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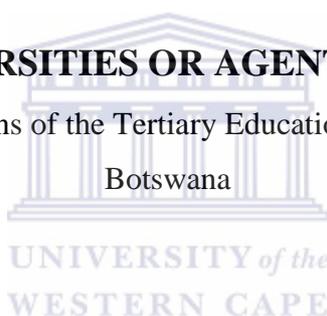
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BUFFER FOR UNIVERSITIES OR AGENT OF GOVERNMENT?

Examining the roles and functions of the Tertiary Education Council in higher education in
Botswana



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3002122

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Educationis (M. Ed.) in the Higher Education Masters in Africa Programme, Institute for Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape.

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March 2014

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KEYWORDS

Higher Education

Higher Education Governance

Buffer Bodies

Agencification

Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education Policy

Policy Coordination

Quality Assurance

Tertiary Education Council



ABSTRACT

Buffer for universities or agent of government? Examining the roles and functions of the Tertiary Education Council in higher education in Botswana

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M.Ed. Full Thesis, Higher Education Masters in Africa (HEMA), Institute for Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape.

The purpose of the study is to understand the roles, functions and perceived performance of the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) in higher education governance in Botswana. The study describes the relationship between the government, the TEC and higher education institutions in Botswana. The main objectives of the study are to:

- a) Examine the roles and functions of the TEC in Botswana's higher education regarding policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education.
- b) Explore potential tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and those of some of its stakeholders.
- c) Establish the performance of the TEC in relation to the three functions of policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education.

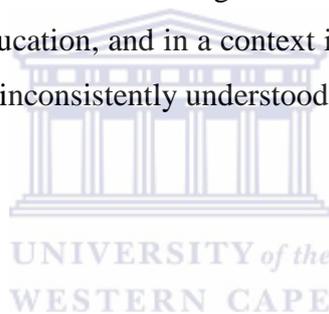
The study is located within the broader framework of higher education governance. It examines the different models of higher education governance (such as state control, state interference and state supervision models) and the relationship involved between different stakeholders in governance of higher education. Furthermore, the framework focuses on the implications of the dynamics of higher education governance on the roles and functions of buffer bodies.

The study adopted a single case study approach and it was designed to allow for the use of multiple sources of evidence. Data was collected through a review of both institutional and policy documents, semi-structured interviews with eight informants from the TEC and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, as well as a survey targeting institutional heads of higher education institutions in Botswana. The use of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection provided useful and in-depth data and allowed for triangulation. The data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The findings of the study reveal that there are differing conceptions of the TEC's role in higher education in Botswana. Whereas the TEC sees itself as 'middleman' between the government and higher education institutions, the higher education institutions conceptualise the role of the TEC as an extension of government. The differing views on the TEC's role, as either buffer or agent, result in different expectations of the roles and functions of the TEC. In addition, the study revealed that Botswana's higher education system is characterised by fragmentation and duplication of roles, which limit the mandate of the TEC, thereby creating tensions between the TEC and other constituencies in the Botswana higher education system.

The study thus contributes to the understanding of the roles and functions of the TEC in the governance of higher education in Botswana. It also contributes to the understanding of the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education and the implications of this relationship on the roles and functions of buffer bodies. Overall, the study shows the complexities involved in the governance of higher education in a young and evolving system of higher education, and in a context in which the roles and functions of the key players are contested and inconsistently understood.

March 2014



DECLARATION

I declare that *Buffer for Universities or Agent of Government? Examining the Roles and Functions of the Tertiary Education Council in Higher Education in Botswana* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Keitumetse G. Lebotse

March, 2014

Signed K. Lebotse



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
CAD	Centre for Academic Development
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
EAQA	European Association for Quality Agencies
HEI(s)	Higher Education Institution(s)
HERANA	Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa
HRDAC	Human Resource Development Advisory Council
HRDC	Human Resource Development Council
IHS	Institute of Health Science
TEC	Tertiary Education Council
TEP	Tertiary Education Policy
MoESD	Ministry of Education and Skills Development
MPU	Manpower Planning Unit
NHRDS	National Human Resource Development Strategy
UB	University of Botswana
UGC	University Grants Commission
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

A number of countries across the world have established “buffer” or “intermediary” bodies between government and higher¹ education institutions (HEIs) to oversee the development and functioning of higher education systems. According to Neave (1992:11), buffer bodies in higher education provide a “zone of negotiation between universities as consumers of public resources and the government as the provider”. Such bodies include funding councils, quality assurance agencies and research councils. Established buffer bodies are found in a number of African countries. Examples include the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya, the National Commission of Accreditation and Evaluation in Mozambique, the Higher Education Accreditation Council in Tanzania, the Council on Higher Education in South Africa, the National Accreditation Board in Ghana and the National University Council in Nigeria (Altbach & Teferra, 2003).

Buffer bodies are often referred to as national councils of higher education, national higher education commissions or tertiary education councils (TEC) (Saint, Lao & Materu, 2009). These bodies are typically established to play an advisory role to the government on higher education policy, funding allocations to the institutions, quality assurance and planning for higher education development (Saint et al., 2009).

The recent emergence of buffer bodies in higher education in developing countries should be understood within the context of the rapid expansion of private HEIs, funding provisions and diversification of programmes and qualifications as well as cross-border provisions in higher education (Nhundu, 2008). The increasing demand for higher education in African countries has resulted in an increased number of private HEIs. This increased number of private HEIs led to a questioning of quality issues and therefore the need for regulation. Faced with these challenges, governments have seen it fit to introduce buffer bodies to help deal with the quality issues facing the sector. The general thrust of the literature suggests that buffer bodies were created in developing countries to “oversee these large and complex systems” (Saint et al., 2009:viii).

¹ The terms “higher education/institution(s)” and “tertiary education/institution(s)” are used interchangeably in this study.

Like many other developing countries, the higher education sector in Botswana has experienced phenomenal growth in terms of student enrolments, new tertiary education institutions and diversification of programmes (Ramatsui, Kupe & Molutsi, 2008). This student enrolment numbers rose from 20 011 in 2003/4 to 47 889 in 2008/9 (Tertiary Education Council, 2009). Likewise, tertiary education providers increased from one public tertiary institution in the 1980s to 39 tertiary education providers in 2013, 13 of which are privately owned institutions (Tertiary Education Council, 2008a; TEC website, 2013).

Because of these changes in the sector, the quality of education offered by these mushrooming institutions to an increasing student population has become an issue of serious concern to the government. The TEC was established by 1999 parliamentary act to oversee and give direction to the higher education sector in Botswana.

Even though it was formally established in 1999, the TEC commenced operations only in 2004. Available literature does not offer explanations as to why it took so long for the Council to start operating (Tertiary Education Council, 2008a). Guided by the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, the TEC has developed regulations for establishing new private tertiary institutions, registration of existing public and private tertiary institutions, accreditation of private tertiary institutions and norms and standards that guide tertiary education institutions. More so, the TEC, through parliamentary procedure, produced the Tertiary Education Policy (TEP) in 2008 termed '*Towards a Knowledge Society*' (Government of Botswana, 2008).

