argument made by Castelss (2004) above should be taken into consideration when one interprets and tries to make sense of human experience and interaction, especially when dealing with merged institutions. This outlook is also valuable in terms of understanding employee/employer relations.

### 3.9 MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

Hogg and Abrams (1988:14) maintain that individuals simultaneously belong to different social categories. However, they hold that it is unlikely that individuals would belong to mutually exclusive categories, like being a Muslim and a Christian.

According to Irrmannn (2002:7), sociologists reveal that there is a multiplicity of identities coexisting in organisations. These identities are multidimensional and dynamic. He claims that identities can shift, and because of this capability, they are prone to manipulation (Irrmann, 2002:12). Gioia (1998:22) claims that these multiple identities can manifest themselves in terms of core values, practices, and most visibly through products and services.
One such type of identity that exists in Higher Education is that of the academic, which will now be discussed.

3.9.1 Academic identity

Higher Education is made up of several communities of practice of which academics are members (Baumann, 2005:100; Trowler and Knight, 2004, cited by James, 2005:3). In the past two decades, the landscape of higher education has been plagued by political, economic and demographic changes. These changes have placed the academic identity in danger of being changed to something different than is normally understood (Henkel, 2005:159). This change has been brought about by what Whitchurch (2008:2) considers “an erosion of academic autonomy”, because academics have to respond to “competitive markets” and government requests.

Based on the evidence of these reasons over the last ten years, James (2005:2) contends that the identity of academics has been under threat. There has been immense pressure on academic communities to cope with new policy structures in higher education, as well as changed environments such as mergers (Henkel, 2005:159). Academics have thus been through considerable stress to construct an identity that could connect with the wider institutional and public interests (Nixon, Beattie, Challis and Walker, 1998:3).

Subsequently, in an attempt to define the academic identity, Nixon et al., (1998:5-6) provided proposals for academics to define their professional responsibilities. These involve:

- **Redefining what counts as research**, which means that research should be viewed as central to academic life.
• **Putting the teaching relationship first**, which means that teaching relationships would develop and these relationships should, significantly, shape the professional identity of the academic.

• **Developing the professional selves**, which would mean that professional development needs to be re-integrated into the picture, through designated staff and academic development units.

• **Turning collegiality inside out**, which means that the boundaries of academic collegiality need to be redrawn. Transparency and openness need to be ensured when dealing with one another.

Clegg (2007:9) argues that it is imperative to understand the concept of the academic identity, because it assists in explaining both the resilience of certain beliefs and the manner in which academics conduct themselves. She further contends that the academic identity indicates a ‘connectedness’ between research, teaching and community engagement. These duties form the basis of academic responsibility.

In order to achieve this, Nixon *et al.*, (1998:9) emphasise that a new kind of community is required where teaching, research and community service are interconnected. Of particular significance for the comprehensive university is what Nixon *et al.*, (1998:10) highlight in regard to the role of the academic in technologically oriented universities. They argue that the role of the academic in these universities is no less different from that of an academic in a traditional university, but the problems are different, due to increasing diversity in the student intake.

They argue that in these kinds of universities teaching comes third. The first position is taken by research and then followed by “a new breed of educational manager, who co-ordinates, plans, budgets, staffs, reviews, etc.” The question then to ask is how, under these circumstances, should academics understand their role and how should it be fulfilled.
In this regard, Henkel (2005:158) contends that individual academic identities are built on the disciplines of academics. She argues that disciplines are concrete and have distinct boundaries. As such, they can shape academic identities. She maintains that these interconnected communities have allowed academics to view themselves as belonging to a unique and enclosed group. Moreover, Li and Seale (2008:990) reveal that each discipline has its own organisational culture with regard to the production of knowledge, the construction of world views and the socialisation of newcomers.

In addition, James (2005:6) observes that some academics affiliate to professional bodies, and thus maintain professional allegiances. She asserts that the allegiance provides them with credibility and a sense of ownership of the profession’s body of knowledge. James (2005:6) therefore concludes that academics attach more value to their professional identity, as opposed to their organisational identity.

Meanwhile, Clegg (2007:9-11) argues that an academic identity is more than just a “function of the ‘job’”. It should involve the willingness to engage outside the university in ways that are not merely limited to restricted sectional interests. Policy makers and managers therefore should cease regarding academics as producers only of economic goods and private gain (Clegg, 2007:11).

Henkel (2005:163) consequently contends that the need for the maximisation of income has driven universities to re-evaluate and multiply their functions and relationships, thus becoming multi-professional organisations. The identities and roles of academics are therefore constantly under revision (Whitchurch, 2008:2).
3.10 ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY

Within an organisational context, identity is the ability of individuals to define who they are, by the way they experience themselves within an organisation, as well as how others perceive them (Hatch and Schultz, 2002:1000). It therefore shapes the meaning of their experiences as members of the organisation. Identity is considered to be constructed through social interaction and in this process the person will associate with or dissociate from others by conforming or diverging from certain values (Jenkins, 2004:4).

Brown and Humphries (2006: 232) describe organisations as socially constructed locales through acts of language. By this they mean that organisations are created by people through their interaction with one another by means of language. De Boer et al., (2007:33) agree with the above statement and, taking it further, assert that what the organisation is or would like to be should be grasped as a socially constructed concept.

David Whetten and Stuart Albert from the United States of America were the first to enunciate the concept of ‘organisational identity’ (Whetten, 1998: vii). They used the term out of necessity after they had observed the reaction of Faculty members, after a two percent cut in their university budget by the state legislature in 1985. The university was forced to question itself on issues such as whether its members thought of it as a university at all.

It was at this time that Whetten and Albert realised that issues about identity were also about survival (Whetten, 1998: vii). They suggested that organisational identity represents the features of the organisation that its members see to be pertinent, characteristic and continuing, when the past, present and future are taken into consideration (Puusa, 2006: 24).

Puusa (2006: 30) concluded therefore that the identity of an organisation defines a “shared and collective sense of who we are as an organisation”. In a study
conducted by Brown and Humphreys (2006:232), it was observed that salient questions on organisational identity were questions such as, “What is important about this organisation?” as well as, “What is the future for us?” Boen, Vanbeselaere and Cool (2006:547) argue that one reason why some mergers fail, is the resistance of employees to identify with the new organisation.

In terms of succeeding in managing the merger process, Empson (2004), cited by Puusa (2006: 30), argued that organisational identity needs to be perceived on two levels. At the individual level, organisational identity embodies the unique features that individuals relate to with their membership of a specific organisation. On the other hand, at the organisational level, identity is composed by the combination of the unique features of individual members.

Hatch and Schultz (2000), cited in Puusa (2006:30), provide another perspective on organisational identity. These authors consider it as the object of commitment and a sense of belonging. Organisational identity is regarded as granting a cognitive and emotional basis on which members of the organisation can build meaningful relationships with their organisation. Painter-Morland (2002:115) however, cautions that when organisational identity and a shared culture are being pursued, the intention should not be to reach a “permanent state of affairs”. She argued that the organisation should rather permit contestations, be responsive and ever changing, so as to be able to deal with the diversities and contextual challenges within the organisation.

In concert with this idea, Jenkins (2004:5) asserted that a person’s identity is never a final matter, but always singular and plural. Brown and Humphreys (2006:233) accordingly regard organisational identity as “… extremely fluid, discursive constructions constantly being made and re-made …” Hatch and Schultz (2002:1004) also discuss the dynamic nature of organisational identity and contend that the “processes of identity do not end but keep moving in a
dance between various constructions of the organisational self … and the uses to which they are put”.

When he compares organisational identity to individual identity, Gioia (1998:22) also argues that organisational identity is more fluid, because it can change at a much more rapid pace than individuals can reinvent themselves. He claims that organisations however can cope with the change in the sense that they have the capacity to alter aspects of identity more easily than individuals do.

From the literature studied, it became apparent that the majority of studies that have been conducted on organisational identity, mainly focused on the role of managers, who are very often expected to do something about the identities of the members of their organisation. This study, however, requires academics to give meaning to their own understanding of their newly acquired status as academics at a comprehensive university. They need to define who they are and what meaning they have in that organisation.

Academics are therefore requested to be agents and not wait for managers to provide them with an identity. This means that academics will inform the strategy that is to be used by managers in their endeavours to create resources and strategic actions in establishing an organisational identity.

Some studies that do refer to organisational identity often mention what Puusa (2006: 25) refers to as the “outer” level of organisational identity. This level is concerned with external and visual signs of identity, like logos, symbols, the name, or the brand. Puusa (2006: 25) claims that this kind of identity can be managed to some extent and even “outsourced”.

In contrast, the “inner” level of organisational identity is concerned with issues of management, human resource management, performance management and strategy (Puusa, 2006: 26). Organisational identity is thus viewed as a
development process that takes place within an organisation. In order to understand the “inner” level, Puusa (2006:26) highlights this level’s central, essential concepts. These are meaning, understanding, identification and the interpretation of human beings and their behaviour.

In a similar vein, Painter-Morland (2002:120) unequivocally points out that there should be a dialogue around the issue of organisational identity. She emphasises that this should never be a “top-down” exercise, where certain decisions are made at top level and are just announced to the membership, without consultation, discussion and questioning. She proposes that members be given a platform where they could voice their concerns, questions and opinions. She however claims that:

The hierarchical nature of tertiary structures, the ridiculous title-consciousness of students and colleagues, and the old-boys-club mentality still prevalent within many university cultures rule out such possibilities (Painter-Morland, 2002:120).

Such a context complicates the task of academics in constructing an organisational identity. The need for understanding and a sense of openness that requires a completely different kind of organisational culture is thus evident.

According to Tierney (1991:37), the wellbeing of an organisation is endangered when its identity is lost. This means that, for an organisation to be in a good state of affairs, it needs to establish its own identity, thereby knowing where it has been, what it means and where it is going. Tierney (1991:37), however, cautions that the purpose of the identity of an organisation should not only be about “branding”, in other words, the image it portrays to the public. It should rather be how the individual human beings in the organisation associate themselves with the aims and objectives, the mission and the vision of the organisation.
Discussing the dangers of branding in higher education, Stensaker (2005:7) warns that branding could be a “risky business”, as it could turn students into customers or clients, who can be demanding and unstable. He claims that this could result in the institution unintentionally changing its values and norms. Referring to the identity of a South African university, the former Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal (DoE, 2003:4) clearly stated that identity “cannot merely be a matter of branding”.

In a study on the transformation of the Dutch universities, De Boer et al., (2007:33) adopted Brunsson and Sahlin–Anderson’s (2000) idea of reconstructing organisations. Brunsson and Sahlin-Anderson suggested that among other things, in order to reconstruct an organisation, its organisational identity needs to be reconstructed. By organisational identity they mean a socially constructed concept of what members envisage their organisation is and would like it to be (De Boer et al., 2007:33).

Brunsson and Sahlin-Anderson (2000) consequently propose the basic elements of such a construction process. These are:

- **Constructing boundaries** – This involves defining own activities, environments and organisational boundaries, also strengthening autonomy.
- **Controlling collective resources** – This involves taking ownership of financial and human resources.
- **Being special as an organisation** – This involves having special purposes and tasks, competence and representing special ideas, logos and brand names, in other words having your own profile.

These elements are also applicable to the South African context. In addition, when constructing boundaries, South African universities should also define target students and regions where programmes are to be offered. Creating an
organisational profile can also imply identifying academic thrusts and research niche areas.

At NMMU, as a result of the merger, many staff members have been moved from their comfort zones into an unfamiliar world. Some academics have to commute between campuses when lecturing. Others have been relocated to different NMMU campuses where they need to settle in among unfamiliar colleagues and students. Those aspects which previously assisted in giving meaning to their world or defining who they are, have changed. Jenkins (2004:3) contends that ‘who we are’ and ‘who other people see us to be’ is very important in helping us identify ourselves. As undesirable as the situation may seem, academics would thus have to identify themselves by firstly finding out who they are in this new environment, as well as what others see them to be.

The former UPE, PET and Vista University had their own institutional identities that they shared as members of their respective organisations. They also had their own perceptions about the other institutions with which they are now merged, thereby allocating an ‘imagined’ identity to each of the ‘other’ institutions. It is therefore important for staff members of the NMMU to redefine themselves as members of the new institution. They need to reconceptualise who they are and what it means to be employed at a comprehensive university. In other words, they need to be actively engaged in the construction of a new NMMU organisational identity.

In South Africa, very little research has been done on the organisational identity of post-merged institutions, especially comprehensive universities. It is evident that there is significant potential for the exploration of this phenomenon in higher education.

As Jansen (2003) asserted in the previous section on South African mergers, the literature in this area is more descriptive and exploratory. This fact thus places
this study in a unique position to provide the groundwork and foundation for any studies that might follow.

3.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have provided a definition of the identity concept. Identity was then explored with regard to how it is sustained under conditions of change. The construction of identity was examined in terms of the post-modern approach to identity as a social construct that is fluid, not fixed, with boundaries that are permeable. Identity has furthermore been defined according to different levels and categories, and also discussed in terms of its relation to the organisation and the academics as members of that organisation.

In order to further explain identity and its usage in the study, the social identity perspective (consisting of the SIT and the SCT) was explained as the theory that would form the theoretical foundation of this part of the study. What should be noted, however, is that this study does not assume that identity is stable or fixed. People are viewed as juggling their multiple identities. These identities overlap and are porous. Identity is therefore a slippery, ubiquitous concept.

The following chapter will discuss the research paradigms and design, the philosophical foundations that underpin this study and the methodological approaches.
CHAPTER 4

AN EXPLICATION OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS, THE SELECTED RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an exposition of how the study was planned and the assumptions that underpin the study. The research design will elucidate the actual steps taken in the execution of the study. An explanation of the methods and techniques employed in this study, in an attempt to answer the research questions, will also be presented.

4.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE

The research question that this study sets out to answer is as follows:

How are the meanings that academics assign to the notion of a comprehensive university instrumental in constructing an organisational identity at the NMMU?

With the change that has taken place in Higher Education, cultures and identities are revisited, reformulated and amended. In situations of change usually behaviours are unlearned and relearned and boundaries are dissolved and rebuilt. All of this requires the institution to reconsider its purpose. Against this background, the above research question was formulated. The objective of this study is thus to explore the meanings that academics assign to the concept “comprehensive” university and investigate how these meanings are instrumental in the construction of an organisational identity. In order to answer the above research question, I have explained how I view the world as a researcher. I also provided procedures that will help me to answer the research question more fully.
4.3 THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

According to Guba (1990:17,18), the word “paradigm” refers to a basic set of beliefs that guide action, and could be seen as the thread that runs through the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations. Put differently, “… behind each study lies assumptions the researcher makes about reality, how knowledge is obtained, and the methods of gaining knowledge” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:21).

Accordingly, a paradigm is a set of beliefs and practices that guide and influence researchers in terms of their choice of questions and methods (Morgan, 2007:49). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:21) argue that every kind of research needs to be based on some kind of worldview that will inform the study, and each researcher should be aware of the embedded worldviews that they bring to their studies.

Goodman (1992:119), however, asserts that not only one school of thought is able to reasonably address all theoretical issues and that one can actually use more than one paradigm. These are but lenses through which we see and interpret reality (Lincoln, in Tierney, 1991: 27). Guba and Lincoln (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:254), refer to the utilisation of multiple paradigms in one study as the “interbreeding” of paradigms.

Lincoln (Tierney, 1991:27) claims that the workability of this ‘interbreeding’ depends on how well the assumptions of the paradigms fit the phenomenon in the study. The challenge for the researcher, therefore, is to conceptualise and comprehend the paradigms in order to avoid what Kuhn (1996) refers to as the “incommensurability” of paradigms (Denscombe, 2008:273; Morgan, 2007:58).

However, the authors above refer to combining these assumptions mainly in a single qualitative approach, which does not pose methodology problems. In this
regard, Morgan (2007: 58) highlights a complex challenge, namely combining these assumptions in a mixed method approach, where both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed.

Green (2008:10) agrees, asserting that mixing philosophical assumptions is a sensitive issue that is particularly contested in a mixed method research approach. Within the mixed methods approach itself, there are diverging views on the manner in which the elements of quantitative and qualitative methodologies ought to be used (Denscombe, 2008:273).

In an attempt to resolve the issue of commensurability, Greene (2007) suggests a “mixed methods way of thinking”, which she claims is

... an orientation toward social inquiry that actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished; ... rests on assumptions that there are multiple legitimate approaches to social inquiry, and that any given approach to social inquiry is inevitably partial;... actively engages us with difference and diversity, of both a better understanding and a greater equity of voice (Greene, 2008:20).

There appears to be some leaning towards the idea that philosophical assumptions should not be seen as pure and rigid worldviews (Creswell and Tashakkori, 2007:306). For the reason that quantitative research has been generally synonymous with positivism, and qualitative research with interpretivism and constructivism, Wilkins and Woodgate (2008:25) argue that there has been some misunderstanding in terms of differentiating between methodology and methods, and between qualitative and quantitative approaches. They cite Giddings and Grant (2007), who describe the methodology as the “thinking tool” and the methods as the “doing tools” (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:11).
With the above understanding in mind, this study is grounded on the critical theory, the social constructivist theory and the interpretive theory. The complexity of the research problem necessitates a mixed philosophical approach. In other words, reality is to be viewed from different perspectives or worldviews, in order to understand the phenomenon under study. When one delves deeper into the above-mentioned assumptions, one gathers that there is some overlapping that occurs, especially between critical theory and constructivism.

4.3.1 The critical theory

For critical theory, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is essential. The dialectic interaction between the researcher and the participants encourages the empowerment of the participants and the researcher is viewed as a social activist (Ponterotto, 2002:399).

The research that one engages in thus intends to change the conditions that the participants find themselves in (the status quo), and as such the researcher is an activist, who sees the process of change through. This is believed to bring about “transformation and emancipation from oppressive conditions” (Ponterotto, 2002:399) (own use of italics).

The rationale behind the decision to ground the study in critical theory is because there is a need to improve the current conditions and culture of the newly merged comprehensive university. Due to the political history of South Africa and what can be called, ‘academic politics’, the three merged institutions were not equal before the merger.

The fact that the Port Elizabeth branch of Vista University, a former historically black university, was incorporated into UPE, a historically white university, brings to light issues of marginalisation and hegemony (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:23).
The critical theory argues that all facts are constructed socially, are determined and interpreted by humans, and are therefore subject to change through human means (Higgs and Smith, 2002: 80; Gibson, 1986: 4). This means that people are capable of constructing their own reality (in this case identity) through action and interaction.

The above argument could also go the other way, where an identity could be constructed for people by others, in order to serve the latter group’s own interests. This would happen if people accepted the status quo without critically questioning and examining it.

Furthermore, critical theory claims that societies are structured according to certain power relations, and it is therefore the intention of the critical theorist to reveal factors that prevent people from taking control of the decisions that affect their lives and expose those conditions that are oppressive (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2003: 437; Higgs and Smith 2002: 80; Tierney, 1991: 41).

Critical theorists assume that the world is full of social injustices and suffering, and it is characterised by great distress and unfairness (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2003: 437; Higgs and Smith 2002: 80; Tierney, 1991: 41). In addition, critical theorists are constantly analysing interests between groups and individuals in order to determine a “winner” and a “loser” in a given situation (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2003: 437). This is where hegemonic issues arise - the “winner” enjoys her culture and identity, while the “loser” is being assimilated.

Merging a university and a technikon, on the other hand, reveals a different kind of marginalisation and hegemony. This is where ‘academic politics’ comes to the fore through personal perspectives, structural and institutional inequalities. Perceptions of inferiority and superiority usually become apparent when academics from a technikon almost overnight become university academics, and,
conversely, university academics from a “traditional” academic university become academics in a comprehensive university.

When conducting a study of this nature, these issues should not be ignored or taken for granted, because in order to gain an understanding of the situation, one has to look at it in its totality (holistically), even if this is through its parts (Struwig and Stead, 2001:12).

The intention therefore is for these inequalities to be addressed and justice to prevail (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:23; Higgs and Smith, 2002: 80). In a diverse community, such as a university, people need to take ownership and be part of the construction of an identity that will in essence define who they are. Factors that hinder the process of identity construction are thus some of the core issues that this study attempts to investigate.

Critical theory attempts to promote critical consciousness and awareness and in the process breaks down institutional structures and arrangements that reproduce oppressive ideologies and the social inequalities that are produced, maintained and reproduced by those social structures and ideologies (Henning 2004:23; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2003: 439).

It is thus essential to see these merged institutions as equal partners in the merger and post-merger processes, so as to avoid the creation of oppressive structures and ideologies that promote some into masters, while demoting others into slaves. Such acts would result in the marginalisation of particular groups, through the preservation of the dominance of others (Lincoln, in Tierney, 1991:23).

Peca (2000:22) argues that the fundamental goal of critical theory is to emancipate society in its entirety and move from the real toward the ideal. Critical theorists claim that the dichotomy between the real and the ideal should
be exposed, so that action to change society is taken (Peca, 2000:11). Through the understanding of factors that enable or deter the process of institutional cohesion (that is assumed to have the potential of promoting an organisational identity), the movement from the real to the ideal should then become possible.

According to critical theorists, emancipation is believed to come through the exposure of oppressive societal conditions (Peca, 2000:28-29). The idea is thus to understand the oppressive aspects of society, so that they may be transformed by those who are oppressed (Tierney, 1991:41). The purpose of the organisation therefore is to act as a change agent that has a transformational possibility (Tierney, 1991: 42). People are thus encouraged to critique and question reality and not passively accept the present ideology and its conditions.

Hence, the idea is to investigate, not merely to expose oppressive conditions, but to determine what needs to be changed (Peca, 2000: 11). For the critical theorist, reality changes on an ongoing basis (Peca, 2000: 10). Critical theorists believe that people can construct and design their own worlds and that they can engineer their future through action and critical reflection (Henning, 2004:23).

This study intends to investigate how people use this ability to construct their own identity as a university community, thereby constructing or engineering their own future. The intention of this study is thus to investigate the processes involved when people actively construct their identity through critical reflection. According to McLaren and Giroux (1997), identity, from a critical theorist perspective, is not constructed with the intention of it becoming “fixed” or “free-floating” (Grande, 2000:353). Rather, it is constructed through the interrelations between people who are participating in the world (Grande, 2000:353). In other words, the construction of identity is transient and is therefore to be grasped in terms of relationships (Grande, 2000:353).
According to Henning (2004:23), the main focus of critical theory is *lived experiences* and the *social relations* that structure these experiences. In any social setting, people have their own experiences regarding the relationships they have with others and the world around them. It is crucial in a study of this nature, to take into consideration the experiences that people have lived, as well as the social relations that shape such experiences. These relations take place with a certain level of understanding and sometimes with explicit or implicit rules of interaction.

Providing an explanation about critical theory and organisations, Peca (2000:31-34) states that, in critical theory, organisations are viewed as social structures created by people. She reveals that organisations are one of the aspects that result in human alienation in that they uphold and encourage historical and political power from which people seek to emancipate themselves. She argues that, at times, people take part in organisations, accept them without question and view them as entities that exist independently. This kind of outlook, Peca (2000:34) argues, makes it difficult for people to understand and appreciate the nature of the totality in which they live.

Engaging with what is alluded to by Peca (2000) in the preceding paragraph, the merger process – pre and post – is a reality that NMMU staff members and students have to deal with. It is ‘real’ that the NMMU was formed through the combination of three distinct institutions. The NMMU, as a new institution, comprises people from institutions that previously belonged to different institutional cultures.

The ideal, however, is to work toward a single cohesive organisational culture and identity. In order to be able to construct this ideal, members of the organisation have to critically investigate and expose conditions that are perceived as obstacles or hindrances to the actualization of a shared organisational culture and identity. In this process, members of this organisation
need to determine what should be done in order to attain this ideal. Factors such as hegemony that were alluded to in the previous paragraphs, that are likely to prevent social cohesion and a shared organisational identity, will have to be identified so that people can emancipate themselves from these.

4.3.2 The social constructionist theory

Constructivists emphasise the social construction of reality. They contend that...

... the social world is not a given: it is not something 'out there' that exists independent of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it. It is not an external reality whose laws can be discovered by scientific research and explained by scientific theory (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006: 164).

It is always socially constructed and mainly through language (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999: 4). The fact that reality is constructed by human beings makes it intelligible to them (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006: 165).

In terms of the role of culture and meaning in organisations, Pedersen and Dobbin (2006:897) reveal that, in the late 1970s, social constructivism was introduced to the field of organisations. It was during this time that the neo-institutional theorists and the organisational culture theorists challenged the rationalist organisational paradigms that prevailed at that time. Pedersen and Dobbin (2006:897) observed that these theories revealed a paradox in terms of two research traditions that evolved independently.

The neo-institutionalists on the one hand, argued that meaning is socially constructed among large numbers of organisations by means of the creation of shared practices and the combined attribution of rationality or justice to those practices. Conversely, the organisational culture theorists argued that meaning is socially constructed within organisations by means of the creation of unique practices and the combined attribution of importance and identity to those practices (Pedersen and Dobbin, 2006:898).
Furthermore, *neo-institutionalists* claimed that members of the organisation deliberately copy practices from the environment that they believe represent and produce their goals, thereby importing culture and practices from the environment (Pedersen and Dobbin, 2006:898). *Organisational culture* theorists on the other hand, argued that members of the organisation create distinctive practices to differentiate their organisation, and to characterise and achieve the goals of rationality and justice.

Both these theories have resulted in a great deal of research and have made a significant contribution towards the understanding of organisations. However, this study views ‘the organisation’ from the *organisational culture* theory perspective, in terms of individuals creating a distinctive practice to distinguish their organisation by constructing a shared organisational identity that will typify their organisation.

The *organisational culture* theory is well placed to address the research question, because it explains what members of the organisation are doing within the organisation to distinguish themselves through their practices. In an attempt to explain the context of this study, I have tried to expose ontological, epistemological and methodological issues that have significant implications on how members of the organisation make meaning of change. The NMMU, as an organisation, is a social structure that is socially constructed by its staff members and students. It is a social world in which people live and experience reality. They are actively involved in an effort to give meaning to that reality in order to understand it.

As a changing institution, this meaning-making experience involves questions such as: *Who am I? Who do I want to be? Who do others see me to be?* It is a process through which members of this organisation are asking these questions in an attempt to construct an understanding of who they are. They are thus
constructing their identities as they go along, with the intention of making sense of who they are. Since they had their previous institutional identities, and those identities were socially constructed, these previous identities are now reconstructed, reframed, assessed, altered or amended.

The rationale for choosing the constructivist theory was because the phenomenon of identity construction is understood through participants and their subjective views. Participants provide their understandings of what a comprehensive university is.

They also give meaning to themselves as academics employed at a comprehensive university. These meanings are shaped by their interactions with fellow academics, students, administrators and management teams, as well as their own personal histories (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:22). In order to move from the understanding of reality, to obtaining the ideal, I have chosen to use the social constructivist theory to explain the manner in which the ideal could be obtained. This theory also allows me to look at reality from a more practical view, i.e. in terms of the actions that need to be taken.

Constructivism holds to the idea that boundless alternatives of construction of the events exist. The focus is on the different meanings with which our world becomes invested (Burr, 1998:13). The claim is that human beings are constructions themselves and they are believed to have the capacity to reconstruct themselves in a manner that is convenient to them (Burr, 1998:13). This idea relates to the critical theory as mentioned above. Constructivists argue that both people, and their world, are the product of social processes (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999: 4). Social constructivism focuses on the relationships between people, rather than what is going on within people.

The social identity theory explained in Chapter Three attempts to understand the relationships between groups. The belief is that the individual experience is
largely shaped and adjusted by the social world (Butt, 1999: 128). Constructivists want to probe the context to arrive at a deeper understanding of it, to reveal the thoughts, ideas and beliefs of the actors involved (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006: 166).

According to the constructivist theory, human beings are perceived to be proactively oriented towards a meaningful understanding of the world in which they live, as well as their own place in it (Botella and Herrero, 2000: 408). Academics thus attempt to gain a meaningful understanding of who they are as academics in a comprehensive university. Constructivists claim that the social world is meaningful to the people who have made it and live in it, and who therefore understand it. The reason for this, Jackson and Sorensen (2006: 165) claim, is because they have constructed it and they are therefore at home in it.

This assertion is important in this study in terms of academics being engineers who construct their own identity, according to that which has meaning for them. Botella and Herrero (2000:408) cite Niemeyer and Niemeyer (1993), who argue that, being human, involves making active attempts to interpret experience, and seeking purpose and significance in the occurrences around them.

As human beings, we are situated in a certain context and the interpretations of experience are “patterned and located in the context of shared forms of intelligibility” (Botella and Herrero, 2000: 409). These interpretations assist us in making meaning of these experiences.

Botella and Herrero (2000: 409) argue, however, that meaning is not an individually exclusive affair, but an open process of supplementation. They claim that in order for one’s words and actions to mean anything, they need to be supplemented by the other person’s words and actions. This meaning, they contend, can always be reconstructed, reframed and trans-valuated (Botella and
Herrero, 2000:409). Thus, social interaction, through give-and-take experiences, seems to be part of the underlying assumptions of social constructivism.

People are believed to be the narrators of their life stories. Botella and Herrero (2000:410) argue that the manner in which one decides on the events to be included or excluded in one’s narrative is fundamental to one’s own identity as the content of one’s life story. The same could be said about what is taking place at the NMMU. The interviews conducted with NMMU academics, and explained here, are an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the context, as well as to expose how individuals experience their reality.

It is thus apposite to use the constructivist theory to try and understand what is taking place in the change process after an institutional merger. Having understood what the world looks like and who takes part in the social world, it is imperative for me, as researcher, to understand how the actors try to make meaning of their world. In order to be able to do so, I need a lens through which I can make sense of the actions and words of the actors. In other words, I need to explain and interpret these actions, based on how the participants interpret their world.

The interpretive paradigm is therefore suitable in assisting one in this endeavour.

4.3.3 The interpretive paradigm

The researcher, working within this paradigm, wants to find out what people are doing and experiencing, and must also take into account the social conditions (context) in which the people live (Henning, 2004:20). In other words, the researcher becomes part of the social situation by

… confronting the social world under research, by raising questions about this world in order to discover relations between categories, by formulating propositions about these relations, by organizing these propositions into analytical schemes and to test the
questions, data, relations, propositions and analysis through renewed examination of the social world (Goodman, 1992:120).

In doing all of this, the researcher is exploring how participants make meaning of their personal, as well as their social world (Smith and Osborn, in Smith, 2003:51). The intention is to explain the world and therefore there is a need to understand it, in order to make sense of it (Usher, in Scott and Usher, 1996:18). Furthermore, Henning (2004:20) argued that text is analysed to discover how people make meaning, instead of just investigating that they make meaning and what meaning they make.

The interpretive researcher searches for frames that shape the meaning. Thus the context is very important to this researcher (Henning, 2004:20). Meanwhile, McFarlane (2000:27) claims that people do more than just respond to outside pressures and stimuli, but they also create their own perceptions of their world and then act upon these perceptions. It is therefore one of the tasks of the researcher to interpret these perceptions and make meaning of them.

Embedded within the interpretive paradigm are the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches. Both these approaches originate from German philosophy. According to Laverty (2003:11), differences in these approaches surface within ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimensions.

4.3.3.1 The phenomenological approach

The phenomenological approach focuses on what the person experiences and how the person expresses this experience in language, as loyal to the lived experience as possible (Rudestam and Newton, 2001:38; Denscombe, 2003:97). Creswell (1998) regards this form of inquiry as an inquiry that makes an effort to describe and explain the meanings of human experience of the phenomenon (De Vos, et al., 2005:270). Often, this approach is seen to emphasise subjectivity, description, interpretation and agency, and it deals with people’s perceptions,
attitudes and beliefs, feelings and emotions (Denscombe, 2003:96). Babbie (2007:294) makes a strong assertion that people describe their world not “as it is”, but rather “as they make sense of it”. It thus reflects their interpretations of their world, and not necessarily the world as it in reality is.

The phenomenological approach in this study is used through interviews, where participants share their personal stories and express their experiences through language. They thereby describe and explain the meaning of their lived experiences. Participants give explanations of how they view their organisation and what it means to them to be part of such an organisation. They do this by expressing their feelings, thoughts, aspirations, attitudes and beliefs about their reality.