Following recommendations from the Tertiary Education Policy (Government of Botswana, 2008) and the National Human Resource Development Strategy (NHRDS) (2009), the TEC merged with the Manpower Planning Unit (MPU) in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA), a sister organisation of the TEC that focuses on education up to and including certificate level. The rationale for the merger was of the identified weaknesses of existing oversight bodies (Government of Botswana, 2009). The merged institution was to be known as the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) and was expected to be operational by 2012. By the time of concluding this study, the TEC had ceased to exist and has been replaced by the HRDC.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The governance of higher education in Botswana has been undergoing changes over the years. In the midst of these changes, roles for the governance of tertiary education have been changing

as well. For instance, before the establishment of the TEC, the University of Botswana (UB) was responsible for assuring quality in tertiary educational institutions in the country through affiliations by institutions to the university. The Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) was responsible for, among other things, funding the tertiary education sector, hiring of staff for public institutions, and regulating tertiary education in the country. Through the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, the Government of Botswana established the TEC. The council has been tasked with, among other duties, the responsibility of formulating tertiary education policy, coordinating long term planning of tertiary education and ensuring the quality of tertiary education.

Consequently, the establishment of the TEC meant that some of the responsibilities carried out by other stakeholders in higher education governance were to be taken over by the new organisation. Since its establishment in 1999, the TEC has been faced with serious operational problems emanating from a variety of factors (Molatlhegi and associates, 2010). These factors include the weaknesses identified with the current set up of oversight bodies, such as the overlapping mandates between the TEC, MPU and BOTA. These structures are said to be fragmented and suffering from a lack of both vertical and horizontal integration (Government of Botswana, 2009), due to their location in different ministries, which made coordination difficult (Government of Botswana, 2009). Thus, the TEC fell under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, whereas BOTA was under the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and MPU in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

The TEC scenario presents an interesting dimension as the actual introduction of buffer bodies has not been researched much. The fact that buffer bodies are a relatively new phenomenon in the African higher education landscape implies that they are bound to face operational challenges in their endeavour to fulfil their mandate of standing as ‘middlemen’ between the government and HEIs. According to El-Khawas (1992), the role of operating as an intermediary is a precarious one. El-Khawas argues that most buffer bodies cannot sustain themselves as neutral parties between the government and HEIs and end up tilting towards one of the parties and in the process failing to fulfil their mandate. This leads to tension between the functions of buffer bodies and its stakeholders. Despite El-Khawas’ claim about the precarious role played by buffer bodies, very little has been done in Africa to probe these claims. The TEC scenario provides many opportunities to probe the claims made by El-Khawas in an African higher education system. Therefore, this study sets out to examine the role played by the TEC in the

governance of higher education in Botswana and explore the dynamics involved in the way the TEC operates and then how these dynamics affect TEC's delivery on its mandate.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The overall aim of the study is to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana.

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- a) To examine the roles and functions of the TEC in Botswana's higher education with regard to policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education.
- b) To explore the potential tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and those of some of its key stakeholders (government and HEIs).
- c) To establish the perceived performance of the TEC in relation to three functions of policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education.

1.4 Research questions

Pursuant of the above aim and objectives of the study, the following research questions are posed:

- a) How do the different stakeholders conceive of the role of the TEC in higher education?
- b) What are the potential tensions that exist between the government, the TEC and higher education institutions in terms of the roles and functions of the TEC?
- c) What is the perceived effect of the tensions on the performance of the TEC in relation to the three selected functions?

1.5 Scope of the study

The primary aim of the study is to examine the roles and functions of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana with reference to the stated functions. The higher education system in Botswana has a wide range of role players. These role players include the Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Education and Skills Development; the TEC; the HEIs; the students; the academic community; the private sector; and the wider community (Tertiary Education Council, 2012). For purposes of this study, the scope of role players is

limited to the TEC, the government and the HEIs, due to the existing gap in the literature around the tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies, government and HEIs.

Moreover, while the scope and focus of such an investigation could include all the functions of the TEC, this study specifically limits itself to three selected TEC functions relating to the formulation of tertiary education policy and advisory role to the government, coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education and quality assurance in tertiary education institutions.

1.6 Rationale and significance of the study

This study is considered important as it comes at a time when the TEC is expected to be dissolved to pave the way for the formation of the proposed HRDC. This study therefore contributes to the understanding of the higher education governance in Botswana through the examination of the roles, functions and performance of the TEC and role conceptions of different stakeholders. This will help in the clarification of roles for different stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education in Botswana. The study may also serve as a reference for further research in the area of buffer/agency bodies in higher education governance. Overall, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on the roles and functions of buffer bodies in the governance of higher education.

1.7 Organisation of the dissertation

Following on this introductory chapter, chapter 2 provides a review of literature and the conceptual framework for the study. It begins with a detailed discussion of the governance of higher education. It proceeds to discuss governance models and the assumptions underlying these models. It also discusses and conceptualises the notions of ‘buffer body’ and ‘agencification’ in higher education. It presents a discussion of the different role players in higher education and the tensions that may exist between these different role players. It concludes by discussing the different roles and functions of buffer bodies in higher education.

Chapter 3 discusses the way the study was conducted. It presents a description of the variety of approaches adopted for the study. Further, it describes and justifies the design of the study and the data collection methods that were employed. Issues such as research ethics and the trustworthiness of the study are examined.

Chapter 4 sets the context for the case study. It first discusses the higher education system of Botswana and then presents the data and findings of the study through an analysis, interpretation and discussion of the collected data. The data are presented and analysed using tables and figures as well as elaborate discussion involving a triangulation of data.

Finally, chapter 5 concludes the study. It includes a discussion of the main findings in terms of the conceptual framework and literature, a summary of the study, its conclusions, as well as the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research emanating from the findings of the study.



CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In keeping with the purpose of the study to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana, along with the potential tensions that exist between the TEC and its related role players in HE, this chapter reviews existing literature regarding higher education governance.

The first section of the literature review highlights the various issues around system level higher education governance, with specific reference to the models of higher education governance and the role of stakeholders in higher education governance.

The second section of the literature review begins to develop a conceptual framework for the study by reviewing the existing body of literature on buffer bodies in particular. The focus in the second section is first on the conceptualisation of buffer bodies and their precarious position between autonomy and accountability, and related tensions between buffer bodies, government and HEIs. A conceptualisation of the tensions in the roles and functions of buffer bodies, in keeping with the research questions of this study follows. The review pays special attention to three typical functions of higher education buffer bodies: policy formulation and advisory role to the government, quality assurance and coordination, and the planning and development of tertiary education.

The review of conceptual issues in this chapter is further extended by outlining the two sets of empirical indicators derived from the existing literature. These indicators guide the development of research instruments for conducting a case study.

2.2 Governance of higher education

There seems to be an agreement that the governance of higher education is a complex phenomenon. It involves the analysis of the steering capacity of the government to influence the behaviour of HEIs, the behaviour of institutions themselves to manage their internal academic and professional issues, and the way HEIs react to the external environment (van Vught, 1993:12).

Marginson and Considine (2000:15) define governance as “internal relationships, external relationships, and the intersection between them”. In some cases, the term is described as being

“conceptual shorthand for the way higher education systems and institutions are organized and managed” (Neave, 2006:67). It is also understood as the “notion of the relationship or dynamic interaction of bodies and groups operating at different levels of higher education system” (Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002:279). From these definitions, it can be seen that there is no commonly accepted definition of governance and it is often, as (Birnbaum, 1998:5) states, “...discussed in terms of structure, legal relationship, authority patterns, rights and responsibilities and decision making process”.

Higher education governance has both internal and external features. The external features relate to the system level whereas the internal features relate to the institutional level (Eurydice, 2008). Zgaga (2005) expands on this view by adding a third feature to the concept of the governance of higher education. According to Zgaga (2005) there is also the international or global level of higher education governance. There are therefore three levels of higher education governance: institutional, systemic and international governance levels. However, the most commonly discussed level of governance is the institutional one. This study focuses on the system level of higher education governance to shed more light on the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in higher education and the related tensions.