4.3.3.2 The hermeneutic approach

The *hermeneutic* approach is interested in the human experience, as it is lived (Laverty, 2003:7). It acknowledges the idea that human beings are meaning-making and meaning-using creatures (Yates, 2004:137). Rudestam and Newton (2001: 40) claim that one engages in a hermeneutic approach, in order to derive a better understanding of the context that gives it meaning.

One of the intentions of this study is to understand the merger and the post-merger process as phenomena that carry with them conditions that either contribute to, or hinder the possibility of a shared NMMU identity.

For the purpose of this study, a *critical hermeneutic* approach has been followed. Critical hermeneutics views the world as a part of a larger attempt to review and improve it (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:449). Due to the complex and dynamic nature of social interaction that happens in organisations, one needs to ask questions about the purpose and procedures of interpretation, in order to come up with a form of “cultural criticism”, where power
relations are exposed within the text (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:445).

This allows the researcher to “build bridges between the readers and the text, text and its producers, the historical context and the present, and one particular circumstance and another” (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:445). This process of ‘building bridges’ involves the *hermeneutic circle* that allows the researcher to operate on a higher level of understanding that requires some preliminary understanding (Higgs and Smith, 2002:30; Usher, in Scott and Usher, 1996:19).

In an attempt to understand and arrive at a better understanding than the one initially held, the researcher goes back and forth, studying parts that form a whole and the whole in relation to the parts (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:445, Higgs and Smith, 2002: 29-30). In the process, the researcher is challenged to reconsider and reconceptualise presumptions so that new ways of exploring text are presented (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:445). This hermeneutic understanding is thus a ‘dialogue’ between the researcher and the situation under study (Usher, in Scott and Usher, 1996:22).

It is assumed that researchers come to the research field with their opinions, political orientations, and their social frame of reference. Therefore, critical hermeneuts consider that they do not have to abandon their affiliations (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:447).

In fact, Gadamer (1975) viewed bracketing as ludicrous, because he claimed that all understanding will involve some prejudgement and that these understandings are based on our ‘historicality’ of being (Laverty, 2003: 11; Scott and Usher, 1996:19 and 21). Expressing similar views, Creswell (2003:182) refers to the researcher’s ‘biography’ that he asserts ‘shapes’ the study. He contends that
qualitative researchers do introspection when they acknowledge their biases, values and interests. In that process, the personal-self cannot be separated from the researcher-self (Creswell, 2003:182).

In his later writings, Gadamer (1989), referred to such affiliations and orientations as being the “horizons” of researchers and the act of hermeneutic interpretation, as the “fusion of horizons” (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:448, Scott and Usher, 1996: 21).

It is thus impossible for me, as a researcher, to be totally removed from the situation without influencing it with my own assumptions and prior knowledge.

4.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan that indicates how the researcher intends to investigate the research problem (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:57-58; Mouton, 2002:55-57; Huysamen, 2001:10). Its function is to ensure that evidence is obtained which will be instrumental in answering the research question as unambiguously and accurately as possible (De Vaus, 2001:9; Mc Millan and Schumacher, 1993:31).

What will follow below is an explanation of the research design, complemented by the underlying assumptions and procedures espoused in this study. For the purposes of this study, a mixed methods research approach was employed. This means that the study followed both the qualitative and quantitative approaches.

4.4.1 Mixed methods approach

The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the meaning that academics give to themselves as academics in a comprehensive university and how that meaning assists in the construction of an organisational identity. To address the above aim, I acknowledge that neither a qualitative, nor a quantitative research
method alone would adequately help to understand the complexity of identity and social interaction (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:24).

Employing multiple perspectives from which to look at the same phenomenon, affords more perspective and better comprehension. Consequently, more evidence is gathered through the use of more than one method; and this allows for a better argument (Creswell, 2008; Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:31).

Recently, a mixed methods research has gradually become common, especially in the social sciences (Bryman, 2006:97; Gilbert, 2006:205). Mixed methods research is commonly defined as a research method that combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, for in-depth understanding and verification (Creswell and Garrett, 2008:322; Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:24; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:9).

It offers for better generality and particularity, as well as “magnitude and dimensionality” (Greene, 2008:7). It is inclusive, pluralistic, complementary and it also encourages an assortment of approaches to the selection of methods and thinking and the actual conducting of the research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17). The mixed methods approach therefore intensifies the effect and enriches the adaptability of the research design (Gilbert, 2006:205).

The mixed methods approach primarily uses three wide-ranging research strategies; these are, the concurrent, sequential and transformative designs (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:25; Gilbert, 2006:208). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:59) improved on Creswell’s (2003) work regarding the three strategies alluded to above, and one can now differentiate between four major types of mixed methods designs, namely, the triangulation design, the embedded design, the explanatory design and the exploratory design.
They however reveal that authors from different disciplines use differing terminologies and stress different elements of the mixed methods design. They thus maintain that there are more similarities than there are differences between exponents of the mixed methods approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:59).

For the purpose of this study, I will explain the four designs as detailed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:59-79), as well as illustrate, what Creswell and Plano Clark refer to as the ‘timing’ of the study, explains where and how mixed methods can be used in a study. This will give an exposition of whether the study is concurrent, sequential or transformative.

4.4.1.1 The triangulation design

The *triangulation design* happens in one phase, where the researcher implements both the quantitative and qualitative methods during the same timeframe and with equal weighting. Creswell and Plano Clark *et al.*, (2003) have also referred to this design as the “concurrent triangulation design” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:64; Gilbert, 2006:208).

In this design, the data are collected at the same time from two separate sets of data and they are then merged by either combining the data in the analysis stage, or by bringing the separate results into the interpretation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:64). In essence, the critical outcome of triangulation is based on findings that are authenticated from different methods that can then come to a rigorous conclusion and enrich the “concurrent validity” (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:26).

4.4.1.2 The embedded design

In the *embedded design*, the role of one of the data sets is to provide a supportive secondary role for the other set of data in the study. The reason for
this is that one data set is not sufficient, thus different questions are asked and these questions each require different types of data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:67).

One data set, based on the other data type, thus serves a supplementary role within the design as a whole. It also offers different strengths to contribute to the completeness of the data (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:26). Examples of such studies include the experimental and the correlational models (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:69).

Through the experimental embedded model, a quantitative experimental methodology is used within which the qualitative data set serves a “subservient” purpose. In the correlational embedded model, the qualitative data are embedded within the quantitative design. The researcher in this design collects qualitative data to help explain how the mechanisms in the correlational model work (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:69-70). In both these models the quantitative methodology seems to be the more dominant of the two.

4.4.1.3 The explanatory design

The explanatory design is a two-phase mixed methods design, the purpose of which is based on the collection of qualitative data to help explain or build on the initial quantitative results (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:72; Gilbert, 2006:208). The quantitative results could be used to develop themes for the coding of qualitative data (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:28). This design could be used for qualitative purposive sampling where the participants are selected, or as a follow-up explanations model, where data are employed to explain quantitative results. This design is also known as the sequential explanatory design. It begins with the collection and analysis of the quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of the qualitative data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:72). The qualitative phase is designed so that it connects with the quantitative phase.
4.4.1.4 The exploratory design

The exploratory design is also a two-phase mixed methods design. In this design the findings of the qualitative method can help develop or inform the quantitative method. This allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon with a subsequent measurement of its frequency (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:75; Gilbert, 2006:208). This design is also known as the *sequential exploratory design*.

The design has two models, namely, the instrument development model and the taxonomy development model. In the *instrument* development model, the researcher begins with a qualitative exploration of the topic, involving only a few participants. The qualitative findings subsequently guide the development of a quantitative survey instrument. This instrument is then implemented and validated in the second phase. The qualitative and quantitative methods are thus connected through the development of the items of the instrument.

The *taxonomy* development model is used when the initial qualitative phase is employed to identify important variables, develop a taxonomy or classification system, or develop an emergent theory. Categories or relationships are produced and utilised to direct the research questions and the data collection for the second, quantitative phase. The quantitative method then serves as a secondary method, which is used to test or study the qualitative findings in more detail (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:77).

Data interpretation in the mixed methods approach can be undertaken through different techniques (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:28). It could happen *sequentially*, by analysing the two sets of data independently in each phase and then integrating the two sets of results during the interpretation or discussion phase, thereby creating a meta-inference (Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:28;
Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:83; Gilbert, 2006:208). It could also occur during data analysis, where one type of data could be “transformed” into the other type, or merging the data into new variables (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:83).

This study is grounded on the sequential exploratory transformative approach and also applies the instrument development model. The analysis involves a transformative element attributable to issues of power relations being made explicit through articulated notions of praxis and the reflective everyday experiences of the participants (Gilbert, 2006:210, citing Johns and McCormack, 1998; Todd and Freshwater, 1999).

The researcher employing this design does not take relations of social interaction and social practices at face value. She goes beyond the surface and explicitly interrogates the data by reinterpreting the data, going back and forth “in cyclical movements of either retroduction or abduction” (Gilbert, 2006:212).

According to Gilbert (2006:207), retroduction is employed when one wants to explain empirical phenomena. It refers to the creation of models that are abstract, but appear to be real, when in fact they are structures and mechanisms that cannot be directly observed. Conversely, abduction is about the day-to-day concepts that underpin people’s interactions and the explanations given of these interactions to social scientific descriptions.

This fits perfectly with the philosophical foundations of this study that are critical, constructivist, interpretive and critical hermeneutics (discussed later in this chapter).

The intention of this study is to interpret the qualitative and quantitative findings, by allowing the data to mutually inform each other through debate or conversation. This will provide for a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon and broaden the evidence base for academic and organisational
identity (Bryman, 2006:106; Wilkins and Woodgate, 2008:24). The rationale for employing a mixed methods approach in this study is based on Greene, Carracelli and Graham’s (1989) broad purposes of mixed methodological studies:

- that of seeking for triangulation: to establish affirmation of results from the different methods;
- that of being complementary: to enhance, elaborate and clarify the results from the qualitative phase with the results from the quantitative questionnaire; and
- that of being developmental: by using the results from the qualitative phase to help inform the questions to be developed for the questionnaire (Denscombe, 2008:272; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007:115; Gilbert, 2006:206).

Citing Greene (2006), Creswell and Tashakkori (2007:306) accordingly argue that there is value in drawing distinctions and finding disparities in the conjectures that transpire from analysing the results of a study from multiple worldviews.

The purpose of this two-phase sequential exploratory mixed methods study is to explore the views of participants with the intention of employing the findings to develop and administer a questionnaire. The intent is to gain a better understanding of the problem through the strength provided by the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell and Garrett, 2008:322; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:9).

The first phase of this study is a qualitative exploration of how academics give meaning to the concept of a comprehensive university and the consequent influence that the meaning has on the construction of an organisational identity. Data were collected through interviews from a sample of thirteen individual academics and managers at the NMMU. The intention was to gain a complete
picture of the situation by presenting more comprehensive and in-depth evidence of the participants’ feelings and experiences (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:9).

In the second phase of this study, statements from the qualitative data have been clustered into themes, categories and subcategories that would inform the formulation of the questionnaire. The quantitative questionnaire was later administered to a larger sample from the NMMU population of academics (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:11). The process of data collection was sequential, with the interviews serving an exploratory purpose which informed the development of the questionnaire (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:121).

The analysis also involved a transformative element, due to the fact that issues of power relations were made explicit through articulated notions of praxis and the reflective everyday experiences of the participants (Gilbert, 2006:210, citing Johns and McCormack, 1998, Todd and Freshwater, 1999).

The reason for collecting qualitative data initially was that there are no existing instruments to assess how the meanings academics attach to themselves are instrumental in the construction of an organisational identity. Instruments that do exist, do not address the research questions of this study adequately, because they focus on commitment, trust, behaviour, attitudes or self-esteem as variables that indicate attachment to or identification with the organisation.

Furthermore, most of the instruments were designed for research conducted in the private sector (Fuller et al., 2006; Van Dick, et al., 2005; Fuller, Barnett, Hester and Relyea, 2003; Van Knippenberg, et al., 2002).

The study will unfold in a diagrammatically presented manner:
4.5 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:13, 33) state that qualitative researchers are guided by a set of principles that emphasise the *socially constructed* nature of reality, the *personal relationship* between the researcher and what is being inquired, and the *situational constraints* that shape the inquiry. They argue that these principles combine beliefs about what the form and nature of *reality* are and what can be known about it (ontology); what the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be *known* is (epistemology); and how we come to know the
world by *inquiring* in certain or specific ways, in an attempt to understand our world better (methodology) (McNiff, 2005:1; Henning, 2004:15; Laverty, 2003:12).

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:14) assert that *qualitative research* is based on what they call a “naturalistic phenomenological philosophy”. This philosophy assumes that there are multiple realities and that these realities are constructed socially through individual and collective definitions of the situation. Academics in institutions of higher education define their situations individually and collectively to give meaning to their world.

This study intends to find out what these definitions are and how they impact on the reality that these individuals construct for themselves. These definitions will help them to construct their expectations of what the NMMU identity should entail, as well as what that identity should look like.

Henning (2004:5) describes a researcher who undertakes qualitative research as someone who wants to ascertain what certain phenomena are about, how they appear on the surface, and also what their other levels of meaning may be. Phenomena, as explained by East, Hammersley and Hancock (1998:4), may be events, situations, experiences or concepts that we encounter on a daily basis and are aware of, but may not yet fully understand.

In an attempt to understand these phenomena, Henning (2004:5) states that the qualitative researcher wants to discover how human interactions take place, and why these interactions happen in the manner in which they do in certain situations. She further argues that the researcher examines the qualities, characteristics, or properties of a phenomenon in order to grasp, comprehend and explain their world. Rudestam and Newton (2001) argue that the qualitative researcher seeks an in-depth understanding of phenomena as they occur naturally and that no attempt is made to manipulate the situation.
This study is of such a nature that one cannot conduct experiments, especially when one needs to find meaning in people’s experiences and relationships. To get an in-depth understanding of the relationships and experiences of people, one needs to adopt a qualitative approach to research, which will assist the researcher to not only report on the findings, but to constantly engage with the study throughout by means of argument and reasoning.

Such an approach allows both the researcher and the study, to engage, as well as to enlighten the reader about the what, the how and the why of the research process.

4.5.1 The interpretive approach

Qualitative research is primarily interpretive (Creswell, 2003:182). The assumption is that knowledge is obtained through people’s descriptions that they express of their intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning-making and self-understanding (Henning, 2004:20). The intention is to understand the views of participants on a specific phenomenon, and as such, the phenomenon can be understood from the perspective of the participants (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:28-30).

In other words, it is a method of inquiry that is systematic and interactive, and is employed to give an exposition of the life experiences of the participants, and also to give meaning to them (Mouton, 2002:161; Eisner, 1998:21-23; Guba and Lincoln, 1985:40).

In this study, academics were asked to give their views, feelings, opinions, interpretations and explanations on the meaning they attach to themselves as academics in a comprehensive university. These meanings were then interpreted and an attempt was made to make sense of them.
4.5.2 Naturalistic and contextual nature

Qualitative research takes place in the participants’ natural environment (Creswell, 2003:181; Golafshani, 2003:600; Wisker, 2001:140). This affords researchers an opportunity to enter the world of their participants and get the opportunity to obtain a rich understanding of their world as they experience it (Babbie, 2007:312; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:30; Creswell, 2003:181; Ponterotto, 2002:398).

The world of the participants is thus seen, as it “really is” (Anastas, 2004:62). For the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted in the offices of academics, where they do their everyday job. This allowed me as the researcher to observe the participants in their natural settings, especially since the NMMU has multiple campuses and Faculties that are divided across the various campuses.

This observation was thus done without trying to “manipulate” the natural context (Golafshani, 2003:600, citing Patton, 2002).

4.5.3 The descriptive nature

Qualitative research is descriptive in nature, since its purpose is to investigate, unearth and uncover more about the specific phenomenon, and then provide detailed, comprehensive descriptions (Struwig and Stead, 2001:8; Wisker, 2001:118). In other words, qualitative research describes the “lived experiences of participants in their own words” (Ponterotto, 2002:398), thereby gaining an in-depth understanding of the human perspectives at the individual level.

In this study, the data are reported verbatim through words uttered by the participants, thus giving a description of their reality (Creswell, 2003:199; Holloway and Wheeler, 2002:285). Creswell (2003:169) explains that the
responses from the participants are recorded by means of what he calls “thick, rich description”. This thick description must be substantiated with abundant practical evidence and a theoretical foundation (Henning, 2004:7).

In other words, the researcher reviews the literature and uses it to provide evidence for the purpose of the study and the research problem under investigation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:29). Due to the varying and complex responses of the participants, the researcher concentrates on one specific issue and does an in-depth study on it (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:30).

4.5.4 The inductive approach

Since qualitative research is exploratory in nature, it seeks to understand and zoom in on the quality of social life and thereby builds theory from the ground up (Leedy and Ormond, 2001:102). The inductive approach commences with the gathering of data without preconceived notions, from which themes or categories emerge and are identified (Struwig and Stead, 2001:15). This implies that the raw data that have been gathered from the field must be inductively analysed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:203). The researcher thus “makes sense” of the data gathered by inductively examining them (Struwig and Stead, 2001:226; Lincoln and Guba, 1985:202).

4.5.5 The exploratory nature

The intention of qualitative research is to explore an unknown phenomenon, as well as to provide more opportunities for exploration as themes emerge (Babbie and Wagenaar, 1989:80). In other words, the emphasis is more on discovery, because it is suggested that research be approached with an open mind and open eyes (Denscombe, 2008:92 and 301).
According to Babbie and Wagenaar (1989:80) the purpose of exploratory research is threefold, namely:

- to obtain a deeper *understanding* of the topic under investigation, thereby satisfying the interests of the researcher;
- to test the extent to which the study is *viable*; and
- to develop a *modus operandi* to be used in the study.

### 4.5.6 A holistic picture

Qualitative research is holistic in nature in that it attempts to obtain information by covering the *whole* context of the phenomenon under study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:384). The social environment is thus examined in its entirety (Struwig and Stead, 2001:12). Different parts that make up the whole are therefore examined in their entirety in order to obtain a complete understanding of the particular whole.

### 4.6 A CASE STUDY

The approach of this study is qualitative in nature, as it aims to provide an in-depth description and understanding of a single organisation. A study of this nature necessitates a case study research design that is typically used to understand a situation by pursuing scholarly research questions (Stake, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:443). The defining characteristic of a case study is said to be the focus on one instance of a thing in order to understand its complexities, as well as to generate illuminating insights (Babbie, 2007:298).

Henning (2004:41) argues that characteristic of ‘a case’ is its “boundedness”; in other words, its possession of identifiable boundaries. One could therefore understand ‘a case’ as having structure in terms of the participants, the locality, temporality and the activities.
As is the case in this study, the intention was to study academics at the NMMU in an attempt to understand the identity construction process and the relevant requirements necessary for the construction process. The intention was also to gain some understanding of the meaning that academics give to their own identity as academics in a comprehensive university.

Furthermore, the purpose was to explicate the general by looking at the specific (Denscombe, 2003:30). Case studies in addition investigate real life events in their natural setting. They capture both the real life event and its context (Yin, 1994:13). The process of organisational identity construction was therefore studied in the academics’ natural setting and context, in other words, in their offices on the premises of the NMMU as an organisation.

Stake (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:443) differentiates between three types of case studies. Firstly, he talks about the intrinsic case study, which he explains does not necessarily represent other cases, but is an interest in itself. Stories of those “living the case” are teased out. Secondly, he refers to the instrumental case study which he claims is supportive and plays a facilitative role in assisting the researcher to understand something else. The instrumental case may be seen as characteristic or not characteristic of other cases. Thirdly, he refers to the multiple or collective case study, which he argues is an extension of the instrumental case study, because the understanding of the case will result in a better understanding of and/or improved theorising on a still larger collection of cases.

Having considered the above explanation with the research question in mind, this study considers the case of the NMMU an extension of the instrumental case study, as proposed by Stake (2005). This case is thus perceived to result in a better understanding of a still larger collection of cases.
Due to the fact that this is a case study, it is neither the intention of the researcher to assume that participants' views and opinions are representative of the views and opinions of all the academics at the NMMU, nor of that of all other academics across other comprehensive higher education institutions. However, the study does assume that by looking into the NMMU as a case, there might be lessons learned by cases elsewhere that are similar to the NMMU.

It is the intention of this study to provide the reader with aspects of the findings that might be transferable and/or extendable to other contexts, although not necessarily generalisable to all other contexts (Henning, 2004:71).

4.7 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.7.1 Sampling

For this part of the study, the participants were selected by the researcher, because they were regarded to be sufficiently informed and knowledgeable to provide meaningful information (Babbie, 2007:184; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:112; Denscombe, 2003:15; Berg, 2001:32; Struwig and Stead, 2001:111, De Vos, 1998:198). In other words, the participants were ‘hand picked’, which means that purposive sampling was employed (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:112; Denscombe, 2003:15).

Furthermore, the method of snowball sampling was also applied, in other words, the participants were requested to recommend people who would probably be willing and able to contribute relevant and rich information for the purpose of the research (Babbie, 2007:184; De Vos, et al., 2005:330; Denscombe, 2003:16; Sullivan, 2001:207).

The sample of participants for this part of the study was selected by means of ‘sampling frames’, as suggested by Friedman (1998:48). These ‘sampling
frames’ acted as criteria that assisted the researcher in identifying elements possessed by participants that contributed to the selection of the participants (Babbie, 2007:199; Friedman, 1998:48). It was therefore crucial for the researcher to have a clear identification and formulation of the criteria (De Vos, et al., 2005:329).

The participants were expected to provide information that helped to answer the research question (Friedman, 1998:48). For the purpose of this study the ‘sampling frames’ that served as criteria, were as follows:

- Has the academic experienced the merger directly by being relocated to other campuses, or having had to teach students on different campuses as a result of the merger?
- Does the academic have to teach modules in ex-merger institutions other than their own? This would include for example, university academics who now have to teach in technikon programmes that are more vocational, and technikon academics who have to teach in university programmes that are more academic.
- Has the academic not been moved, or is not expected to teach classes on different campuses, but work with academics who have been touched by the merger in one way or the other? Snowball sampling was used to identify these academics.
- Is the academic part of academic management? This includes the Senior Director, Centre for Planning and Institutional Development (CPID), The Director for CPID, The Vice Chancellor, The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research, The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, and the available Deans of Faculties.
4.7.2 Qualitative data collection

4.7.2.1 The researcher as a research instrument

Le Voi (2002:160) states that qualitative research is an engaging exercise that requires the researcher to be involved as the research instrument, in order for the research to lead to meaningful results. Patton (2002) concurs that in qualitative research the “researcher is the instrument” herself (cited in Golafshani, 2003:600).

The researcher is thus sensitised to her own prejudices of which she is unaware, such as stereotypes, expectations and privileges (Ponterotto, 2002:399). During this sensitisation process, as Ponterotto (2002:399) reasons, the researcher’s own professional and personal growth is made possible.

4.7.2.2 Interviews

Interviewing is the basic mode of qualitative inquiry. One conducts interviews in order to understand people’s experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences. What is involved in an interview is the description of the experience and the reflection on the description (De Vos et al., 2005:287). By and large, can an interview be defined as a conversation, the purpose of which is to gather information (Babbie, 2007:306; Berg, 2001:66; Guba and Lincoln, 1985:268).

However, Denscombe (2003:163) argues that an interview is much more than a conversation, but rather an active interaction between two or more people, because it involves assumptions and understandings that would not normally be present in a casual conversation. Along the same lines, Babbie (2007:306) argues that the researcher has a plan through which certain topics will be covered and thereby acts as the “moderator” of the conversation.
Semi-structured interviews

The issues that are addressed in this study emanate from the research question and sub-questions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:29). The interviews were recorded on tape, with the permission of the participants. I also took field notes that were compared with the transcriptions in order to maintain a level of accuracy. The process was flexible with regard to the sequence of topics that were addressed (Denscombe, 2003:167).

In the process of interviewing participants during this study, some information emerged which necessitated alterations or amendments to the interview questions, depending on the portfolio that each participant held within the university. Creswell (2003:182) argues that the process of data collection in a qualitative study is emergent, rather than “prefigured” and structured. Babbie (2007:305) therefore argues that qualitative interviews are continuous in nature and, consequently, questioning may be “redesigned” throughout the process.

Generally, the semi-structured interview is used to obtain a detailed depiction of a participant’s beliefs, or insight about a certain topic (De Vos, et al., 2005: 296). Participants were also allowed to introduce an issue in which they are an expert, as well as to elaborate on points of interest (De Vos, et al., 2005:296; Denscombe, 2003:167).

In order to develop a degree of detail on the participants and their workplace, and to be familiar with their experiences, the interviews took place in the participants’ natural setting (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:30; Creswell, 2003:181). The participants were interviewed in their offices, which meant that I had to travel across campuses to get to their offices.

Below are questions that were posed to the participants, according to the sequence in which they appear. If the participant was in a managerial position
(Dean or Director), question five was posed differently to find out what the individual did as a manager in her Faculty or school.

1. What do you understand by the term ‘comprehensive university’?
2. What meaning do you give to yourself as an academic in a comprehensive university?
3. What is your role in the construction of the organisational identity of the NMMU?
4. What do you perceive as obstacles that can hinder or hamper the construction of an organisational identity?
5. Are you aware of any strategies or opportunities that are in place to help in the construction of an organisational identity? (an academic with no managerial position)
5.1 As a Dean/Director, what strategies and opportunities do you have in place in your faculty/school to help with the construction of an organisational identity? (a manager)
   a. In your Faculty
   b. In the university at large
6. What lessons have you learned from the merger and the post-merger processes?

As alluded to in the previous paragraph, it should be understood that questions were not always posed in the exact wording, as above. The wording depended on each interview since the interviews were regarded as conversations. The researcher was guided by the responses of the participants, but nonetheless the essence of the questions was never changed. These questions were put to both academic managers (DVCs, Deans and Directors) and academics who did not hold any managerial positions.

The intention for doing this was to determine the extent to which similarities and/or differences in the way in which they view their responsibility towards the
Another intention was to determine how the difference in power relations informs the way in which individuals make meaning of their reality.

4.7.3 Qualitative data analysis

Making meaning of data involves its analysis, which is a process that requires the skill to depict the understanding of the data in writing (Henning, 2004:101). In other words, the “raw” data are converted into meaningful patterns (Henning, 2004:102). This means that data are analysed and interpreted (Mouton, 2002:108). This process, according to Henning (2004:103), is the “heartbeat” of the research, because this is where the researcher’s “quality of thinking” will be perceptible. Before this process can take place, recordings of the interviews have to be transcribed verbatim (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002:236).

In qualitative research, analysis starts with coding the data (Babbie, 2007:384; Creswell and Plano Clark 2007:131). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:132) argue that coding involves the process of the grouping together of evidence and labelling ideas that are similar, so that they eventually provide the researcher with wider perspectives.

According to Creswell (1994:154), when the researcher analyses the data by means of coding, a story emerges. Creswell (1994:153) cites Tesch (1990), who suggests that during the data analysis process, data are “de-contextualized” and “re-contextualized”. This happens when the text is reduced to generate themes and categories for understanding.

In order to reduce and organise the content to become manageable and meaningful, the following process, adopted from Tesch’s eight steps, as cited in Creswell (1994:155), was followed:
1. I first read through all the transcriptions, so as to get a picture of the whole.
2. I then selected and read one interview that struck me as interesting, so that I could form an impression of the context of the individual words, while noting the thoughts that came to mind as I read the transcript.
3. A list of all the themes was made. Similar themes were grouped together and arranged into columns as main themes, categories and subcategories. This process was repeated for all the other transcriptions.
4. The themes were then arranged and coded next to the corresponding text, to determine the possibility of the emergence of new categories and subcategories.
5. A note of what appeared to be the most descriptive word for each theme was made and these descriptive words were then turned into categories.
6. The categories were then abbreviated and numbered.
7. All data belonging to one category were grouped in one place by means of an introductory analysis.
8. The data were then recoded.

The co-promoter was employed as an independent qualitative coder and requested to independently code the data simultaneously with the researcher and the promoter. This was done in order to establish whether the same themes and categories emerged, which could be verified. A consensus meeting was then convened, where the researcher, the promoter, and the co-promoter met to discuss and reach consensus regarding the emergent categories.

Henning (2004:106) suggests that when all the data have been categorised, in order to be able to interpret the content, the following questions can serve as a guide:
- What are the relationships in meaning between all these categories?
- What do they say together?
- What do they say about each other?
The questions above provided guidance in terms of a broad scheme of reference. They also enabled me as a researcher to critically interpret the data for better understanding and presentation.

4.7.4 Literature control

The purpose of a literature control is to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study so as to easily compare and match already completed studies with current and contemporary research (Creswell, 2002:87). The aim is also to gauge complementary results from other studies conducted under similar conditions (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002:251). Therefore the findings discussed in the next chapter have been verified against already existing relevant literature to determine diverging and similar views, discrepancies or distinctive contributions.

4.8 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the “quality of qualitative data” (Anastas, 2004:63). In order to ensure that the findings of this study can be taken note of and are trustworthy, I have decided to answer four questions that Guba and Lincoln (1985:290) claim to be useful in this regard. An additional seven questions posed by Denscombe (1998:213-14) have also been responded to. The questions are as follows:
How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of the study for the respondents with which (and the context in which) the study was conducted? – “truth value”

In this study, the following measures were used, as suggested by Creswell (2003:196):

- Different data sources were triangulated, in this case, interview transcripts and field notes, by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. More than one method for data collection and sampling were used in this study.
- The final report or descriptions or themes were returned to the participants to determine whether their views were represented.
- Thick and rich descriptions to communicate the findings were used.
- The researcher clarified the bias that she, as an academic employed by the NMMU, brought to the study. This created an open and honest narrative.
- Discrepant information that countered the themes was presented in order to demonstrate how real life is made up of different perspectives.
- A prolonged time was spent in the field. This was done in order to develop in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study.
- Peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the study was employed. The promoter, as well as the co-promoter analysed the data.
- An external auditor, who is new to the study, (in this case the external examiner), will be used to review the entire study.

How can one determine the extent to which the findings of this study have applicability in other contexts or with other respondents? Guba and Lincoln (1985:298) assert that it is not the responsibility of the researcher
to prove that the findings of the study are *transferable*, but that of the person who intends to apply these findings elsewhere. The responsibility of the researcher, according to Guba and Lincoln (1985:298), “ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible”.

> **How can one determine whether the findings of the study would be repeated if the study were replicated with the same respondents in a similar context?** Guba and Lincoln (1985:316) suggest that a demonstration of *credibility* in the study takes care of *dependability*. What has already been alluded to in trying to answer the first question above, can thus be regarded as an account for dependability. The following three actions are worth mentioning again:

- spending a prolonged period in the field to get an in-depth understanding of the context and to build trust;
- persistent observation in order to identify elements in the study that are most relevant to the research problem and to focus on these closely; and
- triangulation, in other words, the use of multiple and different sources and methods (Guba and Lincoln, 1985:301-305).

> **How can one establish the degree to which the findings of the study are determined by the respondents and conditions of the study and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher?** In other words, how can one be *neutral*? In qualitative research, the researcher is essential, as she is part of the research instrument (Denscombe, 2003:273). Since the researcher is an integral part of the research and acts as the instrument, it is impossible for the researcher to remain completely neutral or objective.
Guba and Lincoln (1985:300) therefore put the emphasis on the characteristics of the data and not on the characteristics of the researcher. The question is on whether the data are confirmable or not. De Vos, et al., (2005:347) accordingly propose the following question: “Do the data help confirm the general findings and lead to the implications?”

In order to determine the validity of the findings, Denscombe (1998:213-214) also advises the researcher to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Do the conclusions do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon being investigated and avoid “oversimplifications”, while also offering internal consistency?
2. Has the researcher’s self been recognised as an influence in the research, but not a cause of biased and one-sided reporting?
3. Have the instances selected for the investigation been chosen on explicit and reasonable grounds as far as the aims of the research are concerned?
4. Have alternative possible explanations been explored?
5. Have the findings been “triangulated” with alternative sources as a way of bolstering confidence in their validity?
6. Have the research findings been fed back to informants to get their opinion on the explanation being proposed?
7. How far do the findings and conclusions fit with the existing knowledge on the area, and how far do they translate to other comparable situations?

In the case of this particular study, the following responses to the above questions are offered:

1. Based on both qualitative findings and quantitative results, conclusions are presented. An attempt was made to demonstrate the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation by indicating the multifaceted nature of
human interaction, as well as the significance of other processes that need to take place before the construction of an organisational identity can become possible.