The first or institutional level of governance denotes a situation where HEIs are responsible for managing their own activities. Higher education has been undergoing reforms and key among these reforms is the notion HEIs freely managing their own affairs and being accountable for their own performance (Fielden, 2008). The reforms in higher education demand that HEIs are highly autonomous and held responsible for the governance and management of their own finances, activities and personnel. These reforms call for HEIs to be afforded the freedom to determine their own goals and priorities, employ and dismiss their own staff, determine enrolment size and manage their own budget (Saint et al., 2009). As a result, there has been an introduction of institutions across the world governed by executive bodies known as councils, which hold the rectorate accountable. The rectorate is headed by a rector, president or vice-chancellor as the executive head of the institution. Institutions also have academic governance bodies such as a senate, academic council or academic board responsible for educational matters.

However, as noted by Berdhal (1990), affording HEIs more autonomy creates tension between the institutions and the state. These tensions arise from institutions wanting to carry out their duties without external interference and, at the same time, being accountable to the state and

the nation. There is a danger in affording institutions more autonomy as they might end up not being responsive to societal issues and, at the same time, the demands placed on HEIs in terms of responding to societal needs may stifle and limit them, affecting their autonomy negatively and also limit their ability to be innovative, raise their own funds and also shape their curriculum (Berdhal, 1990).

In addition, the goals and objectives of HEIs may not align with those of the state creating tensions between the two. This may affect the internal governance of these institutions. Neave (1996:404) observed a worrying trend of external influences reported as mostly responsible for the internal reforms of the management structures of universities and colleges. Ultimately this calls for a balance to be struck between granting institutions more autonomy and also wanting institutions to serve society and account to the state.

The second governance level, the system level, which this study is mostly interested in, refers to the national level higher education system (in most countries), which involves all the stakeholders in the governance of higher education ranging from the state, HEIs, buffer bodies and the private sector. The history of governance of higher education systems in Africa shows that for many years African governments have been the major stakeholders in terms of funding: paying students' fees and funding HEIs. From the 1980s onwards in a context of social and economic change on the African continent, African governments were advised by institutions such as the World Bank to reduce their funding of higher education (Jegede, 2012; Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

This led to structural adjustment reforms within the higher education systems in countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Cameroon and Mauritius. Consequently, the relationship between the higher education sector and government shifted and governments were left with the role of policy making and funding, other regulatory functions were increasingly given to intermediary bodies, such as higher education councils. In effect, HEIs were to be given more autonomy allowing them to function without much interference from the government.

Despite efforts to redefine the role of government in higher education in African countries, there are problems that persist relating to separating the HEIs from the state. As noted by Bloom, Canning and Chan (2005:7) higher education policy in most African countries is highly centralised and, as such, not only restricts the autonomy of HEIs, but also politicises them. It is reported that across the majority of African countries, governments still wield tight control over higher education policy and institutions (TrustAfrica, 2011). Examples of countries with

high levels of policy centralisation include Benin, Tanzania, Cameroon and Madagascar. In Benin and Tanzania, for instance, the government is responsible for appointing senior university managers, whereas in Cameroon, the Minister of Education possesses supervisory authority over HEIs. These arrangements may stifle HEIs as mentioned above and may also have implications for their autonomy.

Bjarnason and Lund (1999) observe that the way governments manage higher education systems has a bearing on the success of these institutions. Those governments that exercise a tight control over the higher education system can limit the potential of the sector to respond to the demands of the sector and vice versa. However, it has also been observed that a lack of centralisation and system oversight allows the mushrooming of ‘fly-by-night’ private institutions that provide low-quality education at a high cost.

2.2.1 Shifts in higher education governance

Traditionally, funding and orientation of the higher education system has been the prerogative of nation states through traditional state-centred governance structures. Thus, most of the literature on higher education governance tends to focus on the relationship between the state and HEIs, particularly following widespread criticism of the traditional state-centred governance model. This criticism led to significant changes made to governance structures by the end of 1990s. Several factors initiated these changes, among them economic challenges, ideological shifts and pragmatic motives (Kickert, 1997; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000). Firstly, according to Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000), the economic recession between 1980 and 1983 and consequent tightening of public expenditure have had a significant bearing on the changes in higher education governance. The economic downturn forced nation states to cut budgets on higher education and focus more on other development issues.

Secondly, with the advent of globalisation and internationalisation, market-oriented approaches to governance have been preferred in place of traditional state-centred modes of governance. In addition, powerful international organisations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation are encouraging changes geared towards the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the governance of higher education in order to allow higher education to be more responsive to societal needs thereby making it relevant to their needs.

Thirdly, governments have been found wanting in the governance of higher education and in some instances have been blamed for not providing education responsive to societal needs (Pollitt, 1996).

Lastly, there has been a strong case made to allow the markets to regulate higher education. Proponents of this move motivate that competition will remedy the inefficient allocation of resources within the higher education sector. As such, market mechanisms are seen as the relevant instruments to guarantee more options, higher quality and lower prices in the higher education sector (Dill, 1997).

The resultant shifts in higher education governance introduced other stakeholders at various levels of governance to play a key role in the coordination of higher education, thus leading to alternative modes of governance (Kooiman, 2000). This shift in governance from a single dominant role player to one involving multiple stakeholders is described in literature as a move from 'government to governance' (Kooiman, 2000). It symbolises the emphasis on shared governance as opposed to governance by a single authority (Kooiman, 2000) and, as a consequence, the state's role has been redefined to accommodate them (Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2001).

The changing role of the state means that the state has had to delegate some of its responsibilities to other stakeholders. This process includes granting of autonomy to HEIs to allow them to govern themselves without outside interference. This move is considered key to allowing markets to allocate resources equitably.

Furthermore, the state has delegated most of its traditional roles to parastatals, buffer bodies and other organisations, such as research councils. The state's new role can now be described as facilitative, whereby it only deals with higher education at a system level, primarily limited to issues of policy.

More importantly, the shift from the traditional state-centred approaches in higher education governance to a multi-stakeholder approach has not been a smooth one. Despite efforts to move away from the traditional state-centred approach, some governments have not fully endorsed this trend. Even though the state has delegated some of the responsibilities to parastatals, buffer bodies or agencies, research councils and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), it continues to heavily influence decisions in higher education governance beyond its mandate leading to tensions between the functions of such bodies and between the stakeholders

themselves. This aspect of higher education governance has not been given much attention in literature, hence the focus of this study on the tensions between the roles and functions of intermediary bodies.