2. The researcher explicitly recognises herself as an influence in the research, but not a cause of biased and one-sided reporting.

3. The phenomenon under study was chosen on explicit and reasonable grounds. There is clear theoretical and practical evidence that the construction of an organisational identity after or during any kind of change is a phenomenon worth investigating.

4. A thorough study of different perspectives and theories concerning the phenomenon of identity, organisational identity, change and higher education was done, so as to explore possible alternative explanations of the phenomenon being studied.

5. Triangulation of sources, data and methods was carried out.

6. The researcher went back to the participants to confirm that the categories and themes that emerged from the data represented their views.

7. Findings of this study have been compared with existing research to reveal similarities and differences that either confirm or reject existing knowledge. The researcher has also demonstrated in her conclusion how the findings translate to other comparable contexts.

It is evident from the questions alluded to above that qualitative research is indeed concerned with the trustworthiness of the study. I have decided to respond to all of the above questions in order to establish confidence in the truth of this study (Guba and Lincoln, 1985:290).

An exposition of the qualitative methodology and methods has been provided above in Phase One of the study. The following is an explanation of the second phase of the study, which focuses on the quantitative methodology and methods.
PHASE TWO

4.9 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative approach is based on the more positivist view that reality is ‘out there’. It also holds that reality is constituted by observable, measurable and quantifiable facts that can only be observed objectively (Walker, 2005:572; Golafshani, 2003:598; Seers and Critelton, 2001:487).

According to Golafshani (2003:597), quantitative research puts more emphasis on facts and the causes of behaviour. Its major focus is on populations, and thus it seeks to discover any general patterns for a population, rather than for particular individuals (Seers and Critelton, 2001:487). The intention of this phase is to discover general patterns of the sample, in order to confirm or reject the hypotheses made in terms of measured frequencies and occurrences.

4.9.1 Hypothesis testing

Creswell (2003:108) asserts that, in quantitative studies, research questions and hypotheses are employed to shape and direct the purpose of the study. Decisions that concern the values of parameters are made through the process of hypothesis testing (Howell, 2004:139).

A hypothesis is a tentative assumption that is made in order to further investigate its expected empirical results (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:88). In other words, hypotheses are forecasts that the researcher presumes about the relationships among variables (Creswell, 2003:108). They thus provide a solution to the research problem. This solution can either be accepted or rejected in favour of some other alternative.
There is a distinction between a research hypothesis and a null hypothesis. A research hypothesis ($H$) is a hypothesis which the research was designed to investigate. The null hypothesis ($H_0$) is a hypothesis of no difference or no relationship between population parameters of interest. It usually indicates the opposite of what is claimed by the research hypothesis (Howell, 2004:143; Creswell, 2003:109; Anderson, Burnham and Thompson, 2000:912).

With regard to this study, the following hypotheses applied:

**Research Hypothesis ($H$):**

Significant challenges exist in terms of the possibility of the academics’ construction of an organisational identity at the merged comprehensive university.

**Null Hypothesis ($H_0$):**

No significant challenges exist in terms of the possibility of the academics’ construction of an organisational identity at the merged comprehensive university.

**4.9.2 Quantitative sampling**

A sample is a subset of the population (Howell, 2004:6). A population is the entire collection of events or objects in which the researcher is interested (Howell, 2004:6). The intention of sampling in quantitative research is to select individuals that are representative of a population, to ensure that the results can be generalised to a population and that inferences can easily be drawn (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:112, 113).

A *random* sample is a sample where every member of the population stands the same chance of being included in the sample (Collins, Anthony, Onwuengbuzie and Jiao, 2007:272; Howell, 2004:6).
4.9.2.1 Procedure

In this study, respondents for the quantitative questionnaire were randomly selected. An e-mail was sent out to all academic staff via the internal NMMU Communiqué. Respondents thus had an equal opportunity of responding to the questionnaire. A total of 108 out of 527 academics completed and returned the questionnaires. The response rate could be attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were disseminated during the end of year examination period, which is usually a busy time for academics due to marking responsibilities. This indicates a 20% response rate, which is satisfactory in terms of analysis.

4.9.2.2 The description of the sample

- The distribution of the sample

Table 4.1 offers summarised information on the distribution of the sample of the study.

**Table 4.1 Biographical details of the sample groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58 (53.7)</td>
<td>50 (46.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>20-29 years</th>
<th>30-39 years</th>
<th>40-49 years</th>
<th>50-59 years</th>
<th>60+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (4.6)</td>
<td>15 (13.9)</td>
<td>43 (39.8)</td>
<td>38 (35.20)</td>
<td>7 (6.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>isiXhosa</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 (32.4)</td>
<td>60 (55.6)</td>
<td>12 (11.1)</td>
<td>1 (0.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>B Degree/ Diploma</th>
<th>Honours</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (4.6)</td>
<td>15 (13.9)</td>
<td>49 (45.4)</td>
<td>39 (36.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Associate/ Junior Lecturer</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Senior Lecturer</th>
<th>Associate Professor</th>
<th>Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (7.4)</td>
<td>46 (42.6)</td>
<td>36 (33.3)</td>
<td>4 (3.7)</td>
<td>14 (13.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years at institution</th>
<th>1-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>21-25 years</th>
<th>26-30 years</th>
<th>31-35 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 (37.4)</td>
<td>22 (20.6)</td>
<td>20 (18.7)</td>
<td>10 (9.3)</td>
<td>10 (9.3)</td>
<td>3 (2.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chart above indicates that in terms of gender, there was a fair representation in this sample with 46% females and 54% males. According to the NMMU Audit portfolio guide (2008:113), in 2007 there were 57.3% permanent males employed at the NMMU as opposed to 42.7% females.

This shows that the sample is representative of the population that it attempts to understand.
In terms of age, the graph above indicates that the highest rate of responses was received from academics in the 40-49 years cohort (39.8%), followed by the 50-59 years cohort at 35.2%. The fact that the majority of academics who responded are 40 years and above, is significant for this study because one could infer that the academics who are concerned about the wellbeing of their institution, will be at the institution long enough to see the change process through.
In terms of the number of years that academics served in their previous institutions, more responses were received from academics who served 1-5 years before the merger took place (37.4%). Twenty point six (20.6%) percent of the academics were employed at their previous institution for a period of between six to ten years. A slightly lower percentage (18.7%) of the respondents served 11 – 15 years in their previous institutions.
In terms of the response rate, there appears to be a similar rate between ex-UPE (46%) and ex-PE Technikon (47%) academic staff members respectively, whereas there was a low response rate from ex-Vista academics. Although it needs to be noted that the ex-Vista population of academics is smaller than that of the other two institutions, it does not explain the very low response rate of 7%.
This graph indicates that academics located at NMMU South campus constituted the highest number of responses (44.4%), followed by North campus (31.5%), and lastly, Bird Street campus (the smallest campus) with the lowest percentage (2.8%). There could be a variety of reasons for the response rate, which the scope of this study is unable to cover. What one could infer however is that the number of responses corresponds with the sizes of the campuses in terms of numbers.
From the graph above one could gather that 45.4% of respondents in this sample obtained a Master's degree as their highest qualification, while 36.1% of the respondents were academics with a doctoral degree. Thirteen point nine percent (13.9%) of the respondents were academics whose highest qualification was that of an Honours degree, while 4.6% of the respondents obtained only a first degree or diploma.

It was satisfying to see that the majority of academics possessed a Master’s degree. This was an important factor in the perceptions held about the status of a university.
There is quite a wide spread of the positions held by the respondents, from associate lecturer up to professorship. The above graph indicates that 42.6% of the respondents were appointed as lecturers, while 33.3% of the respondents were senior lecturers. Only 13.0% of the respondents held the position of professor. Associate lecturers and associate professors did not respond significantly, as they constituted only 7.4% and 3.7% of the sample respectively.

A description of the biographical data has been provided above. Based on the information, assumptions and inferences were made. Below are the data collection procedures and methods that were employed in this study.
4.9.3 Quantitative data collection

4.9.3.1 Data collection procedures

Permission to conduct the entire study was requested and received from the NMMU Human Ethics Committee (NMMU REC-H) at the beginning of 2008. Since the mixed methods approach was employed in this study, the quantitative questionnaire could only be developed once the themes had been established from the first qualitative phase of the study. Hence it was only during the second semester of 2008 that further ethical clearance for the administering of the questionnaire was requested and received from NMMU REC-H.

After permission was granted, the researcher electronically, via email, communicated with academics through the NMMU All Staff Communiqué, an internal electronic communication service at NMMU. A letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting participation from academics only was attached together with the questionnaire. The letter also explained how the questionnaire was to be completed.

4.9.3.1.1 The questionnaire

The purpose of a questionnaire is to gather information by asking directly about what the researcher intends to discover or understand about a particular group or subject across a wide spectrum of research situations (Denscombe, 2003: 144, 145). In other words, the use of questionnaires depends on information supplied directly by the informed people in response to the questions asked by the researcher (De Vos et al., 2005:166; Denscombe, 2003:145).

As explained earlier, the questionnaire in this study was used as a follow-up to the semi-structured interviews. The categories and themes that emerged in the interviews formed the basis of the questions in the questionnaire. The
questionnaire was needed to determine the extent (frequency of occurrence) to which respondents hold a particular attitude, perspective, belief, opinion or view (De Vos, et al., 2005: 166; Denscombe, 2003:146). In other words, the intention was to extract the feelings of the respondents in response to the research question (Rubenfeld, 2004:1182).

- The composition of the questionnaire

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire employed in this study constituted the quantitative component of this study.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A required the respondent to furnish biographical information. Section B consisted of subsections that consisted of items that were divided into subsections. Close-ended questions were asked, which were formulated according to the findings of the qualitative phase, in other words, the themes that emerged from the interviews.

The items on the questionnaire were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), to strongly agree (5). For the sake of significant interpretation, strongly agree and agree have been combined into one category: agree; while strongly disagree and disagree are combined into one category: disagree.

- Section A: Biographical information

The following biographical information was requested from the sample of respondents: gender, title, age, language, highest qualification, position held at NMMU, years at previous institution before the merger, institution before the merger and campus located at present.

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5 A copy of the complete questionnaire can be found in appendix 3.
These items were included in the questionnaire in order to observe their relationship in terms of the themes and items in section B.

- **Section B: Perceptions regarding the organisational identity of the NMMU**

Four themes, which are to be discussed in the next chapter, emerged from the qualitative phase. As mentioned earlier, these four themes were then translated into subsections for the questionnaire. The subsections were divided as follows:

**Subsection B 1** related to *the academics’ understanding of the term comprehensive university*. This subsection included six items, which explained the concept of a comprehensive university, as they emerged from the themes of the qualitative phase. In order to determine the *extent* to which academics understand the term “comprehensive” university, the following statements were presented to academics to respond to, according to the five-point Likert scale, as explained above:

- The comprehensive, combined nature of the university makes it a unique type of university.
- It offers broader access to a wider range of University and Technikon programmes, with articulation between degrees and diplomas.
- A comprehensive university is more career-focused and offers better opportunities and multi-tracking career pathways for students.
- A comprehensive university caters for both academic and practical qualifications.
- Both teaching and research are regarded as important academic functions.
- The term is confusing to me.
Subsection B 2 related to the significance of the human factor during institutional change at the NMMU. There were ten items under this subsection. Statements about the experiences and feelings of academics in terms of their perceived treatment by the institution’s management teams were presented to the respondents. Statements about the nature of the institutional procedures and processes were also put to them for their response.

The following items served as statements for this section:

- The voices of academics are heard.
- Old stereotypes no longer exist between academics of the previous institutions.
- I experience that academics are treated with sensitivity.
- Strategic planning, team building and academic development are valuable strategies that ensure the desired outcomes.
- Proper communication, transparency and consultation take place in the new institution.
- Access to and dissemination of information is adequate.
- A culture of respect and trust exists.
- Academics are recognised and valued for their contribution.
- Salaries are harmonised in the new institution.
- There is cohesion and a common focus among academics in the new institution.

Subsection B 3 focused on the strategies to foster an organisational identity at the NMMU. This subsection included twelve items, which, in essence, were statements about conditions and strategies required for an organisational identity to be constructed.
The following statements were presented for academics to respond to:

- Academics are teaching across programmes.
- Some old programmes have not changed.
- There is a focus on the strengths of the new institution.
- Recurriculation is done in line with the needs of industry.
- The research environment is nurtured.
- The SANTED project is fostering the academic enterprise.
- Attempts are made to keep academic standards high.
- The academic programmes contribute towards the employability of students.
- A multi-disciplinary approach to teaching is followed.
- There is facilitation and mediation of change.
- Excellence in teaching and research are equally acknowledged.
- Academics have internalised, and are living out, the vision, mission and values of the newly merged institution.

**Subsection B 4** concentrated on the *impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity*. There were twelve items in this subsection. The intention of this subsection was to gather information on the manner in which the merger has had an impact on the everyday operations of the NMMU.

In addition, the purpose was to establish how academics were and are still being affected by the way in which the merger process was and is still being managed. Consequently, the aim was to expose and reveal issues that affect academics and prevent them from executing their duty in a non-threatening, non-restrictive and healthy environment.

The following were statements that academics were requested to respond to:
Policies, procedures and structures are in place only on paper, and not in practice.

Academics spend too much time on administration.

Academics are still acting according to the procedures of their previous institutions before the merger.

The management style is top-down and bureaucratic, not allowing enough participation from academics.

The new institution now offers more benefits since the harmonisation of structures.

The fact that units are not physically united and located at the same campus hampers the establishment of an NMMU organisational identity.

The merged institution is understaffed in terms of the academic-student ratio.

Financial constraints hamper academic functioning in the new institution.

Academic standards are maintained in the new institution.

The national restructuring in higher education such as the HEQF, impacts negatively on the establishment of an internal organisational identity.

Previous technikon programmes have been marginalised.

The merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy.

The intention of the questions above was to investigate the perceptions of academics regarding the organisational identity of the NMMU. The four themes were outlined and translated into subsections for the questionnaire. The responses to the questions above will be analysed and interpreted in Chapter 6.

4.9.4 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis refers to the technique that researchers use to convert data to a numerical form and analyse them statistically (Babbie, 2007:405). To analyse the data, a quantitative software programme, known as the Statistical
Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used by a statistical analyst from the Department of Mathematical Statistics at the NMMU. The analysis produced biographical graphs that summarised the biographical information in section A of the questionnaire.

Biographical frequencies, item frequencies, as well as cross-tabulation tables were produced, to make the interpretation easy and comprehensible. The analyses were presented earlier in this chapter (See Table 4.1 and Figures 4.2 to 4.8).

Cross-tabulation tables indicate the level of dependability of variables using the Pearson Chi-Square tests. These tests measure the relationship between two categorical variables and compare how far the frequencies that are observed differ from those expected in those categories by chance (Field, 2004:682; Howell, 2004:444). The p-value was used to interpret the data by indicating the statistical significance of the relationship between categories. This is defined as the likelihood of attaining a test statistic, at least as close to the observed one, on condition that the null hypothesis is true (Anderson, et al., 2000:914).

More detail on the quantitative data analysis are provided in Chapter 6.

4.9.5 Validity and reliability

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:31), determining validity is an essential step in the research process. Golafshani (2003:599) suggests that validity involves the answering of the following questions:

- How truthful are the results?
- Does the research truly measure that which it was intended or claimed to measure?
Validity, in other words, indicates the level at which an instrument measures what it was intended to measure (Oppenheim, 1992:160). In this study, the intention has always been to answer the research question.

In order to further ensure validity, a statistically valid programme (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. This was done in order to obtain the best available estimation of the truth. No attempt was made to manipulate data. Copies of the responses to the questionnaire are being kept in an audit file that consists of evidence that the research was undertaken empirically.

Reliability has to do with the consistency of the measurement or the degree to which an instrument measures the same way each time it is used under the same circumstances with the same subjects (Golafshani, 2003:598; Oppenheim, 1992:159). The focus here is on the replicability and repeatability of results. The questionnaire in this study was designed in such a way that it could be replicated in similar situations with similar subjects under the same conditions.

4.10 ETHICAL MEASURES

According to The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (1989:211), the term ethics refers to the “code of conduct or behaviour governing an individual or group”. When conducting research, social scientists enter into the private lives of their participants (Berg, 2001:39). Researchers therefore have to make sure that the privacy, the rights and the welfare of their participants are guaranteed (Kumar, 1999:191).

Researchers have a duty and obligation to abide by the code of conduct that governs most professions (Babbie, 2007:62).

Christians, in Denzin and Lincoln (2003:217-219), provides elements to serve as guidelines for dealing with ethical concerns in research. These are:
Informed consent from participants should be requested. In this study, a standard pro forma method, provided by the NMMU research office, was adopted and given to participants to sign. A letter was also provided to participants in which the purpose of the study, as well as the role of the participants, was explained.

Guarding against deception refers to the misrepresentation of information or of the researcher. This also includes the handling of the participants’ identity, as well as being honest about one’s own identity as a researcher (Babbie, 2007:67). In this study the researcher was candid regarding any information or content that appeared to be ambiguous. I clearly stated my interests in the study and my capacity within the NMMU.

Privacy and confidentiality both obligate researchers to assure their participants of privacy and confidentiality so as to protect their identities. In this study, I systematically used codes to refer to text that had been extracted for the sake of discussion, in order to protect the participants’ identities. The questionnaires that were downloaded from the e-mails were also coded from 001-108. In no way was I able to identify any of the respondents.

Researchers are obligated to present information that is accurate. Unethical means that may lead to inaccurate information include “fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances” (Kumar, 1999:190-194; Berg, 2001:40-44; 56-59). Right through the study, accuracy was maintained by paying attention to any of the above-mentioned acts that may encourage potential inaccuracy (Kumar, 1999:190-194; Berg, 2001:40-44; 56-59).
4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the trajectory of the research process. In an attempt to answer the research question, I systematically presented a research design that captured my philosophical assumptions, as well as the methods and instruments of investigation. These assumptions and methods served as tools of investigation and examination to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. The diagrammatic representation (see Figure 4.1) mapped the trajectory of the methodology of the study.

Chapter 5 aims to focus on the findings of the qualitative phase of the study, where the data analysis process will be clearly demonstrated. The data will be analysed and discussed, through the support of relevant literature.
CHAPTER 5

REPORT AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of phase one of this study (the qualitative investigation) will be presented in this chapter. These findings are based on semi-structured interviews that were conducted with academics at all post levels at the NMMU. The main objective of the research was to gain an understanding of the meanings that academics assign to the newly merged *comprehensive university* and to explore how the meanings that they attach to this concept of the university shape and inform the construction of an *organisational identity*.

The analysis of the interview transcripts relied significantly on the interpretation of the academics as they made sense of their world. During the sense-making process, they expressed their feelings, thoughts, aspirations, attitudes and beliefs about their reality. I thus had to go back and forth to reconsider and reconceptualise presumptions so that new ways of exploring the text were presented. Subsequently, significant themes emerged from the data.

The findings will be presented in a narrative format, supported by *verbatim* quotations from the transcribed interviews. Each theme will be supported and validated with the relevant literature, in order to reveal similarities, contradictions and discrepancies. The intention is to paint a clear and holistic picture of the situation being studied, from the perspectives of the academics.

The interviews collectively and consistently presented four primary themes. Although academics demonstrated a similar *understanding of a comprehensive university*, they generally felt that it was an unfolding concept (Theme 1). Academics emphasised the importance of the *human factor* during change
(Theme 2). In terms of the construction of the organisational identity, academics suggested various strategies (Theme 3). Throughout the narratives of participants, the effects of the merger have frequently been referred to (Theme 4).

Table 5.1 summarises the findings of the study into pertinent themes, categories and sub-categories.

Table 5.1 Summary of identified themes, categories and sub-categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>SUB-CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Academics seem to have similar views on a comprehensive university</td>
<td>1.1 Nature of the institution</td>
<td>1.1.1 A combination of University and Technikon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.2 A combination of different qualification pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.3 Unique, different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Programmes offered</td>
<td>1.2.1 A wider range/spectrum of programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.2 Broader access in terms of programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.3 Articulation pathways between diplomas and degrees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Benefits for students</td>
<td>1.3.1 Better opportunities for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.2 Deliver a better graduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.3 Multi-tracking career pathways for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.4 Stronger career focus in the training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The nature of teaching and research</td>
<td>1.4.1 The focus is both academic and practical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4.2 Both teaching and research are important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4.3 Different profiles of academics exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4.5 An emphasis on socially relevant research and community engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Clarification of the concept</td>
<td>1.5.1 Confusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5.2 Unfolding concept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5.3 Just a ‘label’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Academics emphasise the significance of the human factor during change</td>
<td>2.1 Better care should be taken of people</td>
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| 3.2 Strategies related to the vision and mission of the NMMU |
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| 4. The experience of the merger hampers the construction of an organisational identity |
| 4.1 Over-emphasis on structures |
| 4.1.1 Staff feel marginalised, isolated |
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5.2 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 THEME 1: Academics seem to have similar views on a comprehensive university

The first question that was posed to the participants was “How do you understand the term ‘comprehensive’ university?” Generally, the participants offered similar views in terms of their definition of a comprehensive university. However, some were not confident when they had to define it.

A few respondents, for example, wanted to know from what perspective or context the question was being asked. One participant started her response by saying “In terms of the Department of Education (DoE) having created a comprehensive university…” This suggests the absence of an agreed-upon definition of the NMMU. What is used, instead, is a DoE definition, since this body created such a university type.
Another participant challenged the idea that there is a common understanding of the term. He started his response by commenting “I don’t think there’s anyone who understands the term comprehensive university”. To put their points across, other participants used phrases such as “from a merger context”, as well as “from a South African context”.

One participant responded, “The word comprehensive comes from probably the German experiment”. Another participant started off by trying to explain what it is not, from the impressions that she received from other academics. It almost seemed as if that she was concerned that the ‘wrong’ impression was going to spread and she did not want that to happen. She said,

*The way that I see some people understand the comprehensive [university] by meaning all things to all people and they think that within a comprehensive you must offer the full range of programmes.*

Revealing the extent of the lack of a common understanding of the term, another participant explained that she had to do some research into what the DoE meant by the term.

Some of the participants expressed the view that becoming a comprehensive university was something that was imposed on the NMMU by the government:

*We ended up with this new university – this new Faculty. Whatever government or whoever wants to call us … but I don’t think our focus was so much on the term. We never focus so much on what we are labelled by the DoE, or whoever.*

Another participant even went further to express his feelings, as he thought that the merger was an unnecessary move. He then provided his reasons:

*So I didn’t see the need for this, let’s put it that way and the simple reason for that is, for maybe the exception of Vista University … the old Technikon and the old University, they were each on their own, achieving quite well without this interference. I think from an academic point of view each could have still, without all this extra energy, achieved.*
What is evident from the responses above is that there is a lack of a common understanding of the term comprehensive university at the NMMU. Almost all the participants made an effort to explain the context in which they were defining the concept. From the responses above, there is a sense that some participants were still pondering on the way the government ‘forced’ the mergers on the institutions (Skodvin, 1999:66-67).

Whether change is imposed or voluntary, Fullan (2007:22) asserts that the meaning will not be clear from the beginning. He suggests that learning and understanding something unfamiliar is a psychological process that does not occur straight away (Fullan, 2007:39). From the above responses it is observable that academics are still grappling with the term “comprehensive” university and are trying to make meaning of this ‘thing’ that is not of their own design.

Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar (1995:355) argue that meaning is created with others through active participation, and it is not something that can be “delivered” from above or from anywhere else, for that matter. This, therefore, means that academics have the task of co-creating and sharing the meaning that they give to the NMMU as a comprehensive university.

This idea is articulated by Imenda (2005:1414), having observed noticeable dissimilarities in South Africa’s comprehensive universities. He argues “… it will be up to each comprehensive university to determine and communicate its own idea of the university”.

Through a historical projection of comprehensive universities internationally, the justification provided above, as well as by the DoE’s own admission of the lack of clarity on this term (see discussion in Chapter One), I arrived at the conclusion that the term is currently shifting and intangible.
5.2.1.1 Category 1.1: The nature of the institution

Most participants shared similar views about the nature of a comprehensive university during the interview sessions. Below are sub-categories that emerged from this category.

- **A combination of a university and a technikon**
  In the responses provided, participants tended to lean heavily on the clinical and simplistic definition of a comprehensive university, as the combination of a university and a technikon.

- **A combination of different qualification pathways**
  Many respondents seemed to be of the opinion that the combination of the two institutions presented the opportunity for combining different qualification and career pathways, which is more encompassing in terms of academic and practical skills development. Academics offered the following definitions: “Comprehensive means a combination of technikon and UPE programmes, in other words, diploma combined with degree programmes”. Another participant averred the same views, “… the university that caters for both the, lets say former technikon diplomas and degrees … So it’s more the academic stuff plus the more practical”.

  These views are similar to the models in the United States of America, Germany, Britain, and Australia, where local equivalents of the comprehensive university offered a combination of vocational and academic programmes (Huisman, 2003:19; Harman, 2002:95; Smith and Langslow, 1999: 111; Finnegan, 1993:2).

- **Unique and different**
  There was a sense that the participants believed that a comprehensive university is something unique and different from the traditional theoretical focus. It is
challenged to differentiate itself from other types of universities: “Comprehensive means it’s not ordinary, it is different from the conventional”.

5.2.1.2 Category 1.2: Programmes offered
In a comprehensive university there is a comprehensive range of programmes and qualifications, from a certificate to a doctorate (Smith and Langslow, 1999: 111). According to Dalbey (1995:1), some comprehensive universities have a large number of students, while others have fewer students. Some institutions have PhD programmes and others offer only programmes up to Master’s degrees, while others do not have postgraduate programmes at all. One of the participants summed it up by saying, “[it is] a university that has the right and obligation to offer both traditional university programmes and traditional technikon programmes”.

- A wider range / spectrum of programs
One academic explained that she could only define the comprehensive university in terms of the programmes offered. She commented, “My understanding would probably revolve around the academic programmes on offer and that is unfortunately the only definition I can give at this stage”. Another participant responded, “My understanding is that it’s an institution that offers a wide spectrum of programmes, ranging from certificates to diplomas, to degrees”. Expressing the same views, one participant said, “I understand it to be an institution that offers a wide range of academic programmes”.

The definitions provided by participants were not off the mark. Dalbey (1995:1) defines a comprehensive university as an institution that offers a wide range of diverse programmes, study fields and degrees, from vocational to academic. In Britain, ‘comprehensive’ was understood in terms of the institution having a wide range of courses at a higher educational level, spread across full-time and part-time programmes (Smith and Langslow, 1999:111). Duderstadt (1997:81) also
defined comprehensive universities as institutions that offered courses at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels.

- **Broader access in terms of programmes**
  
  From the responses one could detect the assumption that, when there is a wider range of programmes, a greater spectrum of knowledge, and lower entrance requirements, broader access and different access routes then become possible. One participant commented along these lines: “… and the purpose I think is to provide students with broader access in terms of the kind of programmes that they can be introduced to at one institution”.

  Another participant concurred with the claim made above, “… which means it can offer a much broader base curriculum to therefore accommodate a far greater diversity of abilities and interests of potential students …”

  These views echo the situation in Britain, where the access to students was broadened to an extent that, in some cases, students were accepted without a General Certificate of Education (GCE) (Smith and Langslow, 1999:114).

- **Articulation pathways between diplomas and degrees**

  When one reads through the transcripts, one could gather that the intricacies of how the synergy within and across programmes needs to be developed, were largely expressed by senior managers. In view of this, one of the participants said, “*Flexibility is needed to optimise opportunities*”.

  Most senior managers could provide detailed and comprehensive explanations regarding articulation. The following views were expressed in this regard:

  *The focus for our institution has a lot to do with articulation … so you will get people who due to parent pressure come here to do a degree and then discover it’s too much; they’re doing a diploma. So how would we allow them to articulate, but not having the idea that one is superior to the other.*
It should be entirely possible if you start off with a diploma in engineering and after two years you discover but you really have an aptitude for this, and that you then move over to degree studies in engineering. It should also be possible the other way round.

Similarly, another senior manager spoke about the comprehensive university as being more than just a ‘combination’ He also considered the inter-programme/inter-qualification articulation:

I think here the comprehensiveness is also being defined or we tend to define it in bridging the two streams of higher education by having articulation pathways between the diploma and the degree, to come up with a comprehensive type of education.

What could be concluded from the above accounts is that senior managers have a good understanding of the term comprehensive university; however this understanding does not seem to have filtered down to the academics. It is thus clear that a need for more information-sharing sessions and communication strategies exists for the concept to be understood.

The following comment from an academic corroborates the assertions made above:

You know in upper management level they’ve made sure that all the sort of processes and procedures and policies are in place, but the whole institution hasn’t had a chance to become involved in how they see this new animal called a ‘comprehensive university.

Skodvin (1999:78) suggests that in such cases, management has to take the initiative to work with staff in developing goals and objectives that can be shared and bought into by the staff members. Citing Marris (1975:121), Fullan (2007:22) contends that when any change is introduced, meaning has to be shared for change to be internalised.

In terms of illustrating the importance of filtering down the information from the managers to the staff members, Muller (2006:204) goes to the extent of
contending that “information is the oxygen of the organisation. Stopping the flow temporarily or prematurely is dangerous”.

5.2.1.3 Category 1.3: Benefits for students
Participants felt that students could benefit from the wide range of programmes. The offering of a wide spectrum of programmes is believed to bring about new opportunities.

- **Better opportunities for students**
  Some participants expressed the opinion that students are in a better position in terms of being exposed to multiple opportunities. These benefits were in place, because of the articulation between and within programmes and qualifications. Responses of participants included comments such as,

  *Be[ing] able to take in a student who is studying for some or other technologically oriented diploma and through a process of articulation eventually that student will or could graduate with a degree in a higher level profession.*

  Another participant specified the type of student that would benefit from the broader access to programmes. She stated, *“There’s a lot of positive things that have happened and especially from the disadvantaged students … I really think it opened up opportunities for a lot of them programme wise”.*

- **Deliver a better graduate**
  Some participants felt that because of the availability of different programmes that cater for different interests and abilities of students, a better graduate would eventually be produced. One participant argued, *“We’re trying to look at the comprehensiveness from a point of view of giving the best of both and the outcome would be a better hybrid”.*
• **Multi-tracking career pathways**

Views from participants revealed that a multi-track career path is a result of the different programmes that are offered. Students can thus choose from different programmes and thereby are exposed to multiple career options. One participant commented. “*We’re offering you a career-focused programme that will make you employable and will contribute to the national economy*”.

• **Stronger career focus in the training**

For the reason that this is a comprehensive university, it is the view of some academics that a strong career focus is evident in its programmes. One participant reflected that “*More emphasis will be on vocational as well as professional qualifications. The academic therefore would have to reflect that in her teaching and research*”. Another participant stated, “*I think what I’m seeing is that there’s a larger portion of skills training involved in the learning process, as opposed to fundamental education*”.

5.2.1.4 Category 1.4: The nature of *teaching and research*

From the responses of the participants, the general assumption was that in a comprehensive university, a different kind of academic exists; therefore a different approach to *teaching* and *research* is taken.

• **The focus is both academic and practical**

A general feeling that resonated among participants was that in a comprehensive university, there are two streams of programme offering. These programmes are believed to cater for pure academic, basic, practical and applied research, while leaving room for innovation and technology. One participant thought of this focus as a challenge that needs to be balanced. He claimed

* A big challenge for a comprehensive university is to think through the balance that it wants to achieve between more basic research and more applied research, and in applied research, and I’m not sure if this is correct or not, I would [say] the whole notion of
technology transfer and you know sort of innovation in the technological field.

However, another interesting challenge raised by a participant was how research had taken a back seat due to academics’ involvement in the merger process. He argued, “we’ve seen it statistically, how our research operative has died; other Faculties have seen that, academics are just tied up with merger-related processes”. It would seem from the assertions made by the participant above that research needs to be encouraged. To build a strong research culture, Harman (2002:101) suggests that under-qualified staff should pursue research-based degrees. He also proposes an introduction of respectable post-graduate programmes, the initiation of students, and an infrastructure to support the research enterprise.

He further contends that this strong research culture requires a professoriate that consists of senior research leaders and managers (Harman, 2002:101).