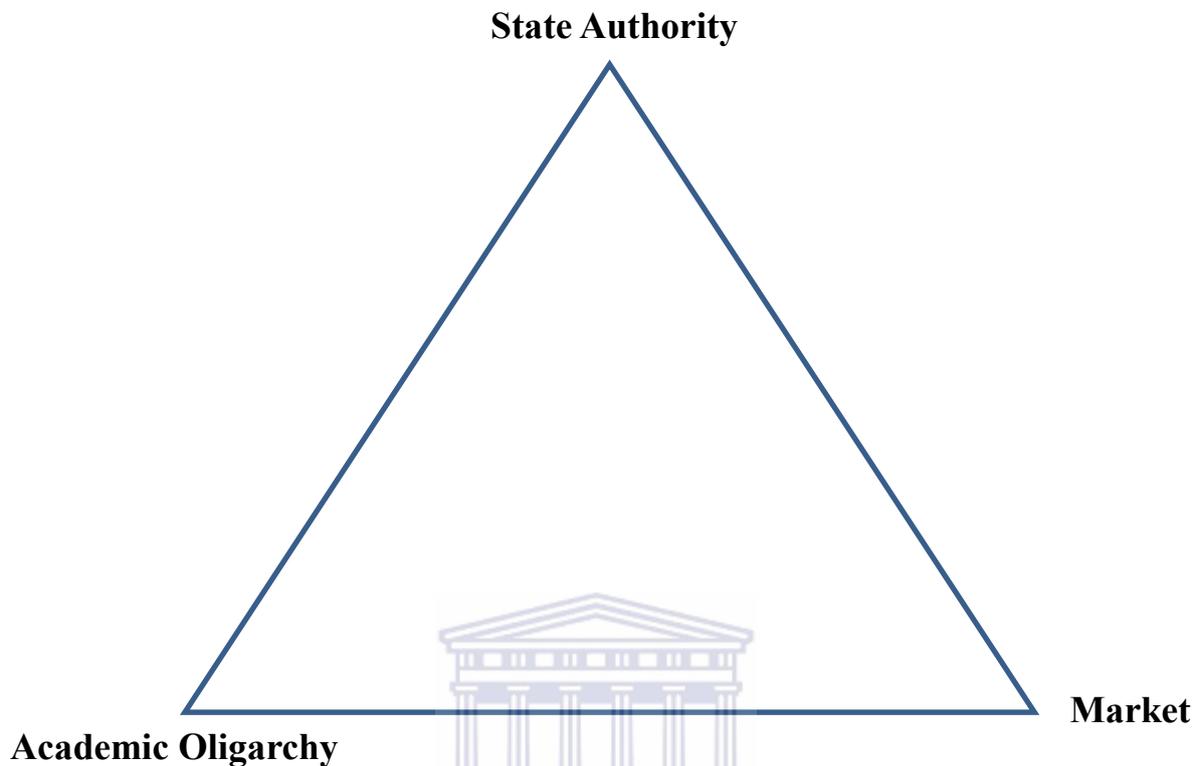
To help highlight the tensions in the governance of higher education, Burton Clark's (1983) triangle of coordination is used to offer insights into the dynamics involved in the governance of higher education in terms of the stakeholders involved (see Figure 1 below). The triangle uses three major stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education to help explain changes in the higher education sector. These are the state, the academic oligarchy and the market.

The following section discusses Burton Clark's triangle of coordination and tensions within the governance of higher education.

2.2.2 Clark's triangle of coordination

The classic work of Burton Clark attempted to analyse the coordination of the higher education system using three dimensions: the state, the academic oligarchy and the market (Clark, 1983). According to Clark, the three dimensions of coordination are positioned in a triangular manner. The corners of the triangle represent "the extreme of one form and a minimum of the two, and locations within the triangle represent combinations of the three elements in different degrees" (Clark, 1983:142). With this triangle of coordination, Clark depicts the governance of higher education as a struggle between many forces, which include the state, academics and the market (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Triangle of coordination



Source: Burton Clark, 1983.

The three forces of authority are roughly equivalent and enjoy differing levels of power relative to one another in different national settings or in the same country at different times (Salazar & Leihy, 2013:53). As such, this breeds tensions between the different roles and functions of the stakeholders concerned.

Clark's triangular space is one delimited by tensions between the state, market and the organisational arrangements within higher education, and this depends on the relationship between the different role players (Salazar & Leihy, 2013). The tensions between the three forces of authority manifest themselves in many ways. The state and the market are viewed as opposite extremes of a continuum. According to Clark (1979:263-264), "there exist different unexpected mixes of coordination and groups of stakeholders." In one of the scenarios, academic oligarchs and bureaucrats work together to repel political forces and eliminate market influence. In another permutation, political figures and administrators work together to gain as much control as possible over the higher education sector. In yet another scenario, academic oligarchs could assume the control of higher education thereby sidelining other stakeholders.

Overall there are different outcomes that may result from the interplay between the three different forces of academic control.

According to Lindblom (1977), the interplay between the forces of state control, market control and academic oligarchy create a scalar tug of war tension. Most of the literature (Van Vught, 1989; Neave & Van Vught, 1991; Goedegebuure et al., 1992; De Boer, Enders & Schimank, 2007) on shifts in the governance of HE reveals that the state is losing ground in control of HE governance and markets are replacing the state. Although this general trend is observed in the literature, Schuetze and Mendiola (2012:9) argue that markets have not entirely displaced academic values and the traditional role of the state has not disappeared. In fact, the HE system is faced with dynamic processes of negotiation and exchange between new and traditional forms of coordination. As a result the new forms of coordination intermingle with traditional forms of coordination and in the process create tensions.

Consequently the shifts in HE governance are a mixture of the forces of governance positioned at opposing ends. This situation creates tensions between the different roles and functions of the stakeholders involved.

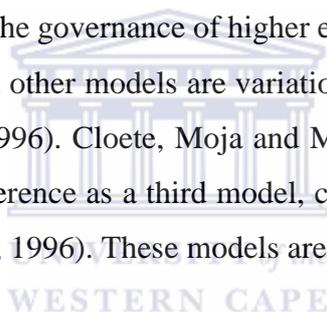
Clark's model is discussed here in the context of the role played by intermediary bodies in the coordination of higher education. Although Clark (1983) does not emphasise the importance of buffer bodies in the triangle of coordination, Boateng (2010) argues that buffer bodies are subsumed under what he terms political coordination; this involves political actors and institutions like pressure groups, the judiciary and legislature and intermediary bodies. These actors demonstrate their interest in higher education coordination through the use of resolutions, legislation and rulings. Intermediary bodies are typically legally constituted bodies with the mandate of coordinating, regulating or funding higher education. In their endeavour to carry out their mandate, they have to negotiate very tough terrains. El-Khawas (1992) observes that the position that these bodies find themselves in is a very precarious one and one subject to vulnerability. She argues that most buffer bodies are not able to sustain themselves as neutral parties standing in between the government and HEIs; most tilt to either the government or HEIs. Several factors play a role in influencing which way a buffer tilts, including the source of funding, governance structure, and patterns of reporting (El-Khawas, 1992). Consequently, different buffer bodies may find themselves occupying different positions in Clark's triangle.

Although Clark's triangle of coordination represented a novel idea in the field of HE, some scholars have criticised the model as lacking dynamism in that it only makes sense in the context of the conditions that prevailed in the 1980s (Jarausch, 1985). Nonetheless, the model provided a platform for other governance models to be developed, as will be discussed below.

Following on Clark's triangle of coordination, some scholars have used it as basis for developing higher education steering models (Olsen, 1998; Maassen & Cloete, 2002; Dobbins & Knill, 2009). The models developed by these scholars vary on their intended use. The state control and state supervision models are of significance to this study.

2.3 Governance models

Following on from Clark's path-breaking work, the governance of HEIs is explained in terms of the relationship between the government, institutions, private sector and civil society (Neave & Vught, 1994, Moja & Cloete, 1996). Neave and van Vught (1994) differentiate between two governmental steering models in the governance of higher education, namely state control and state supervision. They argue that other models are variations of these two (National Council for Higher Education [NCHE], 1996). Cloete, Moja and Muller (1996) concur with this and have since introduced state interference as a third model, considered typical in many African higher education systems (NCHE, 1996). These models are discussed below.



2.3.1 State control model

The literature defines the state control model as a system in which the state assumes full control of key aspects of the higher education sector (Clark, 1983; NCHE, 1996; Kehm & Lazendorf, 2006). Under this model, the governance of higher education is assigned to a government ministry. The respective ministry will be tasked with admissions and curricula activities as well as the appointment of personnel (Dobbins & Knill, 2009). Most importantly, the respective ministry is fully responsible for monitoring the quality of education.