• Both teaching and research are important

Generally, participants felt that both teaching and research are important. Participants seemed to be of the opinion that, because there is an attempt to balance the two streams and acknowledge their equal importance, teaching and research need to be balanced. One participant responded in this manner:

I also think I would like an academic culture moving not only on the pure research, I think there should be a culture of more recognition of teaching … A lot of them spend a great deal of time preparing, facilitating and there seems to be, in the past, very little acknowledgement. Too much acknowledgement again on the publications and research, which is important, I’m not saying that’s something to be scaled down, but I just feel we should perhaps [put] a bit more emphasis on teaching [sic].

In this regard, Smith (in Smith and Langslow, 1999:165) reveals that although research has over the years become recognised as a prominent feature of a university, for a long time the university was primarily regarded as a teaching
institution. Prudently, Harman (2002:99) argues that, if research is valued more than teaching, academic cultural divisions are likely to be created.

He further suggests that if research capacity is to be cultivated and teaching to become more prominent, newly merged institutions need to create conditions and design policies that equally support professional development in both research and teaching. It is common for universities to argue that a research environment is crucial for good teaching. However, according to Smith (in Smith and Langslow (1999:163), universities often fail to use research to “improve the teaching and learning process”.

- **Different profiles of academics exist**

Participants believe that a comprehensive university academic has a different academic profile that strongly and equally includes both teaching and research, or where the orientation is more towards one or the other. In agreement with this statement, one participant argues, “some academics will have a stronger focus on research, while others will focus more on teaching”. According to another participant there needs to be awareness of the existence of these different profiles and that they need to be “accommodated”. Acknowledging the challenge faced by the institution, because of the different profiles of academics, one participant said: “And then in addition to that, there are different types of knowledge within the institution ranging from very applied to very formative and abstract. So all these things we need to now position”.

Congruent with the idea raised by the participants above, Skodvin (1999:74) asserts that different competency profiles, coupled with teaching versus research are phenomena that are prevalent in higher education. In this regard, he argues that in institutions that have merged, these different profiles often create different academic cultures that hinder the process of positive academic integration (Skodvin, 1999:74).
• An emphasis on socially relevant research and community engagement

Another leg to the function of the university is the notion of socially relevant research and community engagement. One participant expressed her view on this issue almost as if she was double-minded about it. She explained,

As an academic you know, time is always a factor, I don’t know how far we can actually be stretched in terms of our contribution, but I think one of the aspects of comprehensiveness is also social engagement. So I would assume that I would first of all in my teaching develop new strategies, then in research in particular.

Jacobs, Brandt and Kruger (2006:226) define engaged universities as institutions that undertake to extend themselves to the community in mutual partnerships that are based on learning, research and scholarship. These authors emphasise dedicated cooperative partnerships.

On the notion of social relevance, another participant argued that in a comprehensive university the approach should be, “here is a problem in society, we don’t seem to have the knowledge to resolve this problem, so let’s do the research to create the knowledge so that that problem can be resolved”.

5.2.1.5 Category 1.5: Clarification of the concept

An additional aspect that resonated among the Deans was the fact that they viewed the NMMU as a ‘new’ university [New Generation University] rather than a comprehensive university. One of the Deans asked me directly, “You say comprehensive university, why don’t you just say new university?” In an attempt to talk about the identity of a comprehensive university, another Dean said,

How one perceives this, you know, the expression is of a New Generation University that was perhaps a way of trying to re-brand the organisation, [and] to give it some tangible identity.

Another Dean also explicitly stated “But the comprehensive university is a secondary issue, we’re new, we are the NMMU”.

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It appeared that the idea of the NMMU being a New Generation University only resonated among senior managers, because academics who are not managers did not even insinuate that the NMMU is a New Generation University. However, there was also a perception that the term comprehensive university was not clear and was confusing to some of the participants.

- **Confusing**
In general, it appeared that academics are still grappling with the concept of a comprehensive university. Speaking on behalf of their staff in an attempt to illustrate the extent to which the term comprehensive university is unclear, one of the Deans expressed the following point of view:

> There’s not a clear understanding of the term comprehensive. So you can go now to my staff members and 80% of them will say ‘I don’t know, I honestly don’t know.’

The following views on the clarity of the concept were also expressed by participants:

> It took me a while to actually get my head around this, because there was very little information initially about the term comprehensive university.

> I can say it is confusing for me, because as far as our programmes are concerned … the programmes that we used to run previously at … still continue … so we still focus on those programmes that we used to focus on.

> My feeling is [that] the word comprehensive is not very helpful. it has a certain middle of the road, non-distinctiveness, trying to be all things to all people linked to it.

- **Unfolding**
Generally, participants felt that the concept, as well as the merger process, is still unfolding. As such, it is too soon to conceptualise the NMMU as a comprehensive institution. One participant asserted, “How it is going to develop over time in terms of marrying some of the programmes or keeping them
separate or enriching them? It’s going to unfold”. Another participant commented, “It will take time, it’s an evolving process”.

• Just a ‘label’
One of the participants displayed a sense of disregarding the term ‘comprehensive’ when commenting, “… we never focus so much on what we are labelled by the Department of Education or whoever”.

Evidently, academics are still trying to make sense of the change and give meaning to the concept that was introduced to define them as an institution. The literature has demonstrated that meaning-making during a process of change cannot occur at the drop of a hat. Meaning-making is not something that comes from ‘outside’, but it is co-created by the same people who are trying to define themselves.

Theme 1 has revealed that academics do have some understanding of what a comprehensive university is. However, it is evident that the understanding that academics offer is not the one that they have collectively come to as the NMMU. It is clear from the responses of the participants that some academics have still not accepted the manner in which the idea of a comprehensive university was imposed upon them. What is also clear is that between management and academics, there are some gaps in the common understanding of the concept in terms of the details, especially those about access and articulation.

Academics have indicated that the term is unfolding and evolving; this gives room for the NMMU to make sense of the term. As Imenda (2005:1414), suggested above, the NMMU will thus have the opportunity to determine what a comprehensive university means to them and what they would like it to be in their context. In this manner, they would be able to construct their organisational identity.
5.2.2 THEME 2: Academics emphasise the significance of the *human factor* during change

Many participants spoke about the importance of the *human factor*, citing that the voices of the people needed to be heard. They felt that more sensitivity needs to be displayed towards staff members. They were also of the opinion that proper communication needs to be sought for at all times. The importance of the acknowledgement of achievements was mentioned in particular. The respondents also referred to the fact that, ultimately, the staff should strive for cohesion.

In this regard, literature suggests that the human factor in organisational change has often been claimed to be neglected or ignored. Bovey and Hede (2001:535) argue that the influence that the human dimension has on the success or failure of organisational change is a commonly committed error. Muller (2006:203) concurs and refers to this human element as ‘soft’ issues that can determine the success or failure of organisational change.

5.2.2.1 Category 2.1: Better *care* should be taken of people

Academics, particularly the ones who are not in management, generally indicated that people were not taken *care* of during the merger process. The respondents revealed that they had not been consulted when decisions were taken. According to them, they were ‘just told’ about changes.

- **The voices of staff should be heard**

  This issue of ‘voices of staff’ is related to the aspect of communication. Participants felt that no transparency and proper consultation exist. One participant said, “I think we need to have clear signals that the contributions of staff are valued and that staff members will be listened to, but staff don’t feel that they’re really consulted properly.” Providing a solution to the problem, another participant stated “… what I would like to see taking place and maybe also
perhaps is for academic staff members to have a greater voice, maybe in terms of our needs”.

- **Stereotypes should be broken down**

It emerged from the interviews that the merging of two academically different institutions of higher education, namely a former technikon and a university, resulted in the creation of stereotypes and biases. For the reason that these previously separate organisations had already developed their group identities, stereotypes and biases of the out-groups are an expected result (Ashforth and Mael, 1989:32).

From the responses it became clear that some academics felt as if they had 'lost' something, or were feeling inferior. One participant revealed that

> it’s interesting when you look at the stereotypes ... you’ll probably know that the ex-UPE staff often look down on the technikon and say what they do is more worthwhile and superior academically.

She went on to show how these stereotypes were unhealthy and created undue perceptions. She explained that

> this is just by the way that a lot of people that were previously placed for example on the Summerstrand South campus, that have to move to an ex-technikon campus viewed that in a sense as a demotion, because they’re now moving from a university campus to a technikon campus.

Responding to this behavior, one participant asserted that “I think the biggest challenge is to try and empty the minds of people to get them to think afresh”. Another participant concurred by saying “… the mentality of some of the staff members needs to change”.

Brown and Humphreys (2003:125) argue that, if the above scenario persists, the perceived differences might be augmented and the cohesion of the pre-merger groups could be strengthened. Nixon et al., (1998:5-6) thus recommended that
collegiality ‘be turned inside out’. This means that the boundaries of academic collegiality need to be redrawn. Transparency and openness during interactions thus need to be ensured.

- More sensitivity towards human beings needs to be encouraged and displayed during change

The ‘human factor’, as Harman (2002:93) mindfully puts it, in any change process, should be handled as a priority and with sensitivity. He argues that in a newly merged institution, if the human factor is a priority, then the merged institution will develop “healthily” in the post-merger period (Harman, 2002:111).

Muller (2006: 204) also holds that if issues concerning the feelings of people are handled in the right manner, the new organisation can emerge with a stronger set of capabilities and a healthy attitude towards change. Fullan (2007:170) thus views change as a “people-related phenomenon for each and every individual”.

The views of these authors are corroborated by the following excerpts from the interview transcripts, which all suggest that better care should be taken of people:

*Paying more attention to the human side, in the end it is the staff who are going to make this institution succeed and make it work well.*

*You cannot ignore people in the process. People are your most valuable asset that you have.*

In concert with the views expressed by the previous participants, some senior managers explicitly argued that the feelings of people needed to be prioritised:

*People matter tremendously … you can’t create a new university without taking the feelings of people into account. And you get nowhere if you don’t have staff behind you.*

*My management style is just very participative, so I would like to hear the voices of even the cleaners…we’re equally important and therefore I need your views [sic]*
One of the senior managers referred to the fragility of the people as follows: “…and I think at this stage many staff members feel marginalised or they don’t feel they are part of a meaningful discussion about what the NMMU stands for …” Another participant called for “sensitivity towards each other”.

Harman (2002:107) cautions that the effect of the merger on “the morale and loyalty of the staff can be devastating” if the change process is not handled with “super-sensitivity”.

- **Team building is required as a strategic priority**
  During the interviews, the Deans in particular shared some insight about their Faculties’ strategic planning and their strategies to foster unity. One Dean mentioned, “…what we are looking at is creating structures that will bring people together…and there will be a new “us”. The same Dean explained how important people are, because expertise from both streams is needed in order to service the different programmes.

  Another Dean revealed how they were already involved in team building exercises as a Faculty. He explained: “In two weeks time we will have a team building exercise, just to bring Faculty Management together, because we went through a whole Faculty strategic plan and we should implement that now”. This claim was also corroborated by another Dean; and he mentioned: “We have identified team building across the Faculty as an important strategic priority. So having team building opportunities is happening across the schools and departments”.

- **A strategic plan with the Faculty is essential**
  One Dean explained that ‘planning with’ the Faculty instead of “imposing” on the Faculty was essential. She commented as follows: “Strategically, I’m supposed to come up with a strategic plan for the Faculty, but for me it’s not something that I come up with, it’s something that is developed in the Faculty”.
• **Staff development**

One of the Deans argued for the development of staff in order “to understand this comprehensiveness”. Another academic suggested that “knowledgeable people about what the potentials are of the comprehensiveness should be having public lectures, workshops, information sessions…” A further remark was that,

> the university does also offer a number of workshops to academic staff members, you know, how to write proposals, how to conduct research and we have many opportunities now to use to empower ourselves.

Congruent with the views expressed by participants, Nixon, *et al.*, (1998:5-6) believe that the professional selves of academics need to be developed, through designated staff and academic development units.

**5.2.2.2 Category 2.2: Proper communication is necessary**

One of the issues also identified in literature as a major challenge during a merger process, is communication (Muller, 2006:202; Harman, 2002:100). It is generally accepted that proper communication is necessary for any change process to run smoothly. Muller (2006: 200) concurs with Skodvin’s (1999: 76) assertion that when employees are not consulted on the matter, they view change as not of their own making.

As a result, change is then feared. Muller (2006:205) thus stresses the importance of proper communication, especially during times of “disruption”.

• **More transparency and consultation are needed**

The majority of the participants highlighted insufficient communication at NMMU. They also complained about the dissemination of so-called “mixed messages”. One participant complained about the lack of “face to face communication”. In this regard, another participant recommended that “… one must have a lot of transparency, openness; and consultation is very important”.
The views of these respondents confirmed the finding of a study conducted at the Durban University of Technology library, where transparency was identified as one of the major challenges faced by library managers (Muller, 2006:203). Muller (2006:203) thus suggests that staff members need to “hear more” from their managers and they should guard against so-called “information vacuums”. Nixon, et al., (1998:5-6) argue that transparency and openness need to be ensured when dealing with one another.

- Easy access to and dissemination of information should be ensured

The issue of easy access to and dissemination of information goes hand in hand with the previously mentioned issues of proper communication, transparency and consultation. Participants therefore called for easy access to information.

This aspect was clearly a significant issue to academics, as one of the participants proposed ways to address this problem. “Part of it can be sort of written communication, electronic communication, but part of it is also face to face communication”. Another participant stressed the importance of information dissemination as follows

> Dissemination of information and ensuring that there’s not a misunderstanding about the kinds of issues, because the comprehensive institution, yes, it has a definition, it has a meaning, but there is a flexibility within that to determine for the specific institution what is best.

These views support Wenger’s (1998:252) assertion that one of the major challenges of organisational design is the sharing of information. He believes that, in communities of practice, information dissemination primarily implies communication, as this constitutes a continuing process of meaning negotiation.
• **An atmosphere of open dialogue and debate is lacking**

In agreement with the views of Wenger (1998) and the other participants expressed above, one senior manager felt that

*We need to be more open in our communication strategies and within the institution and we need to create more space for dialogue ... I’m missing that kind of more open academic debate, where opportunities for people to come out and say sort of how they see the NMMU, perhaps how they think about their role within the NMMU.*

The assertions made by the participants above are congruent to the idea held by Riad (2007:28) who contends that through dialogue reality is constructed, and the site of construction is interaction. The idea of open dialogue and debate seem to be well suited for universities, because they are regarded as “homes for contested views, contradictions, debate and intellectual conflict” (Harman, 2002:97).

In terms of proper communication, by her own admission, another senior manager highlighted certain existing shortcomings: “*We may be weak in a sense that we consult externally a lot, but the staff and students might draw the conclusion that we don't consult as much internally*”.

Contrary to the perceived lack of communication received from management, some of the senior managers alluded to the importance of communication in their personal management styles. One Dean mentioned distinct awareness of the importance of proper communication with staff in her Faculty. She also promoted the involvement of staff in the strategic plan of the Faculty. Another Dean agreed, asserting that a priority, “*...I would say is to get the strategic plan in place, to get the buy-in of all and through that to identify the academic niche areas of our Faculty*.”
These responses are indicative of the level of awareness among Deans, too, that communication is crucial.

- **A culture of respect, trust and democracy is called for**

One participant argued that for integration to take place, it has to happen within the parameters of a “culture of respect, trust and democracy”. In other words, the aforementioned values require a level of “cultural conformity” which plays a significant role in mergers with a high degree of integration (Riad, 2007:27). It appeared from the participants’ perspective that this culture is not only understood to take place between management and staff, but among staff members as well.

This view was elaborated on by one participant who asserted that there needs to be “more respect for what the different parties are doing”.

Furthermore, for integration to take place, Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:30) cite Atkinson and Butcher (2003), who describe trust as the “social glue” that can bring different structures of the organisation together. Puusa and Tovanen (2006:30) accordingly explain that

- at the individual level, trust is based on interpersonal relationships;
- at the group level, trust is represented through collective values and identities, and at the system level, trust is institutional and based on roles, systems or reputation, from which inferences are drawn about the trustworthiness of the individual.

### 5.2.2.3 Category 2.3: Recognition is required

From the responses of participants it can be gathered that they felt that recognition of the efforts of academics is necessary. In an organisation that is going through change, Kotter (1995:65) argues that people who assist in the achievements of organisational objectives need to be rewarded and even recognised through promotions and money. Eddy (2003:7) concurs and asserts that the reward system of a university needs to be given attention, because it is a significant mechanism that can be used to support institutional change.
In other words, recognition must be given to people who contribute towards the wellbeing of the organisation. Kezar (2005:54) contends that incentives are another additional mechanism for bringing about change.

- **Proper reward structures are important**
Congruent to the assertions of the authors above, one participant maintained that, in order to encourage people to move towards change, which would subsequently result in the establishment of a new organisational culture, it is essential to “create some kind of incentive for them to change and in this respect we’re looking at the reward structures for academics”.

Another participant also referred to the value of reward structures, holding that “I think the reward structures that we develop for staff [are] also a very important part of creating this new institutional identity”.

- **People need the assurance of being valued**
In times of change there are many uncertainties. People often feel that they need to be assured of their personal significance. They need to know that they form an essential part of the new organisation and are needed to ensure the wellbeing of the institution.

One of the Deans alluded to this important aspect, when describing his management style as “participative”. He elaborated, “…that was my approach last year, just to say to them we’re equally important and therefore I need your views”. Another participant revealed how staff members are in need of reassurance from management, explaining:

> You know many people are concerned about things that they are just un-informed about. They want to receive assurance from the people at the top, from senior management.
• **Salaries must be harmonised**

Alongside the aspect of rewards and recognition is the salary structure. The restructuring of the salary structure was part of a bigger process of the establishment of new staff structures, which would subsequently result in one single NMMU structure. Commenting on the process of this exercise, one senior manager said, "*We went through what many people called the ‘yellow pages exercise’, where we put together the ex-university and the ex-technikon in one single structure – there was no more distinction between even job titles*".

This whole process was called ‘Section 189’. One of the participants recalls the pressure that was caused by this process. She commented: "*The Section 189 process was very stressful; people left the institution*".

Another participant concurred: "*The hardest thing probably of the whole merger, especially for me very stressful, was the subsequent Section 189 process.*"

Following on this, the aspect of the harmonisation of salaries emerged during the interviews. This process had not been finalised at the time of the interviews, and was clearly affecting the staff. The sentiment was that academics of the three former institutions needed to be remunerated according to the same scale, in order to avoid discrepancies and inequalities in terms of rank and status.

One participant mentioned, "*Obviously the harmonisation of salary scales and those things have to take place, but that’s already on the agenda.*"

5.2.2.4 Category 2.4: **Cohesion / synergy is required**

Participants believe that the issues above are important in working across the university/technikon binary divide, trying to bring the different institutions, as well as theory and practice, together to form some kind of cohesion and common focus.
A strong theme that emerged during interviews was the view that, because the NMMU operates on the basis of a binary system, theory and practice still need to be unified.

Furthermore, many participants expressed a sincere need for staff to be united into a single common body. In essence, all the staff need to share a common focus. In this regard, one respondent was of the opinion that “… the academic focus areas can also create cohesion … that brings us together, because we know that the aim is for the same ultimate objective.” Expanding on the same view, another participant said: “If you have the academic niche areas identified, it means there’s a common focus.”

To bring the point home, one participant emphatically argued that “… the real cohesion has to be academic. You can do all these other things, but an institution that isn’t academically cohesive will always be divided”. According to Hogg and Abramss (1988:95), group cohesiveness refers to the interpersonal attraction that binds group members together into a whole. It is characterised by interdependence more than it is by its similarities or differences (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:96). In other words, the cohesiveness and unity are not so much about being the same, but they are about how well group members work together and depend on one another.

- **Staff ought to be united into a unique body, sharing a common focus**

During the interviews, it became clear that the integration of the ex-Technikon stream and University stream was generally regarded as a significant challenge. One participant referred to a prevailing awareness of “them and us”. According to this respondent, unification into a single ‘us’ was needed.

Harman (2002:109) argues that one of the challenges that impede unity and the sharing of a common focus in merged institutions revolves around the notion of
the academic status of staff. The merger between the old University of New England (UNE) and the Armidale College of Advanced Education (CAE) in Australia was characterised mainly by challenges relating to the academic status of staff. When principal lecturers from the CAE received automatic professorship status, they were perceived by UNE academics to be of a 'lower class'.

To a certain extent, this case resembles the situation at NMMU, where former Technikon and UPE academics now form the ‘same’ academic cohort. One participant revealed that

*When you look at the stereotypes you’ll probably know that the ex-UPE staff often look down on the Technikon and say what they do is more worthwhile and superior academically.*

Another participant remarked that

*Because we still have the legacy of the past in terms of where these institutions came from, the way they each previously operated, we still have remnants of that.*

Another participant went further and claimed that the problem was caused by “a lack of common ground, a lack of understanding of the potential of comprehensiveness”.

**Theme 2** dealt with a very important aspect, namely the human factor. Participants have exposed manners in which the human factor has been neglected at the NMMU since the start of the merger process. Participants attributed this shortcoming to a common challenge that faces organisations during the process of change, namely communication. Subsequent to the lack of communication, several challenges as highlighted above, have been perceived as a threat to the possibility of the construction of an organisational identity. Some of these challenges are transparency and consultation, easy access to and dissemination of information, as well as open dialogue and debate.
5.2.3 THEME 3: Academics apply various *strategies* to foster an organisational identity

5.2.3.1 Category 3.1: *Strategies* to manage the academic enterprise

It became evident from the interviews that the academic enterprise needed to be nurtured and managed. For the reason that the NMMU is a new institution with a binary system, it is essential that programmes meet the necessary professional and institutional requirements. There was a feeling that people still tapped into their previous institutional identities. Some participants believed that if there was a manner in which the academic enterprise could be managed, it would be through the positioning and utilisation of staff members to deliver the programmes and deliver these to students.

During the interviews, many participants referred to this aspect by reflecting on the strategies they were using, such as the ones mentioned below:

- **Cross-pollination should be employed**

  When academics were asked whether any strategies to encourage the construction of an organisational identity existed, the notion of “cross-pollination” was referred to. In other words, *“bringing together the two streams so as to have cross-pollination, so that one stream can reach the other one and where possible there may be joint activities”*. Hogg and Abramss (1988:97) cite Sherif and Sherif (1969) who view the process of joint activities as one that requires “co-operative interdependence”, that involves “mutual needs satisfaction through co-operative interaction”.

  Sherif and Sherif (1969) maintain that in essence this process brings about group attractiveness and encourages cohesion. For this to be successful, Kezar (2005:52) argues for an organisational context that is structured to support collaboration.
• A focus on the strengths of NMMU as a university

A proposal that resonated strongly throughout the interviews was the idea that the university needs to focus on its strengths. In this regard, respondents suggested that the following questions be asked:

“What is our strategy?”
“What is our core business?”
“What strengths do we have?”
“What should we re-do in a couple of years?”
“What do we want to be?”
“How do we get there?”

Respondents were of the opinion that the focus should be on maintaining internal strengths and competencies, instead of replacing these. Providing an answer to these questions, but referring to his Faculty, one participant remarked, “We want to be unique, we don't want to be ordinary, and you can look at our research focuses, we’re really unique in what we’re trying to do”.

The idea of focusing on one’s strengths is closely related to the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the organisation. Uniqueness means that the organisation has a distinct characteristic that brands it as something to be known by or to be known for. This distinctiveness informs people of the kind of service or product that the institution excels in, which forms part of the university’s organisational identity.

De Boer et al., (2007:33) claim that ‘being special’ as an organisation is one of the strategies that advances the construction of such an identity.

• Recurriculation is done in line with the needs of industry

Revision of old programmes is inevitable in a new institution, since the new so-called ‘programme mix’ needs to reflect the academic nature of the new institution. From the responses, it appeared that the participants regarded such
recurrículation as necessary and possible, as long as the new programmes are relevant and responsive to the needs of the industry/community.

Subsequently, one participant explained his responsibility as a Dean as follows:

\[ \text{Let's say to start off to review all academic programmes, the relevance thereof and to link them with the needs of the industry.} \]

Another participant argued that, as a Dean, she deemed recurrículation to be an important exercise to establish internal Faculty cohesion, in addition to meeting the needs of the new profile of students. She explained:

\[ \text{So I've gone and worked with the Directors and HoDs on the curriculum. That kind of forced people to make themselves responsible or accept responsibility for the [modules] that they were teaching and that's how we got them changed.} \]

The process of reviewing programmes during and after mergers is not unique to the NMMU. In Australia challenges of curriculum review were characterised by overlapping that resulted in problems of coordination and rationalisation of academic activities (Harman, 2002:100). To solve the problem, academics across campuses were given the responsibility of rationalising the duplication through an “integrated Faculty model” (Hodgson, 1996, cited in Harman, 2002:100).

- **The research environment is nurtured**

The importance of research emerged during several interviews, and from the responses, it was clear that certain strategies were employed, with some of these already promising to be fruitful. In this regard, one of the Deans reported: “… we have actually created the space for people to have time to do research”. This participant mentioned the creation of a research unit for the Faculty, as well as research teams working on projects in the community, in the identified niche areas. Another Dean explained how his Faculty has identified and brought together research teams in order to forge a common focus that involved all staff members.
On the contrary, one Dean revealed the disadvantages of the merger in terms of research activity and outputs. He argued:

*We've seen it statistically how our research operative has died, other Faculties have seen that, academics are just tied up with merger-related processes, it will take a long time to catch that up.*

The above responses reflect Harman’s (2002:104) view that, if a merged institution wants to equally promote and encourage research and teaching, certain conditions need to be worked out, such as policies to develop research capacity and support professional development.

- **The SANTED project is in operation**

In order to contextualise this sub-category, a brief explanation of the SANTED project is now necessary. The overall purpose of this project is to assist the NMMU and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in the development of a qualifications structure and programme profile that is appropriate in terms of their roles as comprehensive universities. Another purpose is to specifically develop effective and practical approaches to issues regarding curriculum design and articulation pathways, as well as access into and retention within their academic programmes.

A broader conceptual analysis relating to programme and curriculum models for the two Universities will provide the framework for focused work on the subject of articulation, both with respect to access and retention, and with respect to progression and transfer between qualifications. In this regard, specific attention will be dedicated to case studies within and between various academic fields in order to allow the two institutions to:

- Define the distinctive characteristics of their qualifications structure and academic profile within the institutional typology of the South African higher education sector;
- Develop coherent approaches to curriculum consolidation and reconfiguration and academic programme models;
- Develop appropriate access and retention models and strategies;
- Develop appropriate articulation pathways within and between various programmes (SANTED Business Plan 2006-2009, NMMU and UJ).

During the interviews, it emerged that some participants held the opinion that this project would assist in enhancing programme and qualification articulation. One participant stated:

Then another way that I think [SANTED] will encourage internal cohesion is that we have a number of case studies that we’re going to be undertaking in various academic disciplines and what these case studies will do is they will bring together academics from both the former University and the former Technikon say in the field [of] Human Resource Management or Architecture and then they will have to work together to develop an integrated curriculum for Human Resource Management or Architecture.

A similar venture to the SANTED project that was very successful, is an initiative that was undertaken by a New Zealand institution (UNITEC) when they developed a research culture “from scratch” in 1995 (Harman, 2002:101). This undertaking attempted to produce quality research, while avoiding any decline in the quality of teaching. There was a clear and detailed agreed-upon scheme that defined the operational process, as well as built-in review mechanisms.

- Attempts are made to keep the academic standards high

Several respondents referred to the importance of maintaining high academic standards. One participant asserted “… you know we are still keeping the academic standards high by teaching your subject field and then doing research”. [sic]. Keeping academic standards high and planning for academic excellence, involves “curriculum revision of programmes and awards, quality assurance in teaching and research and professional development” (Harman, 2002:92). Smith (in Smith and Langslow, 1999:163) agrees and contends that quality is to be assured and maintained through “rigorous self-assessment and self-evaluation”
that would allow transparency by inviting external quality assurors to occasionally do inspection.

- **Employability of students is ensured**
  Making sure that the students are employable by the time they finish their qualifications, was seen by many participants as one of the core responsibilities of academics. Respondents felt that the programmes that are offered should be highly competitive when compared with others in the country, so that the NMMU graduate can be employable and in demand.

  This is connected to issues of relevance of skills and knowledge taught at the NMMU, in line with the needs of the region. One academic was very passionate about this issue and stated: “My first priority, I mean, I see that as my calling as an academic, is to make my students employable”. Another academic maintained that the responsibility towards the students was “… to make sure that they are employable and then obviously if they are employable, it means that you linked their qualifications to the needs of the country”.

- **A multi-disciplinary approach to teaching is followed**
  The issue of multi-disciplinarity also emerged during the interviews. One participant commented on the teaching. He was of the opinion that a multi-disciplinary approach should be employed and further stated that “… we can bring this technology focus together with the scientific focus and the students can work together”. Another participant also argued for such an approach, arguing that society is “not organised so strictly and clearly in terms of our academic disciplines, [this kind of university requires] interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work”.

  The suggestions made by the participants resemble Whitchurch’s (2008:3-4) conceptualisation of “unbounded” and “blended” professionals who display a disregard for boundaries and work across the university. Although the assertions
made by the participants above are noble, Henkel (2005:166) reveals that academic disciplines are the sources of meaning and self-esteem for academics. This will also affect the construction of an organisational identity.

This implies that it is usually difficult for academics to be involved in multi-disciplinary approaches. She further asserts that the reward systems and values that are well-established within the university system support the disciplinary forms of knowledge (Henkel, 2005:169). This thus means that the task of encouraging multi-disciplinarity is not an easy one.

- **Change is handled via facilitation and mediation**

Several respondents referred to the importance of proper change management. A senior manager provided a solution to the manner in which change is handled, maintaining that “… then the challenge is to facilitate the whole change with staff, that they understand the comprehensive nature of this university”. The need for an adequate strategic plan was voiced by almost all the senior managers.

Within such a strategic plan, team building and the development of staff need to feature strongly. Concurring with the assertions made by the participants, Muller (2006:201) contends that “the starting point for change management is helping everyone understand why change is required.” Muller (2006:204) further asserts that the successful management of change involves the management of the expectations of people, their energy and their experience.

Kotter (1995:67) contends that in order to institutionalise change, the effectiveness of the new way of doing things (approaches, policies, procedures) must be clearly communicated to the people. He argues that people should not be left to make their own connections, because these links are at times inaccurate (Kotter, 1995:67).
5.2.3.2 Category 3.2: Strategies related to the vision and mission of the NMMU

Issues about the vision, mission and values of the organisation are strongly related to aspects of organisational identity. Irman (2002:2) states that organisational culture is usually presented as a set of values and ideas to be shared by the whole organisation. Once these values are taken for granted, they become part of the group’s identity (Schein, 2004:16). Schein (2004:14) asserts that once a group has achieved a sense of group identity, culture is the major stabilising force.

The vision, mission and core values of any organisation are thus at the centre of the organisation’s identity. Furthermore, Van Tonder and Lessing (2003:24) claim that there is a range of “organisational attributes” that are essential aspects of the organisation’s identity. Among others are mission statements, shared values and beliefs, management philosophy, culture, logos, slogans, and so forth.

Furthermore, an organisational identity is a socially constructed concept of what members envisage their organisation is and what they would like it to be (De Boer et al., 2007: 33).

The core business of the university is related to core values, which determine the work plan, future and identity of the institution. Kotter (1995:61) suggests that creating a vision to help direct the change effort is one of the important phases during the transformation of an organisation. He claims that the vision needs to be sensible and should clarify the future course of the organisation. Several respondents, during the interviews, mentioned the vision and mission of the NMMU. The following sub-categories emerged:

- **A programme that is compatible with the vision is designed**
  During the interviews it emerged that many respondents related the vision and mission of the institution to its organisational identity. In this regard, some
respondents felt that the programmes offered at the NMMU needed to be aligned with the vision of the institution. One of the participants, for example, commented that “we have to design a programme qualification, which over time will suit us, in terms of our particular vision, in terms of what we think are the important things here”.

- **Staff is involved in the development of Vision 2020**

Vision 2020 is a concept developed by the NMMU’s current Vice Chancellor, Professor Derrick Swartz. Its purpose is to give the NMMU community an opportunity to visualise its own future and to profile its institution, students and staff. They then need to work out steps to be able to attain that goal by 2020. Strategies to support the action steps must also be put in place in order to reach the ultimate goal.