The state control model is characterised by mechanisms through which the government controls the higher education sector. Neave and van Vught (1994) assert that governments use extensive control mechanisms and stringent rules to regulate higher education. As the Task Force for Higher Education and Society (TFHES, 2000:53) state, "state control of higher education has tended to undermine many major principles of good governance. The direct involvement of politicians has generally politicized higher education, widening the possibilities of corruption, nepotism, and political opportunism". This model of governance represents a

top-down approach where institutions do not have a say in how they should be governed. This model does not recognise the loosely coupled and multi-dimensional character of HEIs (van Vught, 1993).

However, McDaniel (1996) argues that there is a general acceptance that governments have legitimate interest in exercising influence on HE systems. The role of the government is further emphasised by De Moor (1993:61, in McDaniel, 1996:140) by arguing that:

No country in the world has a government which does not retain some control over its universities... Universities are public services. The question therefore is not whether government should have some control over universities, but rather, how much control and where it should be exercised.

It could therefore be considered normal for governments to have a role in steering their higher education system. However, as observed in the literature, the state control model is common in developing countries where decisions made by governments are more often than not politically motivated making it very difficult for institutions to manoeuvre. Ajayi, Goma and Johnson (1996) have characterised the relationship between HEIs and the government as one involving conflict rather than partnerships. This kind of relationship causes tensions between the government and these institutions. These tensions, which are of interest to this study, will be discussed in detail further on.

2.3.2 State supervision model

The state supervision model is characterised by monitoring and feedback. In this model, the role of the state is to exert influence from a distance, thereby leaving more autonomy to the HEIs. Van Vught (1989:333) noted that “the state does not intrude into the higher education system by means of detailed regulation and tight control”. In this model the government is predominantly an actor watching the rules of the game played by relatively autonomous players and it changes the rules when the game is no longer able to lead to satisfactory results.

Compared to the model of state control, we expect the state supervising model to offer a better fit. This model seems to be better equipped to be as a general incitement towards innovations in a higher education system.

It leaves sufficient room for semi-autonomous professionals and basic units and it does not try to coordinate the large variety of a higher education system in a limited set of rules (Neave & van Vught, 1994:19).

Since the mid-1980s, there has been a shift in terms of the governance of higher education from state control to state supervision (Maassen & van Vught, 1994). This shift mirrors the changing role of the state in higher education in which the state is moving away from a controlling role to an increasingly supervisory role (Maassen & van Vught, 1994). Maassen (2009:99) is of the view that the “supervisory role of the state would lead to a better performance of higher education than a controlling role”.

In addition, the market is expected to play a significant role in driving the higher education sector (Mok, 2005; Mills, 2007; Robertson, 2010). Economic events have also affected the relationship between governments and HEIs. Recent trends in the transformation of higher education where emphasis is placed on allowing the market to steer higher education have redefined the relationship between the state and HEIs (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002; Alexander, 2000).

Due to the demands placed on governments by economic trends, governments are no longer receptive to the traditional self-regulatory processes that have dominated universities for centuries. In fact, Kivisto (2007) notes governments’ doubts about efficient resource allocation and effective cost containment on the part of HEIs. Issues raised include a lack of trust and confidence between government and officials from institutions, suspicions about the accuracy and relevance of data provided by institutions, and a lack of confidence in the traditionally decentralised, loosely coupled governance processes internal to these institutions (Schmidtlein, 2004).

In order to respond to economic and financial pressures, governments have therefore redefined their relationship with institutions by forcing institutions to become more accountable, efficient and more productive in the use of publicly generated resources (Alexander, 2000). This is to ensure that higher education plays its role in transforming the existing low-wage economic structures into high performance, technology-based economies. As such, governments have resolved to include higher education in their economic development strategies. This approach comes at a cost to HEIs. Neave (1994) observed that this new arrangement seems to be threatening the internal affairs of these institutions by removing the function of collegial steering, which formerly had control over teaching and research activities. With this new

arrangement, academics are concerned that the autonomous control of academics over some functions of HEIs is being eroded in the process of exposing institutions to the rigours of market demands.

Despite the current trend in most countries of moving from the state control model to the state supervisory model, some developing countries such as Cameroon and Benin are adhering to state-controlled higher education systems (Hoare, 2007). As noted by TFHES (2000:53) the state supervision model “aims at balancing the state’s responsibility to protect and promote the public’s interest with an individual institution’s need for academic freedom and autonomy”. To achieve the balance between accountability and autonomy, countries have moved to what is described as “the agencification of the higher education sector” (Pollitt, Bathgate, Caulfield, Smullen & Talbot, 2001). This will be discussed further below.

2.3.3 State interference model

The state intervention model of higher education governance can be described as a version of the state-control model. The major difference between the state control and state intervention is that the state intervention is not a systematic model. In this case, intervention occurs when HEIs hinder the development path or perceived political direction of the state. The key characteristics of this model include a weak education ministry and education department, and a poorly trained bureaucracy unable to implement higher education policy (Cloete et al., 1996). In this model, the limited capacity of the state to supervise or control the sector is therefore compensated by interference in the sector as crises in the system or in individual institutions surface.

2.3.4 Summary of higher education governance models

The sections above have provided a background on higher education governance models. These models include state control, state supervision and state interference. The models are all based on the role played by the state. It is evident that the models follow a continuum where the state control model represents an extreme of state involvement and state supervision represents an extreme case of low state involvement. Having mapped these three generic HE governance models, there is also a need to discuss the notion of ‘agencification’. The agencification of higher education is becoming a popular way of regulating higher education (Gornitzka et al., 2004). As observed under the different models of HE governance described above, the state takes a central stage in the governance of higher education. Through agencification, the state puts in place a contractual agreement between itself and an agent who is given the mandate of

regulating some aspects of higher education on behalf of the state. The following section discusses the ‘agencification’ of higher education.

2.4 Agencification of higher education and related trends

The literature broadly defines ‘agencification’ as a process of delegation and devolution where certain functions and responsibilities, such as those related to funding, are granted to public bodies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2002). These bodies may still be legally part of the government or they might acquire their own legal persona and so Gill (2002) defines agencification as a process of moving some of the existing or new functions of the government to subsidiaries of ministries or departments. These two definitions are very important in the analysis of the higher education sector and the tensions that are found in the sector.

The first definition by OECD implies that the delegation and devolution of powers still remain with the government, albeit at a different level. In other words, existing or new bodies given certain roles to perform on behalf of the government and are legally part of the government. This aspect of agencification is important in higher education as it helps explain the tensions in the HE system as a result of the shift from traditional state-centred governance models to more market-oriented governance models.

The higher education sector, controlled mostly by the government, has faced serious problems stemming from the ‘love-hate relationship’ between the government and the HEIs (Kivisto, 2005). As observed in the literature (Eisenhardt, 1989), the relationship between the government and HEIs is one characterised by tensions emanating from the pursuit of divergent goals. This relationship is described as complex with multiple dimensions. Owing to this uneasy relationship between the state and HEIs, governments as regulating authorities have made significant changes to the higher education sector (Eisenhardt, 1989). Such changes relate to the size, structure, funding arrangements and focus of HEIs so that they can better serve the public (Jongbloed, 2000; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001; Leruth, Paul & Premchand, 2006). Consequently, the roles and functions of the state relating to funding, quality assurance and many other aspects have been delegated to intermediary bodies, such as quality assurance agencies, non-governmental organisations and academic bodies. It is believed that agencifying some of the government departments will help governments work better and become more economically astute.