In 2008 focus group interviews were conducted by the CPID with staff members to determine how they envisage NMMU in 2020. Workshops around specific themes have been initiated. During the interviews that I conducted with academics as part of my research, one participant indicated that there was some hope, because of the approach to the Vision 2020 initiative. She felt that this approach was more people-oriented and said:

> I mean, you know, the university’s working on this new project called Vision 2020, where people now have to get together and kind of discuss how they see the university in the future, and that will go a long way in assisting debate and discussions, because we haven’t really done that.

What is evident from the assertions made by the participant above is that an effort must be made to communicate the vision. Kotter (1995:63) emphasises the importance of communicating the vision through every channel available so that the “hearts and minds of people can be captured”. One of the strategies proposed by Kotter (1995:61) is for managers to actually model correct and exemplary behaviour.
• Encouraging the **internalisation and the living-out of the vision, mission and values** of the NMMU

A concern that was mentioned during the interviews was the aspect of ownership of the values, the vision and the mission of the NMMU. Respondents seemed to agree in general that, although these exist, they are not fully ‘alive’, because not all staff have taken ownership of them. In this regard, one of the participants stated:

> You know, I think another issue that we need to look at very carefully is the question of whether we actually are living out our values, because we’ve developed a number of important values in terms of our mission and our vision statements and we say that we encourage participation, we are democratic, but I don’t think that many staff members feel we are actually that way.

Almost echoing the same views, another participant said:

> But first of all it was quite rushed, you know, looking at the mission, vision, and the values of the institution; it was done in a hurry. Not many people were involved in that consultation process.

The above statements confirm that the values, vision and mission of the NMMU are not yet internalised, which means that people have not yet taken ownership of the institution. In other words, they have not yet made the NMMU ‘their’ institution. What can thus be inferred from the above is that there is still a lack of an organisational culture, which will impact on the construction of an organisational identity, because culture is the foundation for a common shared identity.

Acknowledging the problem alluded to by the participants above, Kezar (2005:53) contends that “simply having a mission statement does not ensure that it is lived”. She further suggests that more time and effort should be spent on an ongoing process of communicating and socialising people to the mission. Kotter (1995:64) reminds us that communication is both verbal and action-oriented.
Theme 3 above has explored the strategies that are and need to be in place in order for an organisational identity to be constructed. What the participants have revealed (and this is supported by literature) is the importance of communication during times of change. It is evident from the discussion above that the internalisation strategies need to be communicated until academics own the vision, mission and values. Central to this discussion is the internalisation and living out of the vision, mission and values of the organisation.

From the participants’ responses it is evident that these attributes, that are the backbone of the organisation, do not appear to be well communicated. I must hasten to add though that Vision 2020 is perceived to be on the right track in terms of communication. What is also seen to assist in the construction of an organisational identity is the recognition of strengths that are believed to distinguish the NMMU from the rest. The call therefore is made by participants for multi-disciplinarity that would encourage collaboration, co-operation, interdependence and networking. These elements are essential building blocks that can contribute to the construction of an organisational identity.

5.2.4 THEME 4: The experience of the merger hampers the construction of an organisational identity

Generally, the participants responded negatively with regard to the merger process, expressing negative feelings, such as marginalisation, and reluctance to take ownership of the change process and the new ways of doing things. Some participants appear to be still rooted in their previous institutional cultures and identities. Participants were not satisfied with the manner in which management handled the course of change, especially with regard to facilitating and managing of the merger process. Some participants mentioned that they had lost some benefits in the process.
Another major challenge referred to was the relocation of Faculties, especially in cases where the unity of some Faculties had been fractured, because the staff were located at more than one campus. Financial constraints, the public’s perception of the university after the merger, the influence of the HEQF on technikon qualifications, and the overall emotional impact of the merger on the construction of an organisational identity, were all identified as serious impeding factors, hampering the establishment of an organisational identity.

5.2.4.1 Category 4.1: Over-emphasis on structures
Several participants expressed views that structures, procedures and policies took priority over the wellbeing of people during the merger process. One respondent complained that

We’ve got like far more sort of structures in place [sic] … they are trying to make sure that when it comes to the institutional audit, we can basically tick off everything and say we do this, we do this, we do this OK! What is lacking is the process of education within the institution.

Contrary to the assertions made by the participant above, Kezar (2005:54) claims that structures are the key to sustaining and to connecting ventures that are normally done in isolation. At the same time she maintains that the mission and the network of people must first be sorted out before structures can be put in place to redesign the organisation. Concurring with Kezar’s (2005) latter assertion, Deutschman (2005) quotes Kotter (1995), stating that “The central issue is never strategy or structure. [It] is always about changing the behaviour of people” (Fullan, 2007:42).

- **Staff feel marginalised and isolated**
Subsequent to the above, participants felt marginalised, insecure and vulnerable. According to these participants, the management of the university had been trying too hard to demonstrate to the outside world that the institution was coping with the merger. This was done by putting in place structures, policies and procedures. The subsequent result was the neglect of the staff members in the
process. One participant said, “I think that at this stage, many staff members feel marginalised, or they don’t feel that they are part of a meaningful discussion about what NMMU stands for …”

Another participant added: “We’ve got to feel that we are really part of what’s taking place. Quite often one just feels that you’re a little bit isolated”.

- **No official policies exist to bring people together**

Most participants seemed to be unaware of any policies designed to bring people together. They claimed that management does not display any initiative in terms of promoting unity. Concerns that some efforts of management do not have a lasting impact on staff were also voiced. One participant maintained that there is a lack of leadership, remarking as follows:

> No, there are no policies … What we had in our Faculty last year, we had a strategic management session, but I mean it was a talk shop. There’s another one coming up again, luckily I missed the other one.

Expressing similar views, another participant stated:

> Apart from just the structures like the schools, where you have meetings that you really get to meet the people from the other side, there are no structures.

Contrary to the view expressed by the other participants, one participant acknowledged that the university and his Faculty do have some strategies in place to promote unity. He expressed his views as follows:

> I think the university’s got a few strategies in place; there are certain staff functions that take place, where people can get together and getting to know your colleagues [sic]. We, certainly in our Faculty, we have Faculty breakaways, we have strategic workshops, where staff get together, you get to meet other people from different departments, which has always been very positive. In our Faculty the workshops have also been facilitated in a very positive manner.
It is evident from the above quotes that different Faculties have different approaches to uniting people strategically. There appear to be differing views on this matter, because in other Faculties some participants claim that these strategies have not worked.

Responding to the issue of structures that promote collaboration, Kezar (2005:54) indicates that one strategy that was successful in the study that she conducted, was that of integrating structures across campuses and establishing a central unit responsible for promoting collaboration. At the NMMU, this kind of initiative has not yet been conceptualised.

- **Policies, structures and procedures are in place only on paper, but not in practice**

Many participants expressed feelings of frustration when they referred to the process of policy formulation which took place during the merger process. Although all was done in terms of designing the required policies, the reality of implementation was questioned. In this regard, one participant bluntly blamed the management of the university for ‘policy overload’, stating that:

> *I think the biggest obstacle in my mind for me is management, in the sense that a lot of policies and a lot of things have been designed and … we’re struggling with the information overload.*

Another participant shared the same sentiments, although she provided some justification for the situation:

> *Well, I think we’ve been so busy with the merger and with the institutional audit and with the Section 189 process that what happened is that we’ve got like far more sort of structures in place…we’ve got everything on paper.*

One of the Deans confirmed this frustration, but provided some insight into the policy design process:

> *We just sort of go through one policy, then there’s another one looming, and you have to go through that and sort out and put in*
place [sic], so they’re all on the intranet and I don’t feel that I know them all and I know exactly what [they] entail.

Explaining the challenges of time in terms of actually putting these policies into practice, another Dean commented:

And still today … that I read last night, I was busy with the draft examination regulations, this is the draft, we’re now in operation for three years, it is a crucial aspect of quality assurance and your academic integrity.

The assertions made by participants above, resemble Fullan’s (2007:7) assertions that “Reform is not just putting into place the latest policy.” He contends that it involves changing people’s cultures of how they used to do things in their work space.

- Staff are requested to spend time on too many documents and meetings

Academics, especially HoDs complained about inundation with paper work and meetings. One referred to the administration work, which, according to him, was supposed to be divided between Faculty Officers and HoDs. He stated “… all of a sudden our admin [sic] tasks are just getting more, more and more. I mean, the Faculty Officers are doing less and less”.

Another participant also expressed his frustration with regard to administration and the subsequent neglect of teaching and research. He explained, “I’m beginning to spend half of my time with book work and meetings and filling in of forms compared to the teaching and the research”.

5.2.4.2 Category 4.2: Reluctance to take ownership of the new university

It became evident from the transcriptions that the academics interviewed struggled to provide a description of the identity of the new institution. This could be ascribed to the fact that some academics still occupied the same positions they had before the merger and were still located at the same campuses that
they resided in before the merger. It was difficult for these staff members to clearly see the change.

One can conclude that, as a result, they held on to what made sense to them before the merger. The fact that some programmes did not change at all and were still being offered separately within the two diverse binaries, also seemed to hamper the construction of a new organisational identity, as it delayed the buying into, identifying with and unifying of the new institution.

In this regard, the following sub-categories emerged during the interviews:

- **Nothing has changed, staff still define themselves in terms of their previous institutions**
  The strong influence of the academics' past identity was evident during the interviews. There was a sense that academics still acted according to the cultures and practices of their previous institutions. As a result, they ignored or disregarded the new policies.

Humphreys and Brown (2003:125) posit that the boundaries of pre-merger groups are more salient at the beginning, where members still define themselves according to their pre-existing social categories. One of the participants confirmed the salience of these boundaries during the interviews. She even identified the 'culprits', when commenting that

> People sort of have their roots elsewhere, they come from technikon, they come from university, so that defines the identity of many academics and I think the main resistance actually to a certain extent comes from the university academics, because a technikon academic is quite happy to become involved in traditional university style academia, whereas university academics are less likely.

More respondents seemed to agree that former university academics were playing a dominant role. “We get the idea that the UPE people want to dominate
the degrees and if something is not a degree, it is regarded as inferior”. Another participant concurred:

As far as I’m concerned, the merger has had its own challenges and the new university, however, whatever one calls it, is more UPE than PE Technikon. So for me it looks like an incorporation.

The above comments clearly reveal an inequality in the new partnership, a phenomenon that is not uncommon during the merging of ‘unequal’ partners (Harman, 2002:93; Skodvin, 1999:71). These authors highlight this aspect as a significant challenge that hampers integration. Jansen (2003:36) refers to this process as a “subsumed integration”. The smaller institution is ‘taken over’ and absorbed by the larger and better established institution. Riad (2007:29) calls this trend, namely where one of the partners has to go through a loss of culture, a ‘sub-merger’.

Referring to the issue of ‘previous’ versus ‘new’ organisational identity, one participant, in his response, clearly expected the new institution to actively develop its own new identity.

But we haven't really begun yet to think with the kind of strategies that we need to create a new institutional identity for the NMMU, so I think that most staff members…still define themselves very much in terms of the previous institution that they belonged to.

Another respondent ascribed the perceived unwillingness to take ownership of the new institution to the fact that staff have not yet internalised the new institution’s values and principles, arguing,

But it hasn’t really come into their hearts yet, they still function pretty much in terms of ‘I come from the previous technikon’ or ‘I come from the previous UPE or Vista’ and they’re functioning within that particular frame of reference.

The responses of the participants reveal that academics still operate according to their previous institutions. They attributed this to the lack of internalisation of the vision, mission and values of the institution.
5.2.4.3 Category 4.3: Management style came under scrutiny

A fair amount of respondents expressed serious concerns regarding management’s lack of sensitivity towards staff, as demonstrated by insufficient team building and staff development initiatives.

In terms of these concerns, one member of senior management responded in the following manner:

*So what I think is needed is a lot of change management, interventions and organisational development, because we need to take those strategic frameworks and work with staff and say what do they understand by this [sic] and how does it influence the way that they do their work.*

These views clearly emphasise how profoundly change affects human beings. In this regard, Fullan (2007:21-22) stresses the importance of effective change management strategies, arguing that change

*… involves loss, anxiety and struggle, it involves passing through zones of uncertainty … the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle.*

These complexities necessitate the demonstration of sensitivity towards members of the changing organisation. Their minds need to be put at ease during processes of change. Muller (2006:204) thus reminds us that the expectations of people also need to be managed, since change management also includes the sensitisation of management towards people’s emotional needs.

- **A top-down style is not transformative**

Several respondents alluded to a prevalent management style experienced during the merger process, which they perceived to be ‘top-down’ and thus not transformative. One respondent asserted,

*I think there’s a lot of organisational development work that needs to take place, but it’s not something that can take place just from top-down, there has to be a lot of listening to ideas from the bottom*
up as well – so I’m looking for a kind of balance between the top-down and bottom-up approach.

Other participants agreed:

*There must be better communication, not only top-down, but down-up [sic] communication.*

*And I think that right now we have too much of a style where decisions are made at management level*

*But there are certain elements in top management that [are] very conservative and [are] not transformative.*

These comments confirm research which shows that change that occurs through a top-down approach does not succeed in attaining ownership. Fullan (2007:11) accordingly proposes a reconciliation and combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches for transformation. He thus views change as a “people-related phenomenon for each and every individual” (Fullan, 2007:170).

Painter-Morland (2002:120) also asserts that there should be a dialogue around the issue of organisational identity. This should never be a ‘top-down’ exercise, where certain decisions are made at top level and then merely announced to the membership, without discussion and opportunities for questioning.

- **Bureaucratic system and inflexibility**

Many participants felt that they were being restricted by the way in which the system at times hampers their daily work. Another concern expressed was the inflexibility of management when dealing with staff during times of change. These concerns were articulated as follows:

*Another very, very big challenge that we face over here is that there are many bureaucratic systems, structures in place.*

*Inflexibility - you know this is the policy and I mean 90% of the time people weren't even part of designing the policy and now you have to implement this policy and if you don't stick to it, I mean these are the rules.*
Rules are made by people who have never been in the classroom. We know it can’t work, but they haven’t got a clue how students operate and work and now they want to enforce the rules and we are the bodies on the ground; we know it can’t work.

What the participants raise reflects Bleiklie et al.,’s (2000) assertion that the work of academics, as well as their relationships, have been “bureaucratized and visualized” (Henkel, 2005:164). Providing a solution to the problem of inflexibility, Kotter (1995:62-65) suggests that leaders need to work with staff members as a team, because he claims that transformation will never happen if a great number of people are unwilling to help.

In other words, he proposes an interdependent relationship between leaders and their employees (Carstens and Barnes, 2006:11).

- **Insufficient participation, no tools for understanding change**

Several respondents displayed a concern about the level of participation staff members were afforded during the merger process. One of the senior managers concurred with the inadequate participation, acknowledging as follows:

*And we say we encourage participation, we are democratic, but I don’t think many staff members feel we are actually that way.*

Another apprehension expressed by participants was the fact that academics have not been equipped properly with the required knowledge and skills to understand and handle the change process that is taking place. One participant mentioned,

*I don’t think everybody is comfortable with what is happening, because they don’t really have the necessary tools and knowledge to understand it.*

The same participant then suggested ways in which these competences could be attained:

*People who are knowledgeable about what the potentials are of comprehensiveness should be having public lectures, workshops, information sessions.*
The suggestion provided by the participant above is in line with Kezar’s (2005:53) proposal of communicating and facilitating change. She also suggests “public speeches, ceremonies and events, staff and Faculty orientation.”

- **Reduction of benefits**

Some academics also felt that, as a result of the merger, they had lost some of the employee benefits enjoyed at their previous institutions. One participant complained as follows:

*So there has been a lot of reduction and deduction of benefits throughout the process. It makes people to be very negative even about the university. We’re struggling to be positive because people like staff from Vista even received much more than the other institutions [sic].*

Confirming the assertions made above, Harman (2002:107) contends that in any transformation process, “there will be winners and losers”. He advises management to be sensitive to these implications.

**5.2.4.4 Category 4.4: Site allocation is a serious force in developing an organisational identity**

During the interviews, it became clear that the location divide of the NMMU, due to its multiple campus nature, hampered the creation of an organisational identity.

The responses are confirmed by Ethier and Deaux (1994:244), who contend that identity is impacted on in some way if there are changes in the social environment. This is because the manner in which a person used to sustain her identity might not be applicable in the “new context” (Ethier and Deaux, 1994:244).

Zittoun (2008:166) claims that during transition processes, “repositioning” or “relocation” takes place, where a person occupies places that were previously occupied by other people. She asserts that repositioning means transformation of
identities and might need “social, cognitive and expert forms of knowledge and skills”.

When merging different institutions, addressing the geographical challenge of multiple campuses becomes inevitable. A multiple campus institution has its advantages, as well as its disadvantages. One of the benefits is that, students in particular are exposed to different geographical areas and therefore to different cultural contexts.

On the other hand, multiple campuses pose challenges, especially in terms of programme delivery. Staff and students have to travel between campuses. A multiple campus institution is thus further challenged when developing its own unique organisational identity.

- **Units need to be physically united in order to function well**

Further to the sub-category alluded to above, was participants’ acknowledgement that the multiple campus nature of the NMMU hampered the construction of its organisational identity. One participant observed that “… we are stationed here at 2nd avenue campus and our colleagues are at South campus, so logistically that also poses a challenge”.

A senior member of management (a director of a school) displayed similar frustration, commenting that:

*Faculties should be together. In my Faculty unfortunately, in my school, ¾ of my school is sitting on another campus, and they will always be regarded as that, and there is just no hope that they will ever sit with us.*

One of the Deans highlighted some harsh realities that need to be acknowledged. He stated:

*You have your technikon people sitting in 2nd avenue and your university staff sitting at South. So even though we all have the best of intentions and we have all these interventions and structures that*
reflect that, in practice the people that will work together, that will associate, will be the people sitting in the passage and they’re all in the one stream.

Another participant explained the importance of having the same Faculty together on the same campus and said if that is done,

*It will be a very demonstrable way of getting them to see each other every day, talk to one another every day and start working together and then that will probably also start breaking down some of the stereotypes and perceptions.*

Another participant even went further by describing the importance of having the people of the same Faculty on one campus. She argued that

*If you don’t know a person, how will you ever accept that person? There’s just no space and time created for people to learn from each other or know each other.*

### 5.2.4.5 Category 4.5: Financial constraints impact on the organisational identity

A merger process is a very costly exercise. It costs in terms of resources, time and energy, all of which, when converted, cost money. Harman (2002:106) asserts that long-term investments are essential during academic and physical restructuring. However, he hastens to declare that immediate results are not a guarantee. As anticipated, the aspect of financial constraints could clearly be identified as one of the categories emerging from the interviews.

Within the issue of finances, certain sub-categories featured strongly, as discussed below.

- **Understaffing**

Several participants referred to the fact that, according to them, the institution was ‘understaffed’ and that this challenge hampered the establishment of an organisational identity. One respondent referred to increased student numbers that had to be catered for by the existing staff component:
So the challenges we see at the moment, I would think under the NMMU, is we have certainly in our department high student numbers in relation to the number of academic staff members ... and then at the same time one is actively involved again with research, community projects and teaching. [sic]

Another respondent also mentioned the increased demand on academics as a result of understaffing:

*I think that there are lots of opportunities that can be introduced and utilised, but we’re understaffed, so obviously the first issue would be to ensure that there’s enough staff to drive this new comprehensive university.*

The merger between the three former Port Elizabeth higher education institutions resulted in an increased student cohort. Due to the fact that the new NMMU is a ‘comprehensive’ university and offers a wider range of programmes, access has furthermore widened and more students are being admitted than before. Yet, because of financial constraints, additional posts were not created. As a result, the existing cohort of academics is expected to accommodate the additional teaching demands.

Many respondents thus referred to the fact that academics are overworked, since they have to deal with extraordinarily large classes and a high student/staff ratio. Clearly, improved financial support is required, and in this regard respondents felt that this was the responsibility of the Department of Education, who commissioned the merging of higher education institutions in Port Elizabeth.

This sub-category also relates to the purpose and core business of a university, as interrogated and discussed earlier in this chapter (see Theme 3). The main objectives of the university are generally understood as being threefold: firstly, the mission of teaching (*transmission of knowledge*), secondly, the mission of research (*creation of knowledge*), and thirdly, the mission of services to society (*community service and engagement*) (De Boer, *et al.*, 2007:28; Perkins, 1973: 3-10).
Clearly, the increased teaching demands referred to during the interviews affected academics’ ability to attend to research and community engagement, two equally important core functions of the university, in the same manner. In this regard, one needs to note Jaspers’ (1960:54) warning that “one cannot be cut off from the others without destroying the intellectual substance of the university”.

5.2.4.6 Category 4.6: Public perceptions of the university influence the organisational identity
Another category that emerged during the interviews was the notion of public perception. One participant stressed the significance of public perceptions: “… and of course public perceptions … through experiences, good or bad experiences, that’s how they label an institution”.

When institutions merge into a new organisation, the image of the new organisation deserves to be noted. In this regard, the public’s perceptions of the new organisation are important, especially since the university is regarded as a public service provider.

Apart from a recruitment and marketing point of view, the public’s perceptions also contribute towards the establishment of the new organisation’s identity.

- Standards are declining
Related to the aspect of the importance of public perceptions was participants’ concern about perceived declining academics standards. One participant observed that

There’s an impression from the outside of the university that standards are going down and of course that’s something that concerns academics.

Expressing a similar concern, another participant remarked:
Suddenly now you hear some of them, they will never associate them with a Technikon - that is second grade, so why should my child now come to the NMMU, because they’re now this combined whatever, so I rather send them to university X that I know is an established university.

5.2.4.7 Category 4.7: The HEQF hampers the construction of an organisational identity

The South African Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) regulates the offering of programme qualifications in higher education. The HEQF determines what qualifications are to be offered by institutions of higher education. This framework is still rooted in the traditional view of a university as a primarily academic institution.

At present, the new ‘comprehensive’ universities and ‘Universities of Technology’ experience some problems with the HEQF, because some of their qualifications are not adequately accommodated in this framework. The implications of the new HEQF for the NMMU subsequently also featured during the interviews as one of the emerging categories.

- **Articulation difficulties from diploma to postgraduate qualifications**

Concern about the rigidity of the HEQF in terms of articulation between programmes was, for example, expressed as follows:

> We have a number of challenges, because in the National Policy Framework they emphasise this mobility and articulation and flexibility, but on the other hand, the HEQF makes it extremely difficult to articulate from a diploma into postgraduate studies and in essence what you have to do is go from a diploma into more or less a second year of a degree, with a three year diploma before you can go upwards and that’s going to discourage a lot of diploma students from enrolling.
• Technikon qualifications are marginalised

Another concern raised by participants revolved specifically around the recognition of former technikon-type programmes by the HEQF. One academic remarked:

So the new [HEQF] recognises that route, but then it now had to provide for higher education a framework for the Technikon type of qualifications [sic] and it did not provide an acceptable framework. So much so that the Technikon type qualifications are mostly marginalised. There is no place for the, what was a very popular qualification, the Bachelor of Technology (BTech) qualification, you can only make the Technikon stream work if you have a qualification that’s attractive to the would-be student.

Congruent to this concern, was the fear expressed by another participant who said:

But the HEQF doesn’t allow for the one year BTechs anymore. If you want a Bachelor of Technology, it has to be defined as a three or four year Bachelors degree, so it’s not a one year top-up on a diploma anymore.

5.2.4.8 Category 4.8: The emotional impact of the merger impedes the formation of an organisational identity

Mergers are generally regarded as ‘unpleasant’ events. Harman (2002:91) refers to the difficulties experienced when integration takes place and refers to this process as “painful, messy and protracted”. Furthermore, researchers claim that mergers seldom take place without disruption. Accordingly, Pepper and Larson, (2006: 49), as well as Skodvin (1999: 68), see a merger as one of the ‘most disruptive happenings’ in the workplace.

In this regard, Rowley (1997:261) argues that higher education mergers are similar to mergers in general. Rowley (1997:261) accordingly describes mergers in higher education as “costly, both before and after the event, and ‘messy’ [original emphasis]”.

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Harman (2002:106) further warns that when change happens too fast, the people involved often experience feelings of disorientation, unsettlement and unpreparedness for the process that is taking place. Very often, the members of the organisation are ‘unfit’ for the ‘demands’ of the newly established institution. What needs to be taken into consideration when mergers take place, is that a merger is a complicated event which has an emotional impact on the people involved.

Harman’s views were clearly corroborated by the following sub-categories that emerged during the interviews:

- **It is very difficult and painful**

  Several participants referred to the painfulness of the merger. Although there was general consensus that the process was difficult, some academics did however try to be optimistic. One participant remarked:

  *Everybody is holding onto some names, it will take time, it’s an evolving process, but it doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t be able to visualise.*

  Another participant, who also referred to the distress caused by the merger, referred to the effect that the management style has on the emotional wellbeing of staff. She said:

  *I’ve also learned that it can be a very painful process and that management style in such circumstances is extremely important and that if a university states that it is people-centred, then it must live up to its words.*

  The same participant further explained:

  *So, ja (yes), it’s been a process of learning about change, the pain of change, but also benefiting, trying to understand what all this new stuff is about.*

  Another participant, although acknowledging the difficulties, displayed a future-oriented approach:
Merger processes are very difficult, you can’t think all the time ‘this is what we did at the former Technikon, this is the procedure that we followed, life was so much better in the former Technikon’ - it’s gone, it’s the end of an era, it’s the NMMU and we need to all work together. It’s very easy to live in the past, quite often, that’s your comfort zone.

Contrary to the negative viewpoints on mergers, one participant saw the merger in a positive light, highlighting enrichment and opportunities. He argued that

A merger … destabilises a situation and the [unstable] situation also sometimes hold [sic] lots of opportunities. There are opportunities for doing new things and things differently, because of this destabilisation … Then a merger is also enriching in that an institution over time becomes very much the same … whereas a merger will take you out of that comfort zone and it opens up opportunities that otherwise would not have been there.

The responses above emphasise the importance of proper management during the merging process, a characteristic of successful mergers, as proven by research (Skodvin,1999:77-78). This author contends that visible and strong management can reduce the painfulness, since they are able to collate the different subcultures, creating a joint feeling of identity and organisational structure.

This is what Harman (2002:92-96) refers to as the managing of culture by competent senior executives, who ensure integration and create a sense of loyalty to the new institution.

- **It takes time, and is a continuous process which takes a lot of energy**

It has already been mentioned that most participants acknowledged that the merger is a time-consuming process. Responses included comments such as:

*It will probably take time, but it’s also as I said, change management is critical.*

*I think it will still be a long process for the NMMU to change the culture.*
To expect from staff to work across the binary divide will take years. My personal view is a minimum of ten years … So it’s a very complex process, it cannot happen overnight.

Several authors (Fullan, 2007:68; Muller, 2006:198; Skodvin, 1999: 69) are of the opinion that a merger should not be regarded as an occasion or an event, but rather as a long-term process which requires careful planning. The academics’ expectations, as expressed above, are thus realistic, especially when one considers the merger periods in the USA, Australia, and The Netherlands, where it took up to ten years before the situations normalised after the respective mergers (Skodvin, 1999: 70).

Skodvin (1999: 77) thus stresses that a merger or the option thereof, should be conceived as a long-term strategy, which should be accompanied by development plans.

**Theme 4** above has explored the experiences of academics during the merger. What transpired from participants’ comments is that the merger hampers the construction of an organisational identity. Participants mentioned the over-emphasis that is put on structures at the expense of human beings. This view supports the assertions made in theme 2 about the neglect of the human factor during the merger process. These experiences resulted in academics feeling marginalised and isolated. It was also evident from the participants’ responses that academics still identified themselves with their previous institutions and consequently were reluctant to take ownership of the new institution. This kind of attitude hinders the possibility of the construction of an organisational identity.

Central to the participants’ concerns, was the management style that was top-down. Added to this was the relocation of faculties into different campuses. The relocation process led to faculties being scattered across campuses, which created a dilemma in terms of internal cohesion. Another concern was the lack of financial resources that affected the running of the academic functions of the
institution. Perceptions from the public were also believed to impact negatively on the image of the university, which in turn hampered the construction of an organisational identity. Some obstacles created by the higher education system in terms of articulation between comprehensive university programmes were also raised as sources of great concern. Overall the emotional impact of the merger was articulated as one of the obstacles that impedes the establishment of an organisational identity.

5.3 CONCLUSION
The discussion in this chapter has focused on the presentation and interpretation of the qualitative data that formed the first phase of the mixed methods approach adopted in this study.

The data interpreted suggest that, although participants demonstrated similar views on their understanding of the term comprehensive university, they displayed different views regarding the level of understanding of the concept (Theme 1). The academics who were interviewed appeared to offer a simplistic understanding, whereas members of management provided more detail.

They delved deeper into the meaning and the processes involved, referring explicitly to aspects such as student and academic profiles, as well as access and articulation. Worth mentioning here is the use of the term, “New Generation University”, a concept that only emerged during interviews with members of management.

Another aspect which emerged during the interviews, was the lack of adequate communication between management and academics. One would have assumed that an idea that involved the academic, as well as the organisational identity of an institution, would have received priority in terms of consultation, discussion and negotiation between all members of the institution.
Another pertinent aspect that resonated across interviews was the importance of the human factor (Theme 2). Participants perceived management to be insensitive towards staff. This, according to the participants, hampered trust. There also appeared to be a genuine concern about the need for people to be valued through reward structures. Related to this, was the outstanding issue of unresolved salary harmonisation.

Of great concern is the fact that academics experienced the structures and policies which were designed to encourage and promote unity, as impeding factors, since these were not adequately implemented or applied properly in practice (Theme 3).

The facilitation and mediation of change was another important aspect identified by participants as determining the success or failure of a merger. In this regard, there seemed to have been general consensus amongst the participants that the vision, mission and values of the NMMU had not been internalised by staff. This realisation poses a big challenge, since the latter constitute the cornerstone of an organisational identity.

Another disquieting theme that emerged from the interviews was the perceived top-down, non-transformative and inflexible management styles experienced by participants (Theme 4). This management style stifled academic freedom and, as a result, academics felt marginalised and isolated. It was also clear that the institution’s values had not yet been internalised, and that academics were reluctant to take ownership of the new university. Such a climate is clearly not conducive for the establishment of a new organisational identity.

Chapter Five has thus presented the four major themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study. The themes were summarised and presented in Table 5.1. These themes were further explained through categories and sub-categories, presented and substantiated with
appropriate *verbatim* quotations from the participants, and compared with the relevant literature.

Chapter Six will present the results of the second phase of the study. The quantitative results emerged from a questionnaire that was based on the findings of the first phase and administered among academic staff members of the NMMU.
CHAPTER 6

REPORT AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an interpretation of the quantitative data that were collected by means of the questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections, namely Section A and Section B.

Section A contained the biographical information, comprising the questions on gender, title, age, home language, highest qualification, position held at NMMU, years served at previous institution before the merger, the name of the institution before the merger and the respondent’s current campus location.

Section B consisted of forty (40) closed-ended questions that were separated into four (4) sub-sections, representing the four themes of the qualitative findings. (A table of the summary of the themes is displayed in Chapter 5.)
### 6.2 A DIFFERENTIATED SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THEMES AND ITEMS AS THEY APPEAR IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Table 6.1 A differentiated summary of themes and items as they appear in the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-section 1</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Dis-agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Statistical percentage of confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1</strong></td>
<td>My understanding of the term &quot;comprehensive&quot; university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The comprehensive, combined nature of the university makes it a unique type of university</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It offers broader access to a wider range of University and Technikon programmes, with articulation between degrees and diplomas</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>0.564</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A comprehensive university is more career-focused and offers better opportunities and multi-tracking career pathways for students</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>0.071*</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A comprehensive university caters for both academic and practical qualifications</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both teaching and research are regarded as important academic functions</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>0.006*</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The term is confusing to me</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>0.073*</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significance at 10% level (p<0.010)=90%; significance at 5% level (p<0.005)=95%; significance at 1% level (p<0.001)=99%

The null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.00 (p<0.010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-section 2</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Dis-agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Statistical percentage of confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2</strong></td>
<td>The significance of the human factor during institutional change at NMMU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The voices of academics are heard</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old stereotypes no longer exist between academics of the previous institutions</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience that academics are treated with sensitivity</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>0.046*</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic planning, team building and academic development are valuable strategies that ensure the desired outcomes</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proper communication, transparency and consultation take place in the new institution</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to and dissemination of information is adequate</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A culture of respect and trust exists</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academics are recognised and valued for their contributions</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>0.651</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salaries are harmonised in</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is cohesion and a common focus among academics in the new institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3</th>
<th>Sub-section 3</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Statistical percentage of confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic strategies to foster an organisational identity</td>
<td>Academics are teaching across programmes</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some old programmes have not been changed</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is a focus on the strengths of the new institution</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recur riculation is done in line with the needs of industry</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The research environment is nurtured</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The SANTED project is fostering the academic enterprise</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attempts are made to keep academic standards high</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>0.004* 99%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The academic programmes contribute towards the employability of students</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A multi-disciplinary approach to teaching is followed</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>0.079* 90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is facilitation and mediation of change</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>0.495</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellence in teaching and research are equally acknowledged</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>0.088* 90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academics have internalised and are living out the vision, mission and values of the institution</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.00 (p<0.010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4</th>
<th>Sub-section 4</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Statistical percentage of confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The impact of the merger processes on the construction of an organisational identity</td>
<td>Policies, procedures and structures are in place only on paper, and not in practice</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academics spend too much time on administration</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>0.084* 90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academics are still acting according to the procedures of their previous institutions before the merger</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>0.384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The management style is top-down and bureaucratic, not allowing enough participation</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>0.054* 95%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The new institution offers more benefits after the</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.00 (p<0.010).
The fact that units are not physically united and located at the same campus hampers the establishment of an NMMU organisational identity.

The merged institution is understaffed in terms of the academic-student ratio.

Financial constraints hamper academic functioning in the new institution.

Academic standards are maintained in the new institution.

The national restructuring in higher education such as the HEQF, impacts negatively on the establishment of an internal organisational identity.

Previous Technikon programmes have been marginalised.

The merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harmonisation of Structures</th>
<th>12.1</th>
<th>15.7</th>
<th>72.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The fact that units are not physically united and located at the same campus hampers the establishment of an NMMU organisational identity</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The merged institution is understaffed in terms of the academic-student ratio</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial constraints hamper academic functioning in the new institution</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic standards are maintained in the new institution</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national restructuring in higher education such as the HEQF, impacts negatively on the establishment of an internal organisational identity</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Technikon programmes have been marginalised</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy</td>
<td>0.009*</td>
<td>0.041*</td>
<td>0.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significance at 10% level (p<0.010) =90%; significance at 5% level (p<0.005)=95%; significance at 1% level (p<0.001)=99%

The null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.00 (p<0.010).

6.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

The following section will discuss the results, according to the responses academics provided to the statements. The first table presented under each theme below consists of the responses according to the 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The cross-tabulation table, however, presents a combination of the strongly disagree and disagree responses into a disagree response, and also the strongly agree and agree responses into an agree response.

The cross-tabulation tables provide the results according to the responses from groups from the pre-merged institutions. The intention of these tables is to compare the responses from these groups to see whether there are significant similarities or differences in their responses. This will assist in the detection of...
divisions that still exist among these groups, as well as provide an understanding of how they view the world.

It will be seen that there are differences in the total number of respondents in both these tables. The reason for this discrepancy is the absence of some values, which means some respondents did not fill in all the information that was requested. As a result one would have a different number of responses from the different questions.

6.3.1 Section B 1: *My understanding of the term “comprehensive” university*

There were six items that allowed the respondents to demonstrate their level of understanding of the term “comprehensive university”. These items were related to the main statement of sub-section 1.

Generally, the respondents indicated that they have a fair understanding of the term “comprehensive university”; that it is a combination of a University and a Technikon that offers a wider range of programmes with both academic and practical qualifications.

Below are results of statements that showed statistically significant as well as statistically insignificant responses. Although not statistically significant, I have decided to discuss results that indicated 60% and more. For the reason that this is a case study, the NMMU should be made aware of results that might affect the well being of their organisation.

The results of each item are explained by a table that displays the number and percentages of respondents, cross-tabulations, as well as the chi square tests table. These three tables are displayed as one figure under each item.
Figure 6.1
A comprehensive university offers broader access to a wider range of University and Technikon programmes, with articulation between degrees and diplomas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B1-2</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In view of the comprehensive university offering access to a wider range of University and Technikon programmes, with articulation between degrees and diplomas, 66.7 % of academics agreed with the statement. It is also worth mentioning that there was a 16.7% split between academics who disagreed with the statement and the ones who were neutral about the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>B1-2</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Studying the cross-tabulation table above, it is clear that academics from the former PE Technikon and former UPE responded similarly to the statement, with percentages of 66.0% and 63.3% respectively. Furthermore, ex-Vista academics displayed a high 87.5%. This is a clear indication that academics agree about the access that the comprehensive university offers and that the articulation potential between degree and diploma qualifications exists.
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>2.964a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>4.243</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>.939</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.35.

Although this item is not statistically significant at the p-value\(^6\) of 0.564, it is worth noting that a fair number of academics agreed with the statement.

**Figure 6.2**

**A comprehensive university is more career-focused and offers better opportunities and multi-tracking career pathways for students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B1-3</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of *the comprehensive university offering better opportunities for students and multi-tracking career pathways*, the respondents agreed at 61.1%, while 21.3% disagreed and 17.6% were neutral.

---

\(^6\) The p-value is indicated in the forth column of the Chi square tests table as the first figure under the Asymp.sig. (2-sided).
What is noticeable from the cross-tabulation table above is that both ex-PE Technikon and ex-Vista academics strongly felt that the comprehensive university offered better opportunities and multi-tracking pathways for students with 70.0% and 87.5% respectively.

In contrast, only 46.9% of ex-UPE academics agreed with this statement, while 30.6% disagreed. Interestingly, quite a significant figure of 22.4% was neutral. It could be inferred from these figures that ex-UPE academics are not really sure that the comprehensive university can benefit the students in this manner.

The relationship was statistically significant at the 90% level of confidence and the p-value was $p \leq 0.071$. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.
Figure 6.3
A comprehensive university caters for both academic and practical qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B1-4</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the statement, *the comprehensive university caters for both academic and practical qualifications*, an overwhelming 84.3% of academics agreed with this statement, with a mere 5.6% who disagreed, and 10.2% who were neutral. This is a clear indication that academics do view the comprehensive university as catering for both streams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1_4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, ex-Vista academics overwhelmingly agreed with the statement (100%), while ex-PE Technikon and ex-UPE academics agreed with quite high figures of 86.0% and 76.6% respectively. It must be remembered that Vista’s academics response was generally low.
The level of confidence in the Chi-Square tests however does not indicate any statistically significant value with a p-value of 0.287. Nonetheless, the high percentage of academics agreeing to the statement is worth noting.

Figure 6.4
Both teaching and research are regarded as important academic functions

Academics also agreed that teaching and research are regarded as important academic functions. Sixty-six point nine percent regarded teaching and research as important academic functions, while 20.7% disagreed, and only 12.3% were neutral. It is pleasing to see, especially in matters that concern the core business of the university, that only 12.3% are indifferent about their main responsibilities.

One can thus assume that this indicates that the level of confidence that academics have in their institution to treat both functions is important.
It is evident from the table above that the ex-Vista academics believed that both teaching and research are definitely regarded as important academic functions with a 100% confidence level, while the other two institutions also indicated moderately high responses.

This could be attributed to the small response rate from ex-Vista academics. It is worth mentioning though, that 30% of former PE Technikon academics disagreed with the statement, while 23.4% of ex-UPE academics were indifferent. However, it is evident that academics from all the three institutions did view this as important.

This was reflected with a p-value of $p \leq 0.006$, which indicated a statistically significant relationship of a 99% level of confidence. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.
Sixty-six point one percent of the academics agreed that the term is confusing. It is however interesting to note that 17.0% of academics agreed that the term was confusing, while only 17.0% were neutral to the statement. This indicates that academics have a good idea of the meaning of the term. From the results above, it is evident that academics do have a clear understanding of what a comprehensive university means.

### Categorical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B1-6</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Crosstab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>B1_6</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when one looks at the responses from ex-UPE academics, 53.2% indicated that the term is not confusing, while 25.5% were neutral. When this is compared with the 76.0% of ex-PE Technikon and 75.0% of ex-Vista academics, the 53.2% of ex-UPE indicates a lower level of confidence in terms of the clarity of the term. This means that more than half of the ex-UPE respondents have a lucid understanding of the term. However, the other half indicates a significant percentage in terms of the clarity of the concept.
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.565a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>10.256</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.526</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.37.*

A statistically significant relationship of a 90% level of confidence at $p \leq 0.073$ was indicated. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

What is evident from section B 1 is that academics do have a lucid understanding of the term comprehensive university. They seem to understand the functions of the comprehensive university in their context. However, the differing opinions between previous institutions is important in order to detect the gaps and offer support where this appears to be needed.

What should also be critically examined by the NMMU is the significant number of academics who were unsure about matters that are essential for their work as academics.

**6.3.2 Section B 2: The significance of the human factor during institutional change at NMMU**

There were ten items that dealt with the significance of the human factor during change. Each of the items contributed to the bigger picture of whether the human factor was being ignored or taken into consideration during the change process. The respondents generally indicated that the human factor was important during change but, paradoxically, it was this aspect that was mostly neglected.
Although only two of the statements specifically indicated statistically significant responses, the responses to the other statements also need to be noted, because they reveal a significant percentage that requires attention.

**Figure 6.6**

The voices of academics are heard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-1</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above one can gather that a fair percentage (60.1%) of the respondents felt that their voices are not heard. Even though this percentage is not statistically significant, it is important to note that only 12.0% of the academics were of the opinion that their voices are heard. Twenty-seven point eight percent was unsure. The neutral percentage further supports the assumption that this should be noted as important, because these academics are not sure whether their voices are heard or not.

This is alarming since such high numbers of staff who feel they are not heard, or are unsure about not being heard, point toward an unhealthy organisation.

The similarity between views of the respondents from the former three institutions is interesting, as can be observed in the cross-tabulation table above. This suggests general consensus around this matter.
The p-value of 0.470 is not statistically significant, but the results are important and worth noting.

**Figure 6.7**
Old stereotypes no longer exist between academics of the previous institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-2</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A high percentage of the respondents (81.3%) were of the opinion that old stereotypes still exist among academics. This is a clear indication that academic staff still think and act according to their previous institutional identities. It is interesting to note that only 5.6% of the participants felt that no stereotypes exist, with 13.1% of participants being neutral about this matter.

One can thus infer that old stereotypes still prevail. This is a cause for concern, since the prevalence of old stereotypes will obstruct the construction of a new collective organisational identity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also interesting to note that academics across all three institutions agree that stereotypes still exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>6.306&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>7.319</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>2.638</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .45.

Although the results of this statement are not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.177, the above assertions are important, worth noting and acting upon.

**Figure 6.8**

**I experience that academics are treated with sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-3</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 9.4% of academics indicated that they were treated with sensitivity, while 67.0% felt that they were not. Twenty-three point six percent are indifferent to the
statement. This suggests that, according to the academics they are not treated with sensitivity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the cross-tabulation table above it is interesting to see that 62.5% of academics from ex-Vista were indifferent about this matter. None of them agreed with the statement. This could therefore mean that these academics are unsure if they were treated with sensitivity or not.

A considerable 73.5% of ex-UPE academics and an average 66.7% of ex-PE Technikon academics were sure that they are not treated with sensitivity in the new institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .76.

A statistically significant relationship at a greater than 95% level of confidence with a p-value of p ≤ 0.046 was recorded when respondents indicated that they
experienced insensitive treatment. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

**Figure 6.9**
Proper communication, transparency and consultation take place in the new institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-5</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a fair percentage of 62.0% of academics who disagreed with the statement above. It is interesting to note that only 12.0% of academics agreed with the statement. This is indicative of academics disagreeing that there is proper communication, transparency and consultation taking place at the NMMU. Although this is not statistically significant, it deserves consideration, because proper communication is important during times of change (Kotter, 1995:63), and an essential ingredient for the construction of a new organisational identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT PE Technikon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| INSTITUT UPE | B2,5 | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Total |
| Count | 34 | 12 | 3 | 49 |
| % within INSTITUT | 69.4% | 24.5% | 6.1% | 100.0% |

| INSTITUT Vista | B2,5 | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Total |
| Count | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| % within INSTITUT | 75.0% | 25.0% | 100.0% |

| INSTITUT Total | B2,5 | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Total |
| Count | 67 | 28 | 12 | 107 |
| % within INSTITUT | 62.6% | 26.2% | 11.2% | 100.0% |

A considerable 75.0% of ex-Vista academics disagreed that there is proper communication, transparency and consultation, while ex-PE Technikon and UPE also disagreed at 54.0% and 69.4% respectively. This indicates insufficient
communication, transparency and communication at the NMMU, as indicated by academics from each of the former institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>6.778</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>8.680</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>1.572</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .90.

This statement was statistically insignificant with a p-value of 0.148.

**Figure 6.10**

Access to and dissemination of information is adequate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-6</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This item is closely linked to the previous one, as they both deal with communication. It is interesting to observe that 40.7% of academics were unsure, while 34.3% disagreed that access to and dissemination of information is adequate. Furthermore, it is disturbing to note academics’ indifference regarding adequate access to and dissemination of information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
<th>B2_6</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The close margin in the percentages at which ex-PE Technikon and ex-UPE academics disagreed with the statement is noteworthy. Respondents from the former PE Technikon recorded 36.0%, while former UPE staff recorded 36.7%. Academics from the former Vista, on the other hand, were remarkably indifferent about the statement (62.5%). This shows the relationship between the responses of the previous statement and this one. This relationship confirms problematic communication in the new institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>6.031</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>6.399</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.94.

Although there is no statistical significance, there is a clear indication of a lack of access to and dissemination of information that needs to be acted upon and improved.

**Figure 6.11**

**A culture of respect and trust exists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the table above that a significant number of academics (58.5%) felt that there is no culture of respect and trust in the new institution. Interestingly, only 13.2% of academics acknowledged a culture of respect and trust, while 27.4% were unsure about the statement. This demonstrates that the majority of academics do not agree with the statement.
However, it is worth mentioning that ex-PE Technikon academics demonstrated a 46.0% level of disagreement with the statement, while ex-UPE and ex-Vista respondents recorded higher percentages of 72.3% and 62.5% respectively. The disparity between the three former institutions is quite significant. Interestingly though, 38.0% of the ex-Technikon academics indicated neutrality, which shows that these academics are unclear about the existence of a culture of respect and trust.

### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>7.273a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>7.400</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>3.140</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.07.

This statement was not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.122.
Figure 6.12
Academics are recognised and valued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-8</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that 58.3% of academics were of the opinion that they are not recognised and valued. This percentage is high enough to cause concern for the institution. Twenty-one point three percent (21.3%) of the respondents were neutral, with 20.4% agreeing with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
<th>B2_8</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is evident from the table above, is that ex-PE Technikon and ex-UPE academics indicated similar responses of 58.0% and 63.3% respectively whereby they disagreed with the statement. Thirty-seven point five percent of former Vista academics also disagreed, while another 37.5% were neutral.
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>2.467a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>2.361</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.64.

This statement was not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.651.

Figure 6.13
Salaries are harmonised in the new institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-9</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another significant concern raised during the interviews, was the harmonisation of salaries, which could be attributed to the fact that academics did not feel equally recognised for their level of qualification and the value that they add to the institution. A substantial 70.1% disagreed that salaries had been harmonised, while a mere 6.5% agreed. This indicates that this aspect is a significant measure of concern for these academics.

Crosstab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>UPE</th>
<th>Vista</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

244
A comparison between the institutions would have been interesting in this instance, however, with ex-Vista respondents’ low response rate, it is difficult to make conclusive assumptions. According to ex-PE Technikon (77.6%) and ex-UPE (71.4%) academics, salaries are clearly not harmonised in the new institution. Ex-Vista academics’ responses were equally divided between agreeing and being indifferent, with 37.5% each. Nonetheless, I believe that the table is worth examining.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>16.705a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>11.853</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>9.101</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .53.

Respondents indicated a statistically significant association at 99% level of confidence with a p-value of \( \leq 0.002 \). With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

**Figure 6.14**

**There is cohesion and a common focus among academics in the new institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2-10</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the majority of academics (62.1%) were of the opinion that there is no cohesion or a common focus among academics in the new institution can be understood in the light of the responses referred to above. It is worth noting that
only 5.6% experienced cohesion and a common focus, while 32.4% were neutral. Although statistically insignificant, such a low percentage is a reason for concern and requires attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within INSTITUT</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, it appears that ex-UPE respondents were more in disagreement with the statement, with an above average of 69.4%, while ex-PE Technikon academics also disagreed significantly (60.0%). Only 37.5% of the ex-Vista academics disagreed, while 50.0% were neutral. This however does not reduce the warning signs, as indicated by the majority of the academics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>4.196</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>4.077</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This statement was not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.380.

The results above in section B 2 clearly indicate that the human factor is an important aspect that is perceived to be neglected at the NMMU at present. The main concern of academics is the lack of proper communication that manifests
itself as a lack of access to and dissemination of information, as well as in terms of the voices of academics not being heard. Concomitantly, the feeling of a lack of sensitivity towards academics is exacerbated by the lack of proper communication. The endeavour to work towards a cohesive NMMU with a common focus and a subsequent organisational identity is thus clearly being hampered.

6.3.3 Section B 3: Strategies to foster an organisational identity

The items in this sub-section revolve around strategies that are believed to foster an organisational identity. Overall, the responses were spread across the whole scale with regard to the items in this sub-section. Subsequently, the overall feeling of the respondents in terms of these items is unclear. Nonetheless, what can be inferred from these responses is that in most of the statements responses were neutral, as will be revealed in the figures below.

Yet, there are three cases where the responses were statistically significant. Other cases, where there was no statistical significance, are also discussed below, because they generate unusual results.

Figure 6.15

Some old programmes have not been changed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-2</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, it can be gathered that academics felt that some current programmes that existed in the previous institutions had not been changed. Sixty-two point one percent of academics agreed with this statement, while 24.1% were neutral and 13.9% disagreed. The percentage of academics
agreeing with this statement is high enough to bring attention to the issue. This indicates that from the academics’ perspective there has not been an integration of programmes that would ensure cohesion and further foster an organisational identity.

The table above indicates that 75.0% of the ex-Vista academics agreed with the statement, while ex-PE Technikon (64.0%) and ex-UPE (59.2%) respondents also agreed. One can thus infer that academics across all three former institutions view this matter as being important.

There was no statistically significant association on this item with a p-value of 0.862.
Figure 6.16
There is a focus on the strengths of the new institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-3</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reveals that 39.8% of the academics was unclear about a focus on the strengths of the new institution. Similarly, 27.8% of the respondents disagreed, while 32.4% agreed. This could imply one of two things; either that academics do not know the strengths of their institution, or that there has not been an institutional process of identifying the strengths of the institution.

Alternatively, the even spread of responses could indicate that academics are not aware of strategies that facilitate a focus on the strengths of the institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B3-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is interesting to notice from the table above is that a significant 51.0% of ex-UPE academics appeared to be neutral. This differs distinctively from the ex-PE Technikon (38.0%) and ex-Vista (50.0%) academics, who agreed that there is a focus on the strengths of the new organisation.
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>6.532a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>6.707</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.24.

This item was not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.163.

Figure 6.17
The research environment is nurtured

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-5</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents agreed, with a percentage of 55.5%, that the research environment is nurtured at the NMMU. Twenty-six point one percent (26.1%) disagreed with the statement.

This indicates that more than half of the academics believe the research environment is nurtured, which is a promising sign in terms of the construction of an organisational identity, because one of the core functions of the university is at least upheld. This however does not mean the other 45.5% of the opinions do not matter, because it would be very interesting to find out the reasons why respondents felt that it was not or that they were unsure about it.
It is interesting to observe that 68.0% of ex-PE Technikon academics felt that the research environment is nurtured, while a low 44.9% of ex-UPE academics and 50.0% of ex-Vista academics concurred with the statement. This could be attributed to more staff development strategies aimed particularly at capacitating former PE Technikon academics in terms of research.

This item was not statistically significant and the p-value was 0.222.

**Figure 6.18**

**The SANTED project is fostering the academic enterprise**
Of interest here is that 70.9% of the respondents indicated neutrality regarding the SANTED project which is fostering the academic enterprise. This reveals an interesting and also disturbing tendency, as it indicates a high level of indifference about a project that was specifically initiated to harmonise academic programmes.

This may suggest that academics are not involved in the restructuring and recurrucilation of their programmes. It can also indicate that their programmes have not yet been restructured, or that the intention to restructure the programmes has not been communicated to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>UPE</th>
<th>Vista</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high percentages of neutrality across all three former insitutions is a reason for concern, as it may indicate that the majority of academics are uninformed about the purpose and role of this project. More investigation needs to be done to probe further the reasons for such a high level of indifference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55.
This item was not statistically significant and the p-value was 0.943.

**Figure 6.19**

**Attempts are made to keep academic standards high**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-7</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many respondents agreed that attempts are being made to keep academic standards high. This could mean that they are aware of tangible strategies that are implemented to maintain academic quality. As many as 56.5% of the academics agreed with the statement, while 24.1% disagreed.

Of interest however is that only 38.8% of the former UPE academics agreed that standards were maintained, compared to ex-PE Technikon and ex-Vista respondents with 72.0% and 75.0% respectively. This indicates that ex-UPE academics are not equally convinced that academic standards are being maintained. One could also assume that this indicates the dissatisfaction of ex-UPE academics with the level of academic standards of the new university.
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>15.596a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>17.799</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>5.944</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.50.

The relationship was statistically significant at 99% level of confidence with a p-value of \( p \leq 0.004 \). With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

Figure 6.20

The academic programmes contribute towards the employability of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-8</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above it is clear that 69.2% of academics agreed that academic programmes contribute towards the employability of students, while only 11.2% did not. This indicates that the majority of academics have confidence in the relevance and the standard of the programmes that the university offers.
Worth noting is that 78.0% of former PE Technikon academics agreed with this statement, while academics from the former UPE and Vista also agreed, with percentages of 62.5% and 50.0% respectively. The high agreement from ex-PE Technikon respondents could be attributed to the nature of former Technikon programmes that were more skills-based and vocational. Usually, at Technikons, the intention was to train students for the workplace. Another factor could be the relationship that Technikons traditionally have with industry.

### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>4.903</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>4.872</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>2.374</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .91.

This item was not statistically significant and the p-value was 0.297.
A multi-disciplinary approach to teaching is followed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-9</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another statistically significant relationship was the one on a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching that is pursued. Forty-six point three percent (46.3%) of academics agreed with the statement, while a close 34.3% were neutral. This indicates that academics are aware of the needs of their diverse students and their different learning styles, while a substantial percentage are unsure.

However, it is also worth noting that 58.0% of the ex-PE Technikon academics seem to pursue a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching, compared with ex-UPE (36.7%) and ex-Vista (25.0%) academics. It could then be inferred that ex-UPE and ex-Vista lecturers rarely employ a multi-disciplinary approach in their teaching.
The relationship was statistically significant at 90% level of confidence with \( p \leq 0.079 \). With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

**Figure 6.22**

**There is facilitation and mediation of change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-10</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In any changing organisation, facilitation and mediation of change should be present. In the case of NMMU, quite a significant percentage of academics (48.6%) felt unsure about the existence of such facilitation. This raises some concerns, especially since a further 28.6% of the academics repudiated the existence of facilitation and mediation of change.

Although this is not statistically significant, these figures suggest the need for further probing. The facilitation and mediation of change are important aspects of change management. Here they appear to be either unattended to, or unimportant.
From the table above, ex-UPE academics displayed the highest indifference at 54.2%, while ex-PE Technikon academics followed with 45.8%, and former Vista academics with 37.5%.

This item was not statistically significant and had a p-value of 0.495.

**Figure 6.23**

Excellence in teaching and research are equally acknowledged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-11</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academics felt that excellence in teaching and research are not equally acknowledged. Sixty-one point two percent (61.2%) of academics disagreed with the statement, while 24.1% agreed and 14.8% were neutral. Interestingly, this response seems to contradict the response given to sub-section B1-5 in theme 1,
where academics considered both teaching and research as important academic functions. However, this could indicate that academics do believe that both are regarded as important, but excellence is not equally acknowledged in both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>UPE</th>
<th>Vista</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disagree</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% within INSTITUT</strong></td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that 72.0% of the ex-PE Technikon academics disagreed, followed by ex-UPE and ex-Vista respondents who disagreed at 53.1% and 50.0% respectively. From the above one can deduce that ex-PE Technikon staff are more concerned about this issue than former university academics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.113*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>8.957</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>5.649</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.20.

This association is statistically significant at 90% level of confidence at $p \leq 0.088$. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.
Figure 6.24

Academics have internalised and are living out the vision, mission and values of the institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3-12</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another strategy to foster organisational identity is the internalisation and living out the vision, mission and values of the institution. Even though the relationship of the variables does not indicate statistical significance, it is important to reveal that 49.0% of academics felt that the vision, mission and values of the new institution have not been internalised, with 38.0% of them being neutral.

Due to the fact that these three elements are the core ingredients of an organisational identity, the above statistics suggest that, within this sample of respondents there is only limited internalisation of common beliefs and values. This indicates that these respondents have not yet taken ownership of the new institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3_12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| % within INSTITUT      | 100.0%
| Disagree               | 24    |
| Neutral                | 20    |
| Agree                  | 6     |
| Total                  | 50    |
| UPE                    |       |
| Count                  | 49    |
| % within INSTITUT      | 100.0%
| Disagree               | 25    |
| Neutral                | 19    |
| Agree                  | 5     |
| Total                  | 49    |
| Vista                  |       |
| Count                  | 8     |
| % within INSTITUT      | 100.0%
| Disagree               | 4     |
| Neutral                | 2     |
| Agree                  | 2     |
| Total                  | 8     |
| Total                  | 107   |

Of interest is how the academics across all three institutions agreed at similar percentage levels, with ex-UPE academics at 51.0%, followed by ex-Vista academics at 50.0%, and ex-PE Technikon academics at 48.0%.
### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>1.697&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.500</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .97.

This item was not statistically significant and had a p-value of 0.791.

The respondents revealed in section B 3 that strategies to foster organisational identity do exist at the NMMU. There is an indication that attempts are being made to introduce and implement the above-mentioned strategies.

However, note should be taken of the fact that a high percentage of academics were unsure that the SANTED project fosters the academic enterprise. Of great concern is that a programme intended to merge academic programmes would receive such low recognition. This is alarming since the outcome of such a project is to create cohesion and the intended lifespan of the project at the NMMU was July 2006 up to the end of 2009.

Another aspect that impacts directly on cohesion is the lack of ownership and lack of internalisation of the vision, mission and values statement. An equally important discovery is the perception of academics that teaching and research are not equally acknowledged. This is a crucial matter, since two disparate institutions with different foci in teaching and research have been merged.
6.3.4 Section B 4: The impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity

This sub-section is about the manner in which the merger has impacted on the construction of an organisational identity. Items in this sub-section attempted to elude from the respondents their views on the factors that hamper the construction of an organisational identity. These factors involved a range of aspects from policies and procedures, to administration, financial implications, programmes, as well as time and energy invested in the merger process.

What has resonated throughout the responses in this sub-section was the feeling that the merger process has had a negative impact on the new institution and its organisational identity. Several items demonstrated statistically significant relationships, ranging from 90% to 99% levels of confidence, which is a margin for concern. Below are tables that statistically significantly reflect the results, as well as those that are not statistically significant, but raise concerns, because of the level of their percentages.

Figure 6.25
Policies, procedures and structures are in place only on paper, and not in practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-1</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table it can be gathered that 45.8% of academics agreed that policies and procedures exist only on paper, but are not implemented in practice. Twenty-four point three percent (24.3%) of academics disagreed with the statement, while 29.9% were neutral.
Forty six point two of the total number of academics agreed with the statement. This may not seem to be of significance, however what is interesting to note is that 58.3% of ex-UPE academics and 40.0% of Technikon academics agree. Ex-Vista academics, on the other hand, indicate a 50.0% of neutrality and a 37.5% disagreement.

Although these results are not statistically significant, it is imperative to note how academics from different institutional backgrounds view these processes of change. Further investigations into such cases might shed some light on the reasons for these diverse responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>UPE</th>
<th>Vista</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>7.715</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>8.300</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This item was not statistically significant and had a p-value of 0.103.
On the issue of academics spending too much time on administration, it is worth mentioning that a significant percentage (79.7%) of the respondents agreed that academics spend too much time on administration. Only 10.2% disagreed with this statement.

This tendency could be an indication that the core business of the university is compromised due to the amount of time spent on administration, instead of teaching and research.

The table above indicates that academics from all three institutions agree strongly that too much time is spent on administration. Former UPE academics agree with the statement with a substantial 89.8%, followed by ex-PE Technikon (72.0%) and Vista (62.5%) academics.
### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.208&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>9.107</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .82.

There was a statistically significant relationship between the variables at a 90% level of confidence with $p \leq 0.084$. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

**Figure 6.27**

**Academics are still acting according to the procedures of their previous institutions before the merger**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-3</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, 42.6% of academics agreed that academics still act according to their previous institutions’ procedures, while 31.5% were neutral on this matter and 26.0% disagreed with the statement. Although these figures are not statistically significant, it is worth noting that quite a number of academics feel this way.
The table above indicates that 75.0% of the ex-Vista academics were of the opinion that staff still act according to their previous institutions, compared with only 44.0% of the ex-PE Technikon respondents, and 36.7% of the ex-UPE respondents. It is also interesting to note how the responses of both ex-PE Technikon and ex-UPE academics are fairly similar in percentages across the scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>4.164a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>4.219</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>.338</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.09.

This item was not statistically significant and had a p-value of 0.384.
Figure 6.28

The management style is top-down and bureaucratic, and does not allow enough participation from academics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-4</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academics indicated a 62.1% level of agreement with the statement. Only 18.5% of the respondents disagreed. This means that academics significantly felt that the management style is top-down, and it does not allow for participation from lower levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When one looks at the cross-tabulation table, it is noticed that 71.4% of the ex-UPE academics agreed with this statement, compared with ex-PE Technikon and ex-Vista academics at 54.0% and 50.0% respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.50.
The table above indicates a statistically significant relationship at the 95% level of confidence at $p \leq 0.054$. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

**Figure 6.29**
The new institution offers more benefits since the harmonisation of structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-5</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that 62.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that the institution does not offer more benefits since the harmonisation of structures. Only 10.3% of the respondents agreed. From this one can conclude that most academics felt that they had lost some benefits that they used to enjoy at their former institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B4 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academics across all three institutions similarly expressed their disagreement with the statement. It is, however, worth noting that 66.7% of the ex-PE Technikon academics disagreed, followed by ex-Vista (62.5%) and ex-UPE academics (57.1%).
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>1.925</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.994</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>1.038</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a.* 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .84.

There is no statistical significance and the p-value is 0.750.

**Figure 6.30**

The merged institution is understaffed in terms of the academic-student ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-7</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A substantial 75.9% of the respondents felt that the university is understaffed, while a mere 7.4% disagreed. Understaffing threatens the smooth running of the university, because staff members have to deal with large classes, which in turn affects the process of quality teaching and learning. It is clear that the majority of the respondents perceived this as undermining the core business of the institution, as it involves the capacity to attend to the main task of the university in an effective manner.
Significant percentages of ex-PE Technikon (80.0%) and ex-UPE (81.6%) academics agreed with the statement. However, 50.0% of the ex-Vista academics were neutral, 25.0% agreed, while another 25.0% disagreed. One can gather that the ex-Vista academics are not so severely affected by this shortcoming.

The reality of programmes still being unmerged in some Faculties bears some significance in this case.

There was a statistically significant relationship at the 99% level of confidence with \( p \leq 0.009 \). With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.
This aspect is closely related to the issue of understaffing, because it also relates to the financial constraints that hamper academic functioning in the new institution. The fact that this is also statistically significant indicates staff’s awareness that the shortage of funding to support proper academic functioning is a serious matter. As alluded to above, the core function of the institution is severely crippled when the organisation’s financial resources to deliver its main function are inadequate. Furthermore, if more than three quarters agree (75.9%), it is worth taking cognizance of.