In a nutshell, the international trends in the governance of higher education are summarised as follows by Saint et al. (2009:11): (1) “withdrawal of the state from the control of higher education”; (2) “creation of agents of higher education i.e. buffer organisations/bodies”; (3) “adoption of funding models to give institutions more leeway in sourcing out funds to run their institutions”; (4) “affirmation of the university governing board as accountable to the minister or buffer body”; (5) “establishment of external agencies to monitor quality of education”; (6) “development of new forms of accountability where institutions report on performance and outcomes in line with national goals and institutional targets”; and (7) “gradual withdrawal of the state from decisions relating to the appointment of the chair of the governing board, its members and the chief executive of the institution”.

Literature looking at the transition of the governance of higher education systems from state control to market-oriented models is dominated by discussions on the merits and demerits of such a trend (Pollitt et al., 2001; McLendon, 2003). However, very little attention has been accorded the tensions and conflicts that come with the shift from a centralised approach where the government is in control of higher education to a decentralised approach where buffer bodies and other bodies are entrusted with guiding the higher education sector and individual institutions. Therefore, in transforming the governance of higher education from state control to state supervision and the establishment of intermediary bodies, there are bound to be tensions and conflicts between the roles of buffer bodies and its stakeholders.

The tensions and conflicts may take different forms depending on the dynamics involved. In one instance, tensions and conflicts may occur if there are different organisations carrying out the same function. In this case, HEIs may find themselves caught between satisfying the demands of the different organisations and in the process creating tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies. There are also tensions and conflicts that revolve around path dependencies, especially on the part of governments, as well as already established HEIs with pre-existing arrangements making it difficult for a buffer body to carry out its mandate. Many different forms of tensions could surface and the following sections illustrate how these tensions can manifest themselves in higher education governance.

2.5 Role players in higher education

According to Lazerretti and Tavoletti (2006), higher education governance is characterised by many stakeholders. These stakeholders range from the state, HEIs, labour and the scientific

community to professionals and the wider society. It has been argued that the relationship between the different stakeholders is one characterised by goal conflicts (Braun & Guston, 2003; Kivisto, 2007). However, this section will only focus on the role of the state, institutions and the society and how tensions within the roles of these institutions manifest.

Throughout the world, the state has been the major stakeholder. As the major stakeholder in higher education with an interest in serving the public good, the state funded and regulated higher education and, in return, institutions provided education to the citizenry (Weerts & Ronca, 2006). However, this relationship is not always a smooth one as evidenced by trends in the governance of higher education. Up until the late 1990s, the state has single-handedly been responsible for shaping societal expectations from higher education. This role was common in Western European countries and was transferred to governments of colonised countries (Neave & van Vught, 1991; Cloete et al., 1996). The United States (US) higher education model is the only exception as state influence is very limited (Neave, 1994). The trends in the governance of higher education have shown that countries are gradually moving away from the state-controlled HE system (Neave, 1994). Several factors are responsible for this trend. Key among them is the economic meltdown which has seriously affected state involvement in higher education (World Bank, 2006). In 2013, developing countries are experiencing slow economic growth, and high income countries are faced with contracting economies and tighter credit conditions. In Africa, countries like South Africa are reported to be experiencing shrinkage of government expenditure on higher education (De Villers & Steyn, 2006; Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008). The economic crisis coupled with global diffusion of new modes of governance has resulted in the state taking a step back from complete control of higher education systems.

Consequently, governments have been forced by economic circumstances to relinquish some of its roles and pave the way for market regulation (Amaral & Magalhães, 2007). Under this arrangement, institutions are forced to compete under 'market-like' conditions with less interference from the government. Despite the call for a market-centred approach, there are some governments not willing to relinquish all their power and grant HEIs absolute autonomy (Neave & Vught, 1991). Therefore the trend is towards governments having a certain level of control over higher education while leaving most of the details to HEIs.

HEIs are one of the most important role players in higher education. During the era of academic oligarchy they were responsible for running the HE sector through academic bodies (Hearn & Griswold, 1994; Cloete et al., 1996; Graham, 1989). The intention was to facilitate a conducive

environment for professors to operate autonomously. As such, academics want to exercise control over the conditions of their work. Scott (1995) summarised academic professionals' wishes into three categories. Firstly, academics seek regulative control to determine what actions are to be prohibited and sanctioned. Secondly, academics want to exercise normative control to determine how authority in higher education should be distributed. Lastly, they want to have what is termed as cognitive control. In cognitive control academics want to determine the type of problems that should fall under their ambit and how these problems should be categorised and processed. With all these demands made by academic professionals, it is important to trace the developments in higher education to establish how academic professionals have been able to exercise them.

At a global level the developments in higher education show that HEIs once had more leeway in terms of running their affairs during the era of academic oligarchy before the 1950s. However, after the 1950s, most governments in the developed world decided to oversee the governance of higher education. Alexander (2000) has observed that states were forced to redefine their relationship with HEIs due to the changing economic environment where higher education is expected to play a leading role by supplying quality graduates. By redefining their relationship with HEIs, states are now forcing these institutions to be more accountable and responsive to societal needs by crafting regulations meant to govern higher education (Saint et al., 2009). For instance, Campos (2004) asserts that implementing accreditation systems had a significant effect on HEIs. Some of the institutions' goals, such as increasing enrolment numbers create tensions for the higher education sector as they also compromise the quality of education offered in higher education institutions.

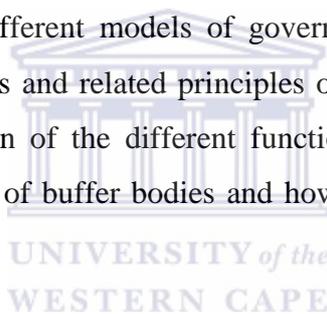
Society is also one of the most important actors in higher education. It comprises many groups ranging from students and parents to the private sector and special interest groups. Over the years, the role of the society in higher education has been increasing owing to social demands regarding higher education such as quality of education offered and the ability of higher education institutions to respond to societal needs (Cloete et al., 1996). One of the challenges facing higher education in developing countries is the increasing enrolment of students with diverse needs. Some of the concerns raised by students include the poor quality of higher education, political interference, and poor management of HEIs, reduced government funding among others (Nkinyangi, 1991; Saint et al., 2009).

The private sector has also expressed displeasure with the quality of education offered by HEIs. Most importantly, graduates from these institutions are reportedly not ready for the corporate world prompting the private sector to question the quality of education on offer (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002; Varghese, 2012).

All of the concerns raised by different stakeholders indicate disparities in expectations of higher education and each places pressure on the sector, leading to further tension regarding governance. The following section discusses the introduction of buffer bodies and/or agents in higher education and the subsequent tensions that may arise.

2.6 Conceptualising the ‘buffer body’ and the tension between autonomy and accountability

The foregoing section has shown that the existing literature on higher education governance considers the roles and expectations of different stakeholders, which involve tensions in the governance of the sector and different models of governance. This section considers the conceptualisation of buffer bodies and related principles of autonomy and accountability. It concludes with a brief discussion of the different functions of buffer bodies relevant for conceptualising the phenomenon of buffer bodies and how this could provide heuristics for answering research questions.



2.6.1 The notion of ‘buffer body’ in higher education

The concept of buffer body originates in the United Kingdom with the creation of the University Grants Committee (UGC). The underlying rationale was “to act as a specialist source of advice to government on higher education policy and to give those within the sector some confidence that their affairs were being managed by people who understood their culture and their concerns” (Fielden, 2000:17). De Boer (1992:36) provided a broad description of a buffer body as “an intermediary organization looking after and representing individual and common interest in a certain domain”. Saint et al. (2009:14) suggest that these bodies “literally buffer the ministry of education from the periodic conflicts that may arise between members of the university community and the government by providing an initial recourse for dispute resolution”. Similarly, they also:

... serve to shield tertiary institutions from intervention by the government leaders since these bodies are usually staffed with former university administrators and academicians who generally understand the organization and culture better than senior ministerial officials, and

who may possess a network of informal contacts in the university community that allows “off record” problem solving conversations to be pursued at a level of trust that may often be lacking between ministry and university leaders (Saint et al., 2009:14).

Neave (1992:10) distinguishes between three major roles of buffer bodies: (1) “those that advise and coordinate”; (2) “those that have powers of allocation”; and (3) “those that serve as arenas for debate and discussion”. Examples of buffer bodies are quality assurance agencies, funding councils and research councils. As already stated, a buffer body is often known as a national council of higher education, tertiary education council/commission or national higher education commission or may be named more specifically in relation to its particular function, for example, higher education quality committee.

Although their mandates are many and differ from one country to another, these organisations are meant to facilitate a relationship between the state and HEIs. However, such bodies are generally tasked with allocating public funds, quality assurance and regulating HEIs.

The intention of having a buffer body is threefold. Firstly, the intention may be to increase the ‘instruments of public purpose’ that reinforce the administrative layer between institutions and central government. Secondly, a buffer may have been established to remove or prevent the development of rigid central controls. Thirdly, it may be intended as a means to increase and improve the interplay between higher education institutions and the nation (NCHE, 1996:183).

There is therefore also a wide range of roles and functions for these kinds of organisations. According to El-Khawas (1992:18), typically, a buffer body in higher education will have one or more of the following functions: (1) “Planning and policy formulation”; (2) “evaluation and monitoring”; (3) “allocation decisions for scarce resources”; and (4) “sponsorship of reform and innovation”. The literature on the various functions of buffer bodies is discussed in further detail below. Specifically, the focus is on the high-level tensions between autonomy and accountability and how these manifest in terms of the relationship between the state and HEIs, as well as the relationship between government, buffer body and HEIs.

2.6.2 Conceptualising autonomy

Closely related to the concept of governance is the concept of autonomy. Autonomy is a multi-dimensional concept that shows variations based on the level of analysis, that is, the basic unit level, institutional level and system level (Becher & Kogan, 1992). It entails “... having the ability to think, decide and act ... freely and independently without hindrance (Keenan,

1999:557). The use of this term varies from one field to another. However, in higher education, the meaning of the term autonomy is twofold. Firstly, autonomy is used in higher education to describe the ability of HEIs to determine their own goals, set their own agendas, select their leaders, appoint and dismiss their staff, determine their student enrolment size and manage their own budget (Saint et al., 2009:6). Secondly, autonomy is viewed from the perspective of buffer bodies as the ability of buffer bodies to function without outside interference. The two facets of autonomy will be discussed here to show how tensions in higher education manifest themselves.

Institutional autonomy is most commonly understood as “the degree of freedom the university has to steer itself” (Askling, Bauer & Marton, 1999:81). According to Berdhal (1990:23) autonomy can be defined in two conceptually distinct ways: procedural and substantive. Procedural autonomy is “the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine the means by which its goals and programmes will be pursued”- the *how* of the academe. Substantive autonomy is “the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programmes” or the *‘what’* of the academe (Berdhal, 1990).

Ajayi et al. (1996) are of the view that autonomy does not guarantee independence from the state. Rather, it is needed to renegotiate the changing circumstances from time to time. Although HEIs should be granted autonomy, the state still has a major role to play in substantive policies. Therefore there is a need for a balance between the substantive autonomy and the state’s role. This balance is what Hall, Symes and Luescher (2002) refer to as “conditional autonomy”.

Maton (2005) distinguishes between two types of autonomy: positional autonomy and relational autonomy. By positional autonomy, Maton (2005:697) refers to “the nature of relations between specific positions in the social dimension of a context of field and positions in other contexts”. To clarify this, Maton argues that in a situation where the positions of the governance of HEIs and buffer bodies are occupied by people from politics or industries, such institutions exhibit relatively weaker positional autonomy and vice versa. Relational autonomy, on the other hand, is used to refer to relations between principles of relation. This describes a situation where ways of working within higher education are either sourced from outside or inside.

The autonomy of buffer bodies is one critical element of this study that needs to be adequately discussed to establish levels of autonomy. Autonomy is very important because when accorded

to buffer bodies it gives them more responsibility and makes them answerable for their own actions (Keenan, 1999). However, there seems to be inadequate literature on the autonomy of buffer organisations. Instead more focus has been accorded the autonomy of HEIs (Saint et al., 2009). Nonetheless there are some scholars who have attempted to discuss this subject albeit at a smaller scale. El-Khawas' (1992) article titled "*Are buffer organizations doomed to fail - Inevitable dilemmas and tensions*" argues that in most cases buffer organisations are very weak and therefore yield relatively weak autonomy. The only exception is the defunct United Kingdom's University Grants Committee, which was a very powerful and independent buffer body created in 1918 to serve as a platform to solve issues of university funding in the United Kingdom.

2.6.3 Accountability in higher education

Over the years higher education has attracted interest from various role players ranging from the government, society, civil organisations and the private sector. These role players have certain expectations on higher education. In addition, the higher education sector has over the years been funded through public funds. As a result, the different role players want HEIs to account for their actions. Saint et al. (2009:7) therefore define accountability as "the clear assignment of responsibility for efficient use of resources to produce results and the mechanisms whereby this performance can be monitored".

Accountability is considered as the "requirement to demonstrate responsible actions to one or more external constituencies" (van Vught, 1994:355). Its main function is "to constrain the corruptions of power, including fraud, manipulation, malfeasance and the like" (Trow, 1996:310). "Accountability does not imply uncontrolled interference, but it does impose a requirement to periodically explain actions and have successes and failures examined in a transparent fashion" (TFHES, 2000:61). This normally takes place in the form of stakeholder representation in decision-making bodies, external evaluation by quality assurance bodies and regulation by buffer bodies.

Buffer bodies are also required to account for their actions through a number of mediums. The way in which they account for their actions can also create tensions between their different roles and functions. In order to explain this conundrum, two examples of buffer bodies are used. Firstly, buffer bodies formed and fully funded by the government account to the minister of higher education. In this case, HEIs will always feel aggrieved as this arrangement creates tensions between a buffer body and its stakeholder. This is in contrast with buffer bodies

formed and funded by higher education representatives and those from the community and the private sector. Such buffer bodies by default are forced to account to HEIs and the community at large.

A discussion on autonomy and accountability as they apply to buffer bodies suggests the existence of potential tensions between the different roles and functions of buffer bodies and its associated stakeholders. These tensions are very critical to this study and the following section will discuss these tensions in detail.

2.6.4 Tensions between buffer bodies, government and higher education institutions

This section discusses the relationship between buffer bodies, governments and HEIs. Subsequently, the tensions between them are discussed.

As observed in the literature, the introduction of buffer bodies in higher education meant that the role played by the government and HEIs changed significantly. This means that buffer bodies find themselves caught between serving the interest of the state and those of the HEIs. The relationship between these three organs has engendered much debate. These debates are centred around the autonomy of buffer bodies as their autonomy is often heavily dependent on how much power these organisations possess. As a result, in some countries, governments have granted buffer bodies absolute autonomy, whereas in others, the autonomy of such bodies is limited. This has led to contrasting records of success for buffer bodies in different countries.