### Crosstab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>UPE</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Vista</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Awareness of the impact of such financial constraints was more obvious amongst ex-PE Technikon and ex-UPE academics. Eighty-five percent of ex-UPE academics and 72.0% of ex-PE Technikon academics clearly felt that these limitations were hampering the academic functioning of the new institution.
There was a statistically significant relationship at a greater than 95% level of confidence with \( p \leq 0.041 \). With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

**Figure 6.32**

**Academic standards are maintained in the new institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-9</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above it is clear that more than half of the respondents (53.3%) were of the opinion that academic standards are maintained in the new institution, while 19.6% disagreed with this statement.
When one studies the cross-tabulation table above, one would find that ex-UPE academics did not share the same sentiments as their ex-PE Technikon and ex-Vista colleagues. Quite interesting is the fact that ex-UPE responses were almost equally spread across the three response options. This distribution indicates that ex-UPE academics have diverse views when it comes to the new institution's academic standards.

Should one further compare the responses to item B3-7 under theme 3 above, which was about attempts that are made to keep the academic standards high, it is clear that ex-UPE academics were not convinced that enough attempts were made to keep academics standards high, with a split in response of 38.8% agreeing and disagreeing respectively.

The matter of academic standards is clearly a pressing issue, especially to former UPE academics. This necessitates further investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>15.532&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>16.026</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>4.269</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A statistically significant relationship at the 99% level of confidence with $p < 0.004$ is indicated. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.
Figure 6.33
The national restructuring in higher education such as the HEQF, impacts negatively on the establishment of an organisational identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-10</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quite a number of academics (45.4%) expressed neutrality on this statement. Another interesting observation is that almost equal numbers agreed (26.9%) and disagreed (27.8%). This may indicate that academics are uninformed about the role and functions of the HEQF as a qualification framework, especially in terms of determining the kind of qualifications institutions of higher education are allowed to offer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within INSTITUT</th>
<th>B4_10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Technikon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that academics at all three institutions displayed ignorance about the HEQF and its role in higher education.
Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>4.986a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>5.087</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.17.

This item is not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.289.

Figure 6.34

Previous Technikon programmes have been marginalised

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-11</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An interesting observation is the statistically significant results indicated on the table above, which show that previous Technikon programmes have been marginalised. Forty one point nine percent respondents were indifferent, with a small margin of difference between agree and disagree of 27.6% and 30.5% respectively.

Crosstab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE Technikon</td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It seems that most academics do not have a clear-cut opinion regarding this statement. However, the responses of ex-PE Technikon academics (43.8% agreeing) need to be noted.

A sense of inequity becomes apparent when one section of an institution feels that their programmes are marginalised. Furthermore, marginalisation tends to lead to hegemony, where one institutional culture subsumes other cultures, with consequent assimilation taking place (Riad, 2007:29).

Issues of power also perpetuate inferiority and superiority among people. This therefore must be handled as a matter of importance and urgency, because there needs to be a synergy of programmes for internal cohesion to take place. Riad’s (2007) argument needs to serve as a warning signal, given the above results.

### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>16.904</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>18.508</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>3.252</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.23.

The relationship is statistically significant at a 99% level of confidence with $p \leq 0.002$. With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.
Figure 6.35
The merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4-12</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The toll that the merger process has taken on the academics is proven by the responses offered to the above statement. Academics agreed at 77.8% that the merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy. Only 9.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUT</th>
<th>PE Technikon</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within INSTITUT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUT</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the cross-tabulations table above, it is clear that a significant number of ex-UPE academics (87.8%) experienced the merger process as very difficult and demanding. Their views were supported by the majority of ex-PE Technikon (70.0%) and ex-Vista colleagues (62.5%).
The statistical significance of the relationship is at a 90% level of confidence with \( p \leq 0.010 \). With regard to this specific item, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

From the results of section B 4 above, it is evident that the merger has had a negative impact on the possibility of the construction of an organisational identity. The negative effects of the merger on the performance of academics are indicated through the amount of time that academics are expected to spend on administrative work and attending meetings. The matter is exacerbated by financial constraints that restrict academics in their teaching and learning activities.

Below is a summary of the themes that indicate the average response to each theme. The internal reliability of a combined score (in other words, the average of all items) is measured by Cronbach’s coefficient Alpha, which ranges from 0 to 1, where large values (at least 0.70) are an indication of acceptable internal reliability.
Figure 6.36

Summary: Theme 1: My understanding of the term “comprehensive” university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Std.Dev.</th>
<th>B1_1</th>
<th>B1_2</th>
<th>B1_3</th>
<th>B1_4</th>
<th>B1_5</th>
<th>B1_6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1_1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1_2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1_3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1_4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1_5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1_6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results for Section B1 are:

Alpha = 0.80 which indicates that there is acceptable internal reliability between the items.

Average inter-item correlation = 0.42

Descriptive statistics for the average score:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Std.Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1_ave</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The average of 3.6 indicates that there is more leaning towards agreeing with the statements B1-B6 of this section. The conclusion is thus that respondents have a fair understanding of the term “comprehensive” university.
Figure 6.37
Summary: Theme 2: The significance of the human factor during institutional change

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>0.17</td>
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</table>

The results for Section B2 are:

Alpha = 0.84 which indicates that there is acceptable internal reliability between the items.

Average inter-item correlation = 0.36

Descriptive statistics for the average score:

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<th>Minimum</th>
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</table>

The average of 2.4 indicates that the responses are more in the middle, with a slight leaning towards disagree. This indicates that most of the responses had a high percentage of neutral responses. The conclusion is thus that academics are mostly unsure about the manner in which they are treated within the NMMU.
Figure 6.38

Summary: Theme 3: Strategies to foster an organisational identity

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<th>B3_3</th>
<th>B3_4</th>
<th>B3_5</th>
<th>B3_6</th>
<th>B3_7</th>
<th>B3_8</th>
<th>B3_9</th>
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<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.28</td>
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The results for Section B3 are:

Alpha = 0.78 which indicates that there is acceptable internal reliability between the items.

Average inter-item correlation = 0.23

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average of 3.0 indicates that the responses lean more towards agreeing with the items. It should be noted however that the items in this section are more independent from the others. This explicates the unequal distribution of responses.
### Figure 6.39

**Summary: Theme 4: The impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity**

<table>
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</table>

The results for Section B4 are:

Alpha = 0.69, which indicates that there is no acceptable internal reliability between the items.

Average inter-item correlation = 0.15

**Descriptive statistics for the average score:**

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</tbody>
</table>

Although the average is 3.7, the items in this section deal with different aspects on the impact of the merger and not with closely related items. It is thus difficult to provide a conclusive inference from the responses provided.
6.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the quantitative research results have been presented statistically. They have also been interpreted, in order to illustrate significant interpretations, opportunities and challenges that are faced by academics in times of change. An attempt has also been made in certain cases to consider the implications of the findings on the construction of an organisational identity.

From the responses, it is clear that:

- Academics have a lucid understanding of the term “comprehensive” university.
- The human factor has been neglected during the change process. In this regard, proper communication, in terms of access to and dissemination of information is lacking. Academics revealed that they feel marginalised and isolated at times. This factor is exacerbated by management’s apparent insensitive attitude towards staff members, as well as the perception that their (academics) voices are not being heard.
- There are some strategies that are in place to foster an organisational identity, however, not all these strategies are well known to the academics. Respondents also felt that the vision, mission and values of the NMMU have not yet been internalised and owned by the academics.
- The changes that came as a result of the merger have had a negative impact on the possibility of constructing an organisational identity.

Chapter 7 will discuss the conclusions, implications, limitations of the study and recommendations.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters five and six dealt with the analysis, reporting and interpretation of qualitative findings and quantitative results respectively. This study has used a mixed methods approach. It proposed to make a contribution to a broader and deeper understanding of the meanings that academics make of the comprehensive university, while in the process of a merger. This study also aimed to investigate the subsequent contribution of this meaning to the construction of the NMMU’s organisational identity.

This chapter will present the conclusions extracted from the qualitative findings and quantitative results. Implications and recommendations will be proposed to assist the NMMU in creating opportunities, platforms and strategies to facilitate the meaning-making process so that an organisational culture can be created which will be favourable for the construction of an organisational identity.

The limitations of the study, as perceived by me, will be delineated, and recommendations for further research will be presented.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

In this research I set out to answer the following research question:

*How are the meanings that academics assign to the notion of a comprehensive university instrumental in the construction of an organisational identity at the NMMU?*

The findings and results of this study have revealed that the organisational culture at the NMMU is not conducive for the construction of an organisational
identity, since the meanings that academics make of the NMMU as a comprehensive university are clouded by a number of obstacles that impede the process of organisational identity construction.

### 7.2.1 Global picture

When considering the results of this study holistically, the following **general** global conclusions can be made:

1. Qualitatively, academics demonstrated that they are grappling to understand the term "comprehensive" university. However, quantitatively, academics exhibited a fairly good understanding of the term "comprehensive" university.

2. The *human factor* was identified as a significant factor during a change process. At the NMMU, respondents have extensively indicated that human beings have been ignored during the process of change, especially in terms of sensitivity towards staff’s feelings. This also related to the unresolved issue of the harmonisation of salaries.

3. Respondents seemed to agree that there are *strategies* in place that could assist with the construction of the organisational identity of the NMMU, such as maintaining high academic standards, as well as adopting a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching. However, academics did not agree that excellence in both teaching and research are being equally acknowledged.

4. It is evident that the *merger* process itself had a negative impact on the construction of the organisational identity of the NMMU. One aspect that needs immediate attention is insufficient financial support for academic endeavours and operations. Lack of adequate monetary resources also leads to understaffing, which unavoidably compromises the quality of the core functions of the university.
Holistically, it could therefore be concluded that there are differing views on what a comprehensive university means to academics at the NMMU. This complicates the construction of a common organisational identity. Furthermore, the manner in which the merger, as a change process, has been handled and managed has hampered the construction of an organisational identity at the NNNU, because it did and still does not create a favourable culture for the creation of the identity. Despite these identified hindrances, there has been consensus about the existence of some strategies that could foster the construction of an organisational identity.

7.2.2 Differentiated picture

When one looks at the above themes individually, a differentiated picture such as the one already alluded to is evident. This picture has allowed me to come to the following more detailed conclusions:

i. The majority of academics assigned the following meanings to the term “comprehensive” university:

- A comprehensive university is more career-focused and offers better opportunities and multi-tracking career pathways for students.
- Both teaching and research are regarded as important academic functions in a comprehensive university.
- The term “comprehensive” university is not confusing to academics.

ii. In terms of the significance of the human factor during institutional change, academics viewed the following as most important:

- The human factor is disregarded during change.
- Academics are not treated with sensitivity.
- Salaries are not yet harmonised in the new institution.
iii. With regard to **strategies that foster an organisational identity** at the NMMU, academics considered the following to be the most perceptible:

- Attempts are made to keep academic standards high.
- A multi-disciplinary approach to teaching is followed.
- Excellence in teaching and research are not equally acknowledged.

iv. In view of **the impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity** the following sentiments were expressed by academics:

- Academics spend too much time on administration and paper work.
- The management style is top-down and bureaucratic, not allowing enough participation from academics.
- The merged institution is understaffed in terms of the academic-student ratio.
- Financial constraints hamper academic functioning in the new institution.
- Attempts are made to maintain academic standards in the new institution.
- Previous technikon programmes have been marginalised.
- The merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy.

### 7.2.3 The integration of qualitative findings and quantitative results

i. In terms of **the understanding of the term “comprehensive” university**, the qualitative findings revealed that a number of academics were still grappling with the term and were confused about its meaning. Some even felt that, in order for academics to have a common understanding of the term, some form of ‘tutoring’ is required. Conversely,
the quantitative results revealed that academics have a fair understanding of the term and that they are not confused. Although the quantitative results statistically indicate that the academics do not have a problem with the term “comprehensive” university, the opinions of the interviewed academics should not be dismissed. It would be to the advantage of the NMMU to make sure that all their academics do have a good, common understanding of the term, as this could contribute to a shared organisational identity.

ii. In view of the significance of the human factor during institutional change, the qualitative findings identified this aspect as one of the most neglected elements during the change process. Academics highlighted proper communication, transparency and consultation as some of the aspects that were not prioritised during the NMMU’s institutional transformation process. These elements, in my view, comprise the essence of ‘attention to the ‘human factor’ during organisational change processes.

Although the quantitative results for all the items in this section were not overwhelmingly statistically significant, the responses during both phases corresponded considerably. The summary below demonstrates the interrelatedness of the qualitative and quantitative phases:

- Perceptions that the voices of academics are not being heard, for example, were not statistically significant, yet these were above 60%. If more than 60% of academics in the sample felt that their voices were not being heard, one can conclude that it is important for the NMMU to take note and address such concerns. In a changing environment, people are likely to share ideas, their concerns, not only about their personal future, but also about that of the organisation. These views should be listened to, since they constitute the ‘voices of the people’, which are instrumental in the construction of an
organisational identity. Meaning is co-created through dialogue and active participation (Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar (1995:355). Moreover, organisations are places where cultures are socially negotiated (Tierney, 1991:39). Therefore, the meanings required for these negotiations should not be silenced (Tierney, 1991:43).

• Another unfortunate finding is the belief that some old stereotypes held by academics of the three previous institutions still exist. Preconceived ideas about ‘the other’ groups in a situation where inter-group relations and in-group identification are to be promoted, are potentially harmful and will hinder the process of joint identity construction. The ultimate goal is for academics to identify with their NMMU colleagues in an inclusive manner. All NMMU colleagues need to be regarded as the new in-group. As such, they need to develop a “collective self-definition” (Reicher, 2004:931). This collective self-definition will only become a reality once the boundaries around the previous institutions have collapsed, dissolved and are permeable, allowing academics to interact and integrate.

• Related to the first bullet above, is the concern that academics are not treated with sensitivity. Vaara (2000:87) maintains that making sense during times of change, involves the presence of emotional elements. The findings thus reveal a need for NMMU management corps to be more tactful and “speak to the feelings of people” (Kotter, 1996, cited by Fullan, 2007:42). In other words, they need to be sensitive to the specific needs of the academics and be mature enough to know when to play certain roles when they are faced with certain situations as managers (Carstens and Barnes, 2006:10).

• Eddy (2003:6) argues that, in order for communication to infiltrate all levels of the organisation, it needs to be steady and persistent. She
also maintains that such dissemination and access should be in different settings and situations. Of particular significance for this study is the assertion of Kuhn and Nelson (2002:9). These authors contend that organisational identification is formed by the frequency of communication and the content of the interactions. Unfortunately, as revealed by the findings of this study, academics at the NMMU seem to be experiencing the opposite. They are of the opinion that proper communication, transparency and consultation do not take place in the new institution.

- The findings of this study also revealed the perceived absence of culture of respect and trust. According to the social identity theory, people tend to be loyal to their organisation when they feel valued (Fuller et al., 2003:789). When this happens, the organisation is respected and trust in the organisation develops. Consequently, commitment towards the organisation increases (Fuller et al., 2003:790), and a favourable climate for the construction of an organisational identity is created.

- Related to the finding above, is the fact that academics felt that they are not recognised and valued for their contribution to the organisation. Eddy (2003:7) asserts that the reward system of a university requires attention, because it is a significant mechanism that can be used to facilitate institutional change. In other words, people who contribute towards the wellbeing of the organisation must be acknowledged. Incentives such as grants and ‘time off’ can be offered as incentives for hard work (Kezar, 2005: 54).

- When the issues discussed above are neglected or ignored, the inevitable result is a lack of cohesion and a lack of common focus, as the meanings of NMMU academics currently reveal. Since the merger
took place two years ago and the process is regarded as completed, this is a serious cause for concern. A common focus is informed by the goals and objectives of the organisation. These are embedded in the organisation's vision, mission and values. A lack of shared focus, in particular, implies that there is no clear direction towards which the organisation is working. This has serious implications for the construction of an organisational identity.

The above findings, as well as the literature alluded to in this study, confirm the significance of the human factor during the process of institutional change. The human factor constitutes the foundational element in the construction of an organisational identity. Moreover, identity construction is a social process that is co-created and negotiated. It requires interaction, co-operation and interdependence of which people are at the centre.

Subsequently, people need to be prepared and supported during this process. This, in turn, will encourage respect and trust, which will eventually create a platform for positive identification and commitment. When this takes place, an atmosphere and culture that is conducive for the construction of an organisational identity is created. The NMMU can only benefit from attending to these barriers, as brought to the fore by the meanings expressed by the academics.

iii. With respect to the strategies to foster an organisational identity, the categories that emerged from the qualitative phase of the study suggested a range of concerns related to teaching and research. However, the quantitative results revealed that academics indicated that some of these strategies were already in place at the NMMU.
• What is noteworthy, however, is that both the qualitative findings, as well as the quantitative results, show that academics felt that some old programmes had still not been changed.

• Directly linked to point ii (g) above is academics' vagueness about a focus on the strengths of the new institution. Uncertainty about one’s strengths could hinder the identification of a common goal for the NMMU. This, in turn, will hamper efforts to make the organisation unique and distinctive. Positive distinctiveness is a crucial element of social identity (Huddy, 2001:134), as it differentiates and separates the organisation from others (Ashforth and Mael, 1989:24). Should academics thus view the NMMU as distinct and unique, they will develop a positive bias towards the NMMU as the in-group (Willem, Scarbrough and Buelens, 2008:373). The research however revealed that this is not the case.

• The qualitative findings brought to light how research activity had been hampered by the time-consuming merger process. Nevertheless, the quantitative results showed that academics felt that the research environment was being nurtured. Both findings and results should be taken into consideration, because one would not like to miss out on the opportunity to improve on practice.

• In the qualitative findings, the SANTED project emerged as a strategy that, according to the respondents, fosters the academic excellence. However, the quantitative results revealed that the majority of academics are unsure about the purpose and value of the SANTED project. This is reason for concern when one considers the intentions of the SANTED project, which are to foster a cohesive and shared organisational identity by means of academic programme alignment.
A positive finding is that, according to the respondents, attempts are made to maintain academic quality. High academic standards will grant the institution recognisable status among its peers and the outside community. Research shows that there is a probability that group identity would be more evident among members of a high-status group, because members positively distinguish themselves from other out-groups (Huddy, 2001:134).

Academics demonstrated trust in the quality of their programmes and the potential of these programmes in terms of enhancing the employability of the students. This is also an encouraging meaning disclosed by this study, since the quality of programmes have a direct impact on the image of the university, which is a pertinent ingredient for the identity of the university.

The qualitative findings revealed a lack of the facilitation and mediation of change. The quantitative results, however, indicated uncertainty amongst academics in terms of facilitation and the mediation of change. This clearly signifies shortcomings regarding the manner in which change at the institution is handled, facilitated, mediated and managed. It goes without saying that the facilitation and mediation of change might pose some challenges on the creation of an organisational culture which would impact negatively on the construction of an organisational identity.

Moreover, the quantitative results confirmed that excellence in teaching and research are not equally acknowledged. In a merger between a Technikon and a University, it is imperative to balance teaching and research in the new institution, as both these functions were strengths of the respective former institutions. Prioritising one of these focuses at the expense of the other suggests the negligence or
deprivation of one of the merger partners. This will impede the construction of a new collective organisational identity and promote hegemony where one academic culture dominates.

- This study also revealed that the vision, mission and values of the institution have not yet been internalised by the academics. As a result, these are not put to practice. Eddy (2003:6) suggests that the vision of the institution needs to be integrated and be part of the “fabric” of the institution in order for internalisation to take place. It is only when the values of the institution are internalised that people start to identify with the institution. The construction of the organisational identity thus depends significantly on the process of the co-creation of the vision, mission and values of the organisation, as well as the subsequent internalisation process.

iv. Regarding the impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity, there was evident congruence between the qualitative findings and the quantitative results. Out of twelve items, seven were statistically significant, which indicates with high probability that the merger process has indeed had a negative impact on the construction of an organisational identity. Worth mentioning here is that interviews (the qualitative phase) were characterised by merger-related responses. The meanings that the academics currently assign to the notion of a comprehensive university are thus typified and even ‘contaminated’ by their meanings about the merger. In a sense, one can conclude that academics equate the concept of a comprehensive university with that of a merger. In this regard, the following findings deserve to be noted:

- Academics believe that they spend too much time on administration, paper work and meetings.
There is a feeling that the management style is top-down and bureaucratic, not allowing enough participation.

Academics feel that after the harmonisation of structures, the new institution does not offer additional benefits.

Academics reveal that the merged institution is understaffed in terms of the academic-student ratio.

There are financial constraints that hamper the functioning of the new institution.

Academic standards are maintained in the new institution.

There is a feeling that previous Technikon programmes have been marginalised.

The merger process has been very difficult and demanding in terms of time and energy.

Both the qualitative findings and quantitative results have revealed that, due to the merger process and the resultant obstacles as highlighted, there is deficient identification with the NMMU as organisation. This thus implies that the meanings that academics assign to the comprehensive university are currently not instrumental in the construction of an organisational identity of the NMMU.

The mixing of the qualitative and quantitative methods has provided a holistic picture of the study. The choice of employing the sequential exploratory and transformative design assisted in answering the research question, which required academics to give meaning to the concept of a comprehensive university. The transformative aspect of the design has revealed power relations between management and academics, as well as between the different pre-merged institutions.

This design has also allowed me, as the researcher, to determine the impact of the merger on the construction of an organisational identity. The design has
allowed the qualitative findings to be confirmed by the quantitative results, thereby serving a complementary, developmental and triangulation role.

If the NMMU can succeed in addressing the aspects that emerged from the discussion above, it would facilitate the promotion of an organisational identity, as these elements are currently impeding the organisational identity construction process.

7.3 IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research revealed that the NMMU’s organisational culture is currently not conducive for the construction of its organisational identity. Culture can be observed through a set of values, norms and assumptions that a group shares (Shein, 2004:16). When these elements are accepted, they become part of the group identity (Schein, 2004:16). It is evident from the findings and results that the impediments highlighted in this study contribute to the stifling culture experienced by NMMU academics. If these obstacles are not removed, the status quo will remain and as a result, the construction of an organisational identity will be hampered.

Below is the discussion of the implications of the study. Each theme will be examined separately.

With regard to the understanding of the term “comprehensive” university, this study revealed that the academics have demonstrated a fair comprehension of the term. However, almost half of the academics in the sample (49%) are unclear about the meaning of the term. When almost half of the sample claim ambiguity about a concept that is supposed to offer them an identity, this means that a common understanding must still be established. Without a common understanding, the ideal of an organisational identity for the NMMU will not be realised.
Furthermore, if there is a lack of common understanding, this implies that the NMMU as an organisation might develop into different directions. Nevertheless, it would benefit the NMMU greatly if steps are taken to ensure that all the members of the NMMU share a common understanding of the term.

In view of the **significance of the human factor during institutional change**, the following implications are foreseen:

i. Academics feel that their *voices are not heard*. This could cause reluctance of academics to share their opinions, due to the perception that they will not being taken seriously. This implies renouncing their potential contribution towards meaningful change, as well as losing confidence in the organisation as a potentially transparent and participatory working environment. This is unfortunate, because for a long time universities have been characterised by rigorous debates. One of the functions of the university is the creation of knowledge. If the voices of academics are not heard, this function is stifled. Creating knowledge is one element of an academic’s identity. If this function is inhibited, the academic will be left with very little to identify with. The construction of the organisational identity of the NMMU will thus be hampered.

ii. *Old stereotypes* are believed to *still exist* between academics of the previous institutions. Stereotypes suggest divisions and these divisions act as stumbling blocks when an organisation attempts to construct a shared identity. The occurrence of stereotyping suggests a lack of trust. It also indicates suspicion amongst colleagues, which may lead to competition between groups within the organisation. This competition might result in some groups perceiving themselves as high-status groups, thereby adopting a superior disposition (Roccas *et al.*, 2008:284). Such attitudes perpetuate “ideological hegemony” that encourages one way of viewing
the world (Tierney, 1991:43). The other group is thus assimilated into the dominant group and its culture is “replaced” with that of the dominant group (Vaara, 2000:85). This process is referred to as a “submerger” by Riad (2007:29) and a “subsumed integration” by Jansen (2003:36). An organisational identity would be difficult to construct in a situation where one group dominates, since the direction and shape of the merged institution will be determined by the dominant group (Van Knippenberg, et al., 2002:235). Given the above, it is thus important for the NMMU to eliminate previous stereotypes.

iii. When academics are not treated with sensitivity, they can become demoralised and demotivated, as they do not feel recognised and acknowledged. This in turn, often leads to poor job performance. A relationship of trust between managers and employees might be compromised. Employees usually observe and assess whether they can depend on their organisation, and consequently decide whether to trust it or not (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006:31). When there is no trust in the organisation, it is difficult for employees to be interdependent and cohesive. The construction of an organisational identity requires collaboration between role players at all levels.

iv. Proper communication, transparency and consultation are not believed to be practised at the NMMU. Communication is crucial in any process of change and has been acknowledged as an essential contributing attribute in the success of a merger (Muller, 2006:202 and 204). Muller (2006:204) refers to information as the “oxygen of the organisation”. When there is inadequate communication, the organisation suffers significantly, because the element that ‘gives it life’ is absent. In other words, the organisation becomes ‘lifeless’ as a result of poor communication. Transparency and consultation are equally important. Nixon, et al. (1998:5-6) assert that transparency and openness are essential ingredients of interaction.
Without these elements, employees feel marginalised and isolated. When people are marginalised they tend to feel excluded from the process. Such feelings may lead to resistance and opposition to change. When employees feel eliminated, the construction of an organisational identity is hindered.

v. The fact that academics are of the opinion that there is not a culture of cohesion at the NMMU, suggests existing divisions between former groups. This implies that the unique contributions and expertise of the various groups are not acknowledged and respected. This hampers the formation of relationships of trust, a necessary requirement for the construction of an organisational identity.

vi. Recognising and rewarding people for their contribution to the wellbeing of the organisation, is regarded as an effective mechanism to promote cohesion (Kezar, 2005:54). When people feel that the sacrifices that they make for the organisation are not taken into consideration, as was revealed by this study, they tend to lose hope and cease trying. As a result, employees’ loyalty and commitment towards the organisation dwindle. Work performance weakens and staff retention becomes problematic. It is difficult for employees to identify themselves with an organisation which, according to them, does not acknowledge their contributions.

vii. Academics feel that salaries are not harmonised. This could lead to feelings of divisions among academics, where some feel less rewarded than others. Such circumstances encourage animosity among groups and delay the process of unity and cohesion – a prerequisite for the collective identity construction process.
viii. There is a feeling that there is *no cohesion and no common focus* among academics in the new institution. When there is no cohesion or common focus, it means that there is no common goal that academics are working towards. This could result in different groups recoiling to procedures and practices of their pre-merged institutions. Such actions would defeat the means to construct a shared organisational identity, since the organisation needs to be perceived as a cohesive unit.

Regarding the **strategies that foster an organisational identity**, the following implications could be predicted:

ix. Academics believe that *some old academic programmes have not been changed*. These perceptions should however not be regarded as obstructing the construction of a shared organisational identity. Since NMMU is a comprehensive university the retention and integration of old programmes enhances the variety of the programmes offered to students. It is precisely this wider range of programmes that provides the comprehensive university with its distinctive identity.

x. Lack of certainty about the *focus on the strengths of the new institution* implies that academic staff is either ignorant about the strengths of the new institution, or that a collective SWOT\(^7\) analysis has not been done. This could result in members of the organisation being ignorant about the NMMU’s unique strengths, compared to other universities. The NMMU would thus not have a unique identity as an organisation. It is this distinctiveness that makes an organisation exceptional and encourages members to identify with it.

xi. There is a belief that *the research environment is nurtured*. This perception indicates that academics feel motivated to be actively involved

\(^7\) Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, strengths
in research. When this happens, research outputs and products are increased and NMMU contributes to the generation of new knowledge. In the process, the university becomes recognised by its peers and the community. Research is one of the core functions of the university and directly linked to the organisational identity of a university. When this aspect is nurtured, the process of the construction of an organisational identity (as a university) is enhanced.

xii. A significant number of academics expressed the view that they are not sure that the SANTED project is fostering any academic enterprise. When academics are unclear about the purpose of the SANTED project, it means that the attempts to restructure curricula in order to achieve the commensurability of the programmes from different institutions are either unknown or have little or no impact. This should raise a red flag for the NMMU. The reason for harmonising programmes is to subsequently contribute towards a common focus and a common goal at the NMMU. This initiative makes the construction of an organisational identity a not-so-distant reality, because when programmes and structures are harmonised, the task of uniting people becomes clearer as it is the only aspect to focus on.

xiii. Academics feel that attempts are being made to keep the academic standards high. This is a positive factor that needs to be valued, encouraged and further strengthened. When academic standards are high, it means that the institution will be prestigious and will attract students and good staff, since people are likely to associate themselves with high status groups (Huddy, 2001:134). This also means that academics will be keen to identify with the NMMU. When their organisation performs well and is esteemed, employees tend to be attracted to it, because it offers them a prospect for “self-enhancement” (Chreim, 2007:450; Ashforth and Mael, 1989:25). Their self-esteem is
boosted, they become more loyal, they perform better and commitment is thus increased (Van Dick, *et al.*, 2005:192). As a result, academics will strive for positive differentiation between their in-group (NMMU) and other relevant out-groups (other universities) (Van Dick *et al.*, 2005:191). When this positive differentiation happens, a positive social identity is developed from a positive self-evaluation. This again leads to “a sense of wellbeing, enhanced self-worth and self-esteem” (Hogg and Abramss, 1988:23). An organisational identity is thus more easily constructed under these circumstances.

xiv. Academics believe that the academic programmes contribute towards the employability of students. When academics have confidence in the relevance of their programmes, it suggests a commitment to deliver good quality programmes, which are responsive to society’s needs, and as such, this will ensure that students are employable. If students are employable, it means that industry and employment agencies trust the NMMU as a brand and as an institution with credibility. This means that the NMMU will be regarded as a high-status university that people would like to associate and identify with. According to Kant (1913), identity is not merely an individual endeavour, where the person simply defines herself; it is a mutual transaction, where the person is also defined by others (De Levita, 1965:19). In terms of the organisation, the perceptions of the public also contribute to the construction of its identity. Organisations operate in a world where image and reputation are essential (Gioia, 1998:22). If NMMU students are seen as highly employable, it means that they are credible and can therefore be trusted. The outside world will view the NMMU in a positive light, contributing to its public image, which will inevitably informs its organisational identity.

xv. Another encouraging aspect is that academics feel that there is a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching. This suggests that students receive
education that is more encompassing, as it will include different perspectives and worldviews. It also implies that academics get the opportunity to work across disciplines. This will amalgamate the different disciplines, thereby also uniting academics from different cultural and academic backgrounds. A sense of cohesion will further develop through interpersonal relations and interdependence (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:95-96). This will positively affect the construction of the organisational identity, because collaboration will enable a common focus and demolish old stereotypes and divisions.

xvi. When academics are unsure or even uninformed of the facilitation and mediation of change during the institutional transformation process, it implies that this process is nebulous to an extent that it is imperceptible. It could also suggest that, in the view of the academics, the management corps of the university is not meeting the criteria of proper change management. If this persists, the construction of an organisational identity will be deterred. Leadership is needed to direct, manage, facilitate and create the space for the construction of an organisational identity.

xvii. In addition, excellence in teaching and research are believed to receive unequal recognition. The implication is that some staff may feel excluded, as not all types of academic activities are acknowledged. As a result, they may not strive for excellence in some of their duties, leading to mediocre teaching or research activity. Furthermore, when one aspect is favoured at the expense of another, divisions are created. This is potentially relevant to the NMMU context, where the new cohort of academics comprises ex-Technikon and ex-University academics. These academics had different orientations towards their work, since staff from the former Technikon was less research-oriented than their university colleagues. When one pillar of the university receives more attention than the other pillars, the enterprise is imbalanced. As such it will not function well, thereby damaging the
“intellectual substance of the university” (Jaspers, 1960:54). These pillars constitute the core function of the university and are the attributes of the identity of the university that academics identify with. If one of these elements of identity does not receive relevant and due prominence, the organisational identity of the NMMU cannot be representative of all of its employees. This kind of organisational identity will be problematic as it will encourage hegemony where only one culture dominates.

xviii. When academics have not internalised the vision, mission and values of the institution, they cannot live these out. This could mean that a new single organisational culture would be difficult to establish, which in turn would impact on the construction of an organisational identity. Henkel (2005:157) cites Mead (1934), who argued that when the individual incorporates the attitudes and values of the community, the self is developed most fully. Schöpflin (2001:1-2) suggests that identities are rooted around a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour. The construction of an organisational identity depends on the internalisation of a set of values that regulates the behaviour of organisation members.

In terms of the impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity, the implications below can be foreseen:

xix. Academics feel that they spend too much time on administration, paper work and meetings. When non-academic aspects, such as those mentioned above, dominate academics’ daily duties, the logical implication is that core duties such as teaching and research could be neglected. This means that the main functions of the university will be compromised at the expense of the support functions of the university. A further implication is that academics could become overworked and behind schedule. Furthermore, if the core functions of the university are
compromised, the academic standards might be compromised as well. The perceptions about the organisation will accordingly be negative which will have a negative effect on the organisational identity.

xx. The fact that this study revealed a concern amongst academics that the university’s management style is top-down, and does not allow participation from academics, suggests frustration amongst employees of the new institution. The implication is that, in the academics’ view, their voices, opinions and ideas are ignored. This has serious implications for the construction of an organisational identity, since academics’ potential contributions are excluded and negated. Should such a practice continue, academics might eventually withdraw and limit their focus to their own, personal circle of concern, with no loyalty and commitment toward the institution. The view is supported by Fullan (2007:11) who warns that, “top-down change does not work, because it fails to garner ownership, commitment, or even clarity about the nature of the reforms”. He calls for the bringing together and blending of top-down and bottom-up muscles for change. Another aspect related to management is leadership. Carstens and Barnes (2006:10) assert that leadership is not a one-man show, but involves the interdependent relationship between the members of the organisation and management. They further assert that leadership can be found everywhere and not just at the top echelons of an organisation. If all academics regard themselves as leaders, they will take ownership of the organisation’s destiny. Such an environment will be more conducive for the construction of an organisational identity.

xxi. A crucial matter that threatens the core business of the university is understaffing. When the institution has an insufficient number of staff, additional pressure is added to the workloads of the existing cohort of staff. The implication is that academics could become overworked, demotivated and discouraged. This does not create a healthy environment
for the construction of an organisational identity, because an overworked and de-motivated employee is less likely to identify with her organisation.

xxii. Any organisation’s functions and performances are seriously hampered when there are financial constraints. When an academic institution like a university does not have sufficient financial resources to support its core business, its stature in the global academic community declines. This is even more acute in cases where new institutions, such as the comprehensive NMMU, need to establish themselves. It is difficult for an organisation to institute itself if it does not have credibility, because it sacrificed its core functions. An organisation without credibility is an organisation without recognition.

xxiii. Academics however feel that attempts are being made to maintain academic standards in the new institution. If the academic standards are high, then the NMMU will attract more students, because people prefer to associate and identify with high-status groups. High-status groups provide people with a sense of belonging. Hatch and Schultz (2000), cited in Puusa and Tolvanen (2006:30), consider organisational identity as the object of commitment and a sense of belonging. This aspect not only applies to students, but also to academics, who will be keen to associate and identify with such an organisation.

xxiv. When programmes of the previous Technikon are marginalised, it implies that students are not offered a sufficiently wide scope of potential programmes to choose from. Career pathways and career opportunities are thus reduced. Articulation possibilities between diplomas and degrees are also be limited. Another implication of the perceived marginalisation of ex-Technikon programmes is that former Technikon academics might feel dissatisfied, inferior or redundant, since their programmes are not recognised. As a result, oppressive structures emerge that lead to the
marginalisation of some groups through the preservation of the dominance of others (Lincoln, in Tierney, 1991:23). The marginalisation of some members of the organisation will automatically exclude them from the construction of an organisational identity process. Furthermore, once the identity is constructed, it would be difficult for them to identify with it, since it would not represent them.

... The research clearly revealed that the merger process has taken its toll on the time and energy of the academics. When academics are exhausted, rushed and anxious, their job performance is affected. In the case of a university, one can assume that the quality of teaching and research might deteriorate. In this case, the decline in job performance could be exacerbated by the other impeding factors highlighted, such as financial constraints, understaffing and the amount of time spent on non-academic duties. Furthermore, when employees are exhausted, stressed and under pressure due to time constraints, they tend to become emotionally vulnerable. This is not conducive for the construction of an organisational identity, since the identity process is an evolving process that requires negotiation, interaction, collaboration and interdependence. This whole process needs effort and time; therefore it cannot be rushed.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

An organisational identity is constructed by the employees who identify themselves with that particular organisation or institution. This study has clearly revealed that, at present, the organisational environment at NMMU is not conducive for the construction of an organisational identity, since several factors (as discussed above) are obstructing academics’ readiness and keenness to identify with the new organisation. In other words, apart from the absence of a tangible organisational identity, its construction is also hampered by the impeding factors. Unless these obstructions are attended to and removed, an
organisational identity will be difficult to construct. A facilitating environment thus needs to be created.

Therefore, in order for academics at NMMU to be willing to identify with the institution, and in doing so contribute to the construction of a shared organisational identity, certain strategies need to be implemented, and certain obstacles need to be removed. Eventually, the institution will have to develop strategies and programmes that will encourage academics to proudly identify with the institution, thereby, collectively constructing the NMMU's unique organisational identity. In light of the above, I now propose ways that these obstacles can be removed:

7.4.1 Theme 1: My understanding of a comprehensive university

i. Even though academics have indicated a fair understanding of the term ‘comprehensive university’, it would be advisable that the NMMU ensures a common understanding of the term among all its staff members. However, this common understanding should be determined by the members of the NMMU and not by management alone. This will assist the NMMU to agree on and communicate its own idea of a comprehensive university (Imenda, 2005:1414), thereby establishing its own, distinct organisational identity. This could be achieved by doing the following:

a. At an institutional level, a holographic sense-making exercise should be embarked upon. Academics should be encouraged to ask questions that will help them to identify themselves as a unique organisation. Examples of such questions are: Who are we as a comprehensive university? What is our core business? What are our strengths and weaknesses? How do we focus on and develop our strengths? Who are our partners? Who is our competition?
b. At a Faculty level, an ideographic sense-making exercise should be executed. Questions to be asked at this level should include: How does our vision and mission statement correspond with that of the institution? How does my discipline enable me to become a better NMMU academic? How does my Faculty contribute towards the construction of an organisational identity? How am I perceived by others within the institutions as a member of my Faculty?

c. Further questions should be asked at the personal level. Questions such as: What does it mean to be an academic in a comprehensive university? What do I need to consider differently? How can I change my practice? How can I contribute to the organisation as a whole?

These exercises require strong leadership. In other words, they require leaders who will acknowledge that the concept of management in the 21st century involves dependence on others rather than power over others (Carstens and Barnes, 2006:11). The Deans, DoSs and HoDs of Faculties therefore need to have a good understanding of the process of sense-making. They need to encourage members of staff to fully participate in these exercises. It should be acknowledged that these exercises will take time and will also require that staff members devote additional time to these projects.

It should also be noted that sense-making is a personal exercise, as well as a social activity (Vaara, 2000:87). Facilitators of change should therefore ensure that the results of these exercises are consolidated and aligned with the holographic picture of the organisation. These initiatives could take the form of workshops, seminars, social events, and symposia.
7.4.2 Theme 2: The significance of the human factor during institutional change at NMMU

i. To resolve the problem of the voices of academics not being heard, it is recommended that:

a. Management should create two-way communication opportunities, such as dialogues and debates within the organisation. This can be done through institutional conversation meetings and Faculty forums. At these platforms, academics need to have the opportunity to share their views within a public but safe environment. Above all, should academics have faith in these forums, because their views are acknowledged and noted.

b. Heads of Departments (HoDs) often have to fulfil a dual role by representing the staff, as well as the management corps of the university on Faculty Management Committees. As a result, neutrality often becomes problematic. Moreover, ‘ordinary’ academics are then not adequately represented. It is thus advised that one or two academics who are not in management positions, be co-opted on Faculty Management Committees (FMCs) to represent the staff. A flexible approach is advisable, for example that attendance is voluntary and that a maximum of two academics alternate their attendance at meetings.

c. There should be an open-door policy and open e-mail policy through which academics can raise their concerns with the Dean, Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) or Vice Chancellor (VC). This policy however should not undermine the presence and authority of HoDs and Directors of Schools (DoSs). An understanding between managers about the correct channel of communication should be established.
d. At departmental and school level, there can be agreed-upon procedures to allow academics’ views to be expressed and noted. Within the department or school, an electronic register could be used to record the concerns of staff. This register will have functions that indicate when the concern was lodged and when it was resolved. In this way, a record is kept and follow-ups can be easily made. Such a practice will eliminate the perception that ‘academics’ voices are not heard’.

ii. To remove *old stereotypes that still exist between academics of the previous institutions*, the following suggestions are made:

a. Recurriculation and restructuring of programmes should take place. This will foster academic cohesion and allow academics to take ownership of their programmes collectively. As a result, stereotyping will disappear, since a common focus and purpose will emerge. Academics should engage with these projects in a non-threatening environment where a neutral, yet knowledgeable facilitator guides the process. Participants should realise at the onset that the process will be sensitive, prolonged and will require compromises on both sides.

b. Collaboration between academics across disciplines and across campuses should be encouraged. The collaboration could be through interdisciplinary teaching, community engagement or research. This can be done by establishing properly subsidised and administrated cross-campus centres⁸ that will make sure that academics work across campuses (Kezar, 2005:54).

iii. In order to ensure that academics are *treated with sensitivity*, the following is recommended:

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⁸ The notion of cross-campus centres will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
a. Transformational leadership workshops need to be convened at institutional as well as at Faculty level in order to equip managers as well as non-managers with change management and people skills. Industrial psychology consultants need to assist managers in particular to practise the values of compassion, empathy and caring in the workplace. Reflection sessions are needed to monitor progress.

iv. In order to improve communication, transparency and consultation, the following proposals are suggested:

a. Proper communication needs to be prioritised. Important decisions that concern a department, school or Faculty should not be spread informally, for instance via ‘corridor talk’. Appropriate university communication channels such as meetings, the intranet, e-mail and the telephone can be used to share information. Academics should be notified via e-mail about the availability of the information. Other communication strategies that have a positive impact, especially at Faculty level, are newsletters. News about academics’ achievements, the latest accomplishments and important dates and happenings can be communicated in quarterly newsletters. This will create a sense of pride and belonging and will contribute to the construction of an organisational identity.

b. Management should be honest and transparent about their intentions in order to establish a culture of trust. Decisions made need to be justified. Minutes of meetings should be accessible to staff members for scrutiny on request. Furthermore, meetings should be characterised by a culture of openness, where academics are allowed and encouraged to question and debate issues which affect them and the institution at large. This will
enable academics to take ownership of their institution - an important prerequisite for the creation of an organisational identity.

There needs to be consultation with staff members when decisions which affect them directly are to be made. Management should ensure that staff receives meeting notifications and agendas well in advance. Bureaucratic systems often lead to rushed decision-making processes, resulting in inadequate consultation and frustrated employees.

v. In order to establish a culture of respect and trust, it is proposed that all academics acknowledge each other as a fellow human being, treat colleagues with respect and trust one another. In order to respect a colleague, familiarity with ‘the other’ is required and interaction between staff should thus be encouraged and enabled. Networks will assist people to interact with one another. Physical spaces should be created where people can liaise and form relationships (Kezar, 2005:54). These spaces could be recreational centres, common areas, and sporting facilities.

vi. To ensure that academics are recognised and valued for their contributions, the following recommendations are made:

a. Recognition and reward structures for excellence in both teaching and research need to be introduced at departmental level. The importance of both teaching and research should be included in the vision and mission statement of the university. Management have to acknowledge the importance and value of both functions and reward both equally. One example of such a practice is to be

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9 Reward structures at Faculty as well as University level have already been instituted. Academics can qualify to be awarded the Faculty Researcher / Teacher and / or University Researcher / Teacher of the Year. Awards for emerging researchers and teachers also exist to encourage novice academics to excel in their work.
found at the University of Delaware where the abilities of academics and sources of support are combined and balanced between teaching, research and community engagement (Rich, 2006:45). In this model, Faculty members are divided into four full-time categories: **instructional academics** that teach and advise students; **clinical academics** that focus on the supervision of students in different kinds of professional training; **public service academics** that are responsible for public service programmes, including applied research; and **research academics** who concentrate on externally funded and sponsored research programmes (Rich, 2006:45-46). It is thus recommended that the NMMU allow academics to focus on their strengths and build communities of practice with pockets of excellence within Faculties, according to their respective strength areas.

b. Special incentives should be offered to those academics who perform well in all three tiers, namely teaching, research and community engagement. These incentives could be monetary or in terms of time relief.

c. Academics can be granted weekly ‘research days’. On these days, they are allowed to focus exclusively on their research projects and work at an off campus setting if preferred, for example at home. They need to be held accountable and be required to deliver agreed upon outputs.

d. The above grant should also apply to academics who are actively involved in community projects. On days that they work in the communities, they should be allowed to spend the rest of the day off campus.
vii. In order to ensure that salaries are harmonised, it is recommended that advice from independent consultants who could assist in salary negotiations are sought. In order to heal the divisions that still exist among academics from the different institutions, the harmonisation of salaries is an important component of the formula for the construction of an organisational identity. This needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

viii. To establish *cohesion and a common focus* among academics in the new institution, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. A *Unit for Change and Transformation* (UCT) that will foster and sustain interaction, integration and collaboration between NMMU staff members needs to be established. This unit will serve a different purpose from the office for Organisational Transformation and Equity (OT and E)\(^{10}\).

b. The UCT will work in tandem with cross-campus centres to foster networks and bring together different Faculties from different campuses to conduct research and offer academic programmes (Kezar, 2005:54). This will create “cross-campus intellectual collaboration” (Kezar, 2005:54).

c. These centres will also act as hubs where information on the change process can be accessed and disseminated. This information could be in the form of policies and institutional announcements.

d. Through these centres, academics will have the opportunity to express their concerns about the change process. The campus

\(^{10}\) The main objective of the OT and E office is to ensure that the NMMU meets equity targets in terms of staff profile.
centres will then communicate the concerns, grievances and challenges to the UCT. In this manner the voices of people are heard, because they have been given a voice by the change facilitators. They will thus not feel marginalised or ignored (Pepper and Larson, 2006:66).

e. Physical boundaries such as the current fence between the North (the former Technikon) and South (the former UPE) campuses should be collapsed to create a physical space for interaction and integration. Symbolically, this will reinforce the unity of the NMMU as a ‘comprehensive’ university.

f. A common area such as a student centre and a cafeteria where students and staff can interact informally should be erected. This kind of socialisation will allow students and staff to bridge the gap and blur the boundaries between what were previously Technikon and University staff and students.

7.4.3 Theme 3: Strategies to foster an organisational identity

i. In terms of resolving the problem of some old programmes that have not been changed, the following recommendations are made:
   a. It should be explained to academics that there are certain programmes that cannot be integrated and need to remain separate, with good reason.

   b. Programmes that complement one another should be identified and merged through the facilitation process discussed above (See 7.4.2 (ii) a).
ii. To ensure a deliberate *focus on the strengths of the new institution*, it is recommended that a sense-making exercise to identify and discover the strengths of the institution be operationalised, as discussed in point 7.4.1 (i) a.

iii. To further nurture the *research environment*, the following recommendations are made:

a. Academics should be encouraged at Faculty level by their Deans to improve their qualifications. Lecturer replacement needs to be budgeted for annually, in order to relieve those staff members who require study leave in order to obtain their higher degrees.

b. Research-related workshops should be arranged and presented in order to equip academics with new research skills. HoDs and DoSs should encourage and enable novice researchers to attend these workshops.

c. The workloads of academics who are improving their qualifications should be adjusted in order to enable them to further their studies.

d. Regular research seminars at Faculty level should be launched for academics to share their research projects. At these sessions, new research methods and methodologies can be introduced and discussed. These seminars could take place fortnightly or once a month, where designated academics prepare and present papers that are to be delivered at conferences and eventually published.

e. Cross-campus centres need to foster research collaborations and networking between the various NMMU campuses.
f. A mentoring programme within and across disciplines, as well as at institutional level, should be launched. Well-established researchers can adopt novice researchers as mentees and guide them through their research projects. In this way, home-grown timber will be developed.

g. The institutional Emerging Researcher of the Year should be given continued financial support for at least a year. Coupled with the funds, a mentor for the emerging researcher should be appointed to encourage and support the researcher. A dedicated coordinator from the research office should monitor the progress of the emerging researcher, to ensure that this researcher reaches the status of a rated researcher.

iv. To ensure that academics are aware that the **SANTED project aims to promote and foster the academic enterprise**, the following recommendations are proposed:
   a. Information sessions at Faculty level must be convened by the Deans to explain the purpose and goals of the SANTED project to all academics. In cases where Faculties are not affected by recurriculation and restructuring of their programmes, the information should nonetheless be disseminated via e-mail or the intranet for noting.

   b. At the institutional level, the cross-campus centres should have information about the SANTED project available for staff members to access.

   c. In speeches made by the VC at ceremonies and events, as well as via general communiqués from the VC, occasional reference should
be made to the SANTED project as a mechanism that promotes academic cohesion and integration.

v. To further enhance the attempts to keep the academic standards high, the following recommendations are proposed:
   a. A sense-making exercise to identify, discover and build on the strengths of the institution, as discussed in point 7.4.1 (i) a, should be launched.
   b. The focus areas and research niche areas of the NMMU should reflect the strengths of each department, school or Faculty.
   c. Faculties should identify academic pockets of excellence and invest in those areas in terms of financial and human resources. In this way the energies will be focused and united towards a common goal.
   d. Regular internal and external programme reviews must be conducted, using the HEQC’s 11 standards as criteria.
   e. Study material produced by lecturers should be reviewed by peers from other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

vi. In order to enhance the relevance of the academic programmes with regard to the employability of students, the following recommendations are suggested:
   a. Departments and Faculties should liaise with industry, the community and other employment agencies who can assist with the conceptualisation of the programmes so as to adequately prepare students for the workplace.

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11 The HEQC (Higher Education Quality Committee) is a branch of the Council for Higher Education (CHE). Its main task is to monitor and ensure quality delivery in higher education in South Africa.
b. Input from the employers in terms of what is expected in the ‘real’ world should be sought and included in teaching and learning materials.

c. Maintaining high academic standards, as discussed in the previous point, should be ensured in order to afford students the opportunities to compete for jobs with students from other universities.

vii. To further strengthen the *multi-disciplinary approach to teaching*, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. The collaboration between academic disciplines and Faculties through teaching and research should be encouraged. This could be facilitated by the cross-campus centres in terms of initiating and monitoring collaboration and networks.

b. Academics should be encouraged to improve their teaching by integrating other disciplines when teaching. This can be done through collaboration and consultation with academics from other disciplines who can advise with regard to teaching content and teaching strategies. This kind of academic engagement across disciplines will further reinforce the notion of the ‘comprehensiveness’ of the institution.

viii. To *facilitate and mediate change* at the institution, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. The UCT must be driven by a group of people who are competent, informed and committed facilitators and agents of change. These facilitators should be individuals who believe in the change process and who can model what it means to be a ‘transformed individual’.
They might need to undergo intensive training in change management.

b. The process, as discussed in point 7.4.2 (viii) a - f, should be followed up to facilitate and mediate change at the NMMU.

c. The cross-campus centres should arrange social events such as lunchtime discussions, sporting activities and games, fun walks, and retreats that will nurture the “existing critical mass” of change facilitators and agents across campuses (Kezar, 2005:54).

ix. To ensure that excellence in teaching and research is equally acknowledged, the following recommendations are suggested:

a. Reward and recognition structures should have similar categories for teaching and research awards.

b. The financial rewards should be complemented by a reward package that includes developmental incentives, such as materials, instruments and skills development initiatives.

c. Academics who excel in teaching and research should be acknowledged at institutional level via NMMU communiqués. Successes need to be celebrated collectively. This will also enhance cohesion, a necessary requirement for the construction of an organisational identity.

d. In the light of the findings of this study, also it is furthermore recommended that the university deliberately pays more attention to the promotion of best practice in terms of teaching, by arranging regular workshops to improve teaching.
x. The mere presence of a vision, mission and values statement does not guarantee internalisation and subsequent practising by the organisation’s members (Kezar, 2005:53). To assist academics to internalise and live out the vision, mission and the values of the institution, the following recommendations are proposed. These are based on Kotter’s (19995:63) views regarding organisational transformation.

a. *Creating a vision:* The purpose of the vision is also to direct the change endeavour. In addition to the creation of the vision, specific strategies need to be developed that will ensure that staff take ownership of the vision and that the vision is subsequently implemented.

b. *Communicating the vision:* All possible means need to be utilised to communicate the new vision and encourage internalisation and subsequent implementation thereof. Periodic information regarding the vision should be disseminated to the staff members. This can be done through e-mails, newsletters, the intranet and conversations. Managers should model the change that they want to see in their employees.

c. *Empowering others to act on the vision:* Obstacles and systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision should be identified and removed. This implies that risk-taking and non-traditional ideas, activities and actions should be encouraged and accommodated. In other words, people need to be familiarised with the vision of the institution. This could take place through informal conversations, social events and staff induction programmes. Another way to act on the vision is to integrate it in community engagement and research projects.
7.4.4 Theme 4: The impact of the merger process on the construction of an organisational identity

i. To ensure that academics spend less much time on administration, the following recommendations are made:

a. There should be a standardised amount of time to be spent by academics on administration and meetings. It is however acknowledged that this will differ according to the responsibility of the academic. Deans, HoDs and DoSs will evidently spend more time on these activities.

b. Faculties can dedicate a specific day in the week to meetings. Committees and forums in the Faculty then plan around the dedicated day to conduct their meetings, devoting the other week days for other academic functions.

c. A Faculty meeting calendar can be posted on the intranet for academics, as well as administrative staff, to access and refer to. The calendar should be administered and coordinated by one administrative staff member.

ii. In order to transform prevalent top-down and bureaucratic management style, which does not allow enough participation from academics, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. Management needs to undergo leadership training which focuses on dealing with human beings during change.

b. Skills in management facilitation and mediation need to be developed through workshops, especially in terms of how to respond to and care for employees.
c. Dialogues need to take place between management and academics where academics are given the platform to express their views, without feeling intimidated of fearing victimisation. These conversations need to be well advertised so that everyone is aware of their occurrence. A concerted effort should be made to organise these conversations from departmental level, school level, up to university level.

iii. In order to address the perception that the new institution does not offer more benefits such as substantial medical aid contributions, housing allowance and other discount vouchers after the harmonisation of structures, it is recommended that management investigates other tangible benefits from which staff members can gain.

iv. To ensure that the merged institution is properly staffed in terms of the academic-student ratio, the following recommendations are made:
   a. With the intention of attending to the problem of understaffing, the NMMU needs to undertake rigorous recruitment strategies in order to attract excellent scholars, teachers and community service academics, who resemble the envisaged profile of the NMMU academic.

   b. Attempts to retain good academics should be prioritised.

   c. The salary structure needs to be revisited in order to attract and retain academics. Redistribution of available funds may have to be made in this regard.

v. In order to ensure that financial constraints do not hamper the academic functioning of the new institution, the following recommendations are proposed:
a. The core functions of the university should be budgeted for adequately. This will involve the purchasing of appropriate teaching material and equipment such as media projectors, white boards, advanced computers, laptops and software. It also implies attending to well-maintained teaching venues and facilities.

b. It is also recommended that additional strategies to increase the university income (for example, third-stream income) be investigated and implemented.

vi. In terms of *upholding the academic standards in the new institution*, the following recommendations are suggested:

   a. Academics should be encouraged to improve their qualifications and be given more support in terms of grants and released time.

   b. Academics should keep abreast with developments in their academic field nationally and internationally. Sufficient funds to subscribe to accredited journals and attend scientific conferences in their field should be made available.

   c. The library should have the financial resources to subscribe to recent and leading scientific journals, and purchase recent scholarly and seminal books.

vii. To prevent the *marginalisation of previous Technikon programmes*, the following recommendations are proposed:

   a. All the programmes at the NMMU should be given equal marketing opportunities.

   b. During the process of recurruculation and restructuring of programmes, programmes should be treated equally.
c. Faculties should devise strategies through which academics teach on programmes that were historically offered by ‘the other’ institutions. The Deans should be held accountable for ensuring that this integration happens in their Faculties. The UCT can oversee this process with the assistance of the cross-campus centres.

In terms of dealing with the additional stresses brought about by the merger, specifically in terms of time and energy demands, it is recommended that all staff members be afforded continued confidential counselling. This needs to be facilitated by a neutral external service so that staff members can express themselves freely without fear of prejudice or victimisation.

I have provided the above recommendations based on the findings and results of the study. The context of the NMMU as a unique institution has been taken into consideration when these recommendations were made. The academics have clearly articulated that before any organisational identity is established, the above matters need to be put to rest as these obstacles affect the meaning they attach to the concept of a comprehensive university. What has also emerged from the results is that the current imbalance between the functions of the university, namely teaching, research and community engagement hampers the construction of a organisational identity.

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the facilitation and mediation process, which I suggest should be the first step towards the construction of an organisational identity.
The Unit for Change and Transformation (UCT) is composed of facilitators and mediators of change and is in the centre of the change process. There is a reconciliation and blending of top-down and bottom-up management; that is why the task team is at the centre. This process always takes into account the interlinked functions of the university. These functions are represented by the triangle that connects them. The triangle and the task team are linked, because the task team is always informed by these three functions in whatever it does.

The lines between the communities are perforated, indicating the permeability of the boundaries. This allows for the back and forth flow of information, consultation and participation that is indicated by the double-sided arrow. The arrow moves across from each side; from the task team through the functions, through the NMMU community, through to the stakeholders and outside the community, and vice versa.
The UCT should be housed in the Centre for Planning and Institutional Development (CPID) of the NMMU. The UCT will have an interdependent link with the CPID, because it will feed into the CPID for implementation purposes and the CPID will collaborate with the UCT on issues of change and transformation. The UCT will be linked to Cross-Campus Centres (CCCs) that will be launched across campuses. This link between the unit and the centres is reciprocal. These centres will foster organisational cohesion, inter-campus integration, interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty collaboration.

These centres will operate across campuses in order to accomplish the above-mentioned functions. They will nurture the critical mass of change agents.

The UCT will serve two functions:

1. To monitor and drive the change process.
   a. This will be done through engagement with managers and staff members.
   b. It will also be done by means of the organisation and coordination of workshops, seminars, symposia, guest speakers / lecturers.

2. To inform and direct the change process.
   a. This will be done through conducting action research on change and change management in order to inform and direct the change process.
   b. This will be achieved through the fostering of interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty collaboration in order to direct the change process.
The process of the construction of identity that I suggest below is derived from a combination of the findings and the literature review of this study (Zittoun, 2008; De Boer, et al., 2007; Lipponen and Leskinen, 2006; Brewer and Hewstone, 2004; Schein, 2004; Brewer, 2001; Irrmann, 2002; Kotter, 1995). I have developed this identity construction process model with the NMMU as an organisation in mind.
1. The first step in the process of identity construction is letting go of one’s previous ideology, assumptions and the fear of the unknown. This step also involves the unlearning of previously held beliefs and attitudes.

2. The second step involves the acceptance of a new way of doing things, new people, new procedures and new structures. This implies a detachment from the previous way of doing things and even relearning of new attitudes and
behaviour. This detachment can be partial or complete, depending on how much releasing and unlearning have been done.

3. The third step involves making meaning of the change that is taking place. This is a personal and emotional step, because it involves the understanding of the losses and the potential gains.

4. Step four is closely linked to the third step, because they can happen simultaneously. As one makes sense of one’s surroundings and context during change, it is possible that, at the same time, the organisation can identify its distinctiveness by looking at strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

5. Step five is closely linked to steps three and four, because the process of identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is driven, informed and directed by one’s values. In this process these values could be amended, alternated, discarded or some values can even be acquired. A process of identifying core values from the latter process is thus developed.

6. In step six, the identified core values are internalised by including them in the vision and mission statement. Internalisation can also happen by basing curriculum development, as well as teaching and learning, research and community engagement on the principles embedded within these values. Other strategies for internalisation are dialogues, clothing and artifacts. Once the core values are internalised, a process of identification can take place.

7. In step seven, the organisation can take ownership of the distinctiveness and make it its own. At this stage, academics can identify and associate themselves with the organisation.

As is evident from the findings, an environment and culture conducive for the construction of an organisational identity currently does not exist at the NMMU. The participants identified a constructive milieu as a precondition. I have attempted to propose how such a favourable culture can be created by making the above recommendations. I have explained how the meaning-making process should be done which will subsequently lead to the construction of the NMMU’s
organisational identity. Informed by the findings of the study, I therefore recommend the institution of a Unit for Change and Transformation (UCT) to foster a constructive climate (Figure 7.1) and the facilitation of a sequential process of identity construction (Figure 7.3).

7.5 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study has the following limitations:

- There is not a great deal of literature on comprehensive universities in South Africa. This has resulted in too much reliance on international literature in terms of clarifying and understanding the concept. Since any construction of reality involves the context within which that reality takes place, in this study the comprehensive university has been viewed as an evolving institutional type at its infancy stage in South Africa.

- A merger is a disruptive process that results in temporary location arrangements. After merging the three institutions, NMMU now has seven campuses. It was difficult to travel between campuses for the interviews. As a result, academics from the George campuses were not involved in the individual interviews, but they were included in phase two (the quantitative questionnaire).

- Due to the study applying the mixed methods approach, the questionnaire could only be disseminated after the qualitative themes had emerged. Consequently, the questionnaire was distributed during the final examination period, when academics were pressed with time to complete their marking and other year-end commitments. Under different circumstances the response rate might have been higher than the 20% that was received.

- Only academics were included in this study. The construction of an organisational identity should involve all the stakeholders in order to obtain a
full picture of the situation under investigation. Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of this study to include all stakeholders. The results of this study cannot therefore be generalised, since the information gathered was limited to academics only.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the conclusions, recommendations and limitations indicated above, the following recommendations for further research are made:

- Qualitative research can be conducted as a follow-up to probe further into the results obtained from the quantitative questionnaire. This could assist management in developing and designing strategies that could improve the conditions under which academics operate.

- A similar study, that will also include administrators and students, could be conducted in order to obtain a full picture of the situation at the NMMU.

- A comparative study between three South African comprehensive universities, namely NMMU, UJ\textsuperscript{12} and WSU\textsuperscript{13} can be done. These three comprehensive universities are very similar in composition and programme mix. It would benefit higher education in South Africa to investigate and compare how these institutions construct their organisational identities. Other institutions of higher education can learn from such a study.

- A comparative study between a traditional university and a comprehensive university could be conducted. This could be done in terms of investigating how the comprehensive university compared to a traditional university, conforms to the traditional idea of a university.

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\textsuperscript{13} Walter Sisulu University
7.7 FINAL CONCLUSION

Chapter seven presented the conclusions, implications, recommendations and limitations of the study. This study has afforded me the opportunity to approach the research question from two different angles by employing a mixed methods approach. I was thus able to capture the qualitative interpretations of academics’ experiences, feelings, thoughts and perceptions about their meaning-making of a comprehensive university and how that understanding subsequently contributes to the construction of an organisational identity.

Furthermore, I was able to design a quantitative questionnaire that aimed at confirming the qualitative findings. The results of the quantitative phase were then integrated with the qualitative findings, which informed the implications and the recommendations made in this study.

The comments and responses of the academics revealed significant information concerning the relationship between management and academics, as well as between academics of the previous institutions. Recommendations have been proposed to resolve issues that emerged from the study.

Two steps have been highlighted as prerequisites for an organisational identity to be established at the NMMU. The first step is a Unit for Change and Transformation that should function as a monitoring and driving force of the change process at the NMMU. The second step is the facilitation of the process of identity construction.

This study attempted to answer the research question that has been at the centre of this research process. The findings revealed that the meanings that academics assign to the notion of a comprehensive university are informed by the context. The nature of this context emerged in the themes that I identified. These themes essentially suggested that certain obstacles hinder the construction of an
organisational identity and strategies need to be implemented to address and remove these hindrances *before* an organisational identity can be constructed.

This study is significant to the NMMU. It raises acute awareness that the meaning-making process that academics are involved in at a merging institution, is a complex and multi-faceted process that is primarily informed and determined by the context. Therefore the conclusion is that the context of the NMMU as it is at the moment, is not conducive for the construction of an organisational identity. The appeal is accordingly for the NMMU to take cognizance of the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations of this study.


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