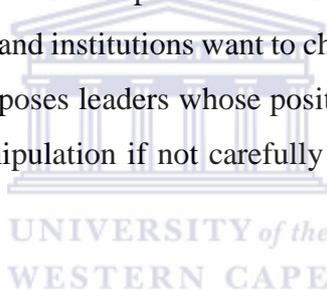
The relationship between buffer bodies, governments and HEI's is one that is characterised by tensions (de Rudder, 1992). These tensions manifest themselves in the form of government interference in the operations of buffer institutions, buffer bodies failing to live up to their expectations and HEIs demanding more institutional autonomy (De Boer, 1992; El-Khawas, 1992).

Inherent to the relationship between the state and HEIs is the conflicting desires of three parties. Lane (2007:615) views the relationship between the state and HEIs as “intricate and clumsy with both partners often trying to play the role of the lead dancer”. On one hand, HEIs want to be granted autonomy and, on the other hand, states want to exercise control and accountability over HEIs. As a result, buffer bodies, in their pursuit to fulfil their mandate, are always caught between needing to please the state and HEIs. This is difficult to achieve as the demands of the two stakeholders are positioned at opposing ends. El-Khawas (1992) acknowledges that being in the middle is difficult. As a matter of fact, buffer bodies eventually move towards serving

one party more than the other. This creates some form of tension for a buffer body as it cannot maintain legitimacy with both parties.

Given this background, El-Khawas (1992) describes the role of buffer organisations as a 'contradiction'. This contradiction is rooted in the structure of the organisation, the scope of the agenda and the various cultural issues relating to the buffer organisations. For buffer organisations formed by the government and funded by the government and reporting to the government, the expectation is that such organisations will favour the government over HEIs. The scope of the agenda has also been found to influence the role of buffer bodies in that organisations with a narrow mandate are able to survive easily as compared to those with multiple agendas (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Lastly, cultural issues and traditions are also reported to have an influence in the way a buffer body functions. Traditions include legal recognition of institutional and academic autonomy and the quality of organisational leaders and political leaders (El-Khawas, 1992). For example, in a situation where a crisis arises and institutions want to challenge the government, they need to be legally recognised and also poses leaders whose positions are taken seriously. All these factors lend buffer bodies to manipulation if not carefully dealt with and therefore affect its autonomy.



2.7 Conceptualising tensions in the roles and functions of buffer bodies

Originally the roles and functions of buffer bodies in higher education were not easily understood by scholars or by the people these bodies serve (El-Khawas 1992). More recently, a deepened understanding of the roles and functions of buffer bodies is evident, especially in literature discussing quality assurance in higher education. Yet, over and above quality assurance, there is a wide range of roles and functions for buffer type bodies, including those mentioned by El-Khawas (1992:18). A more elaborate description of commonly performed functions of buffer bodies is provided by Schmidlein and Berdhal (1992:32):

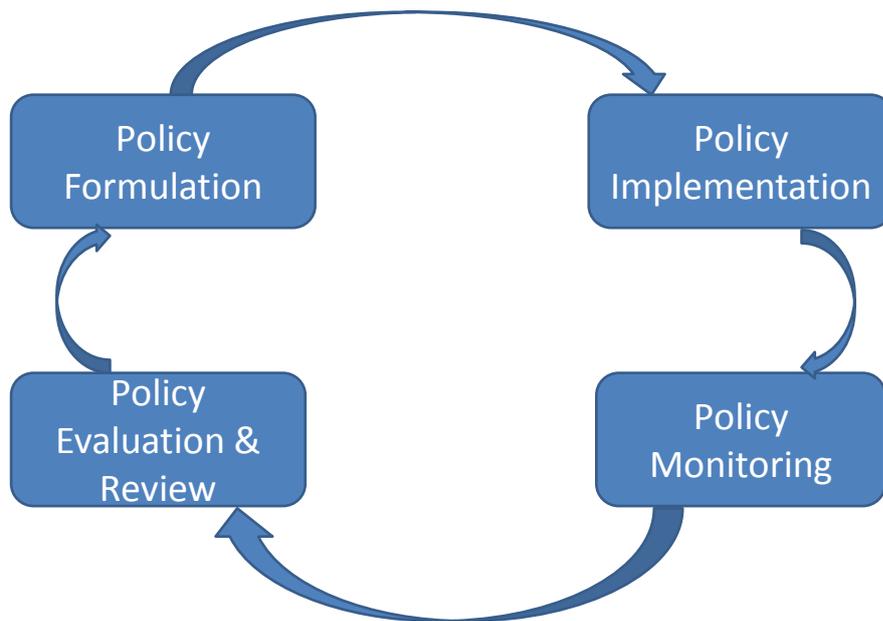
- (1) "Planning: is the top priority function of any buffer body and it includes activities such as examining higher education needs, establishing goals, determining resource requirements and recommending priorities."
- (2) "Policy analysis and problem resolution: conducting special studies on long term issues such as funding alternatives."

- (3) “Mission definition: defining institutional missions in terms of degree awarded, programmes offered and clientele served.”
- (4) “Budget development: participating in budget formulation, developing budget process, conducting studies of fund uses and examining financial procedures to ensure accountability.”
- (5) “Academic programme review: reviewing and approving proposals for new programs and, in some states, regularly examining existing programs to curb unnecessary duplication.”
- (6) “Programme administration: administering state higher education programmes such as student financial aid and licensure and regulation of non-degree granting and out-of-state institutions, as well as cross-sector cooperative arrangements such as library and computer networks.”
- (7) “Information, monitoring and accountability systems: developing and maintaining state-wide information systems and using these systems to monitor trends and performance of institutions.”
- (8) “Quality initiatives - developing policies and administering programmes designed to stimulate or mandate institutional attention to state priorities.”

The complex role of higher education buffer bodies is not fully understood in that it not only involves the complex terrain between government and the higher education sector/stakeholders (as discussed in relation to the notion of buffer body and the principles of autonomy and accountability above), but also between different functions. While under normal circumstances, a buffer body carries out only one step in a process (El-Khawas, 1992), the case where a body performs several steps in a process or several complimentary or contradictory functions can be anticipated.

Considering the policy life cycle (see Figure 2 below) a buffer body may be involved in various steps in this process including advice on policy and policy formulation, policy implementation (e.g. quality assurance), policy monitoring, and policy evaluation and review (including advising on policy change).

Figure 2: Policy life cycle



Source: Adopted and modified from Badat, (2001).

There are a number of factors that can be used to assess tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies as demonstrated by the discussion above. These include the governance structure of buffer bodies, their autonomy, accountability structures and the nature of their mandate. When studying tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies it is important to clearly state what exactly constitutes the tensions, as demonstrated in literature, and how that relates to the study. The tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies have not been given much attention in the literature and as such there is limited evidence of the tensions. However El-Khawas (1992) has attempted to discuss some of the tensions inherent between the roles and functions of buffer bodies and these will be used to inform the direction in which this study is going.

The funding of buffer bodies is an important aspect that can be used to help understand tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies. For buffer bodies legally established and wholly funded by government, the tendency is towards favouring the government against HEIs. In this case buffer bodies view the government as their “boss” and, as such, feel that they are accountable to it; this is in contrast to a situation in which a buffer body is formed by volunteers and HEI representatives. Such a body will naturally safeguard the interests of HEIs. However, El-Khawas (1992) has also noted that there are exceptions. For example, the German Rectors

Conference, despite being funded by the government, was able to maintain its independence from the government for a very long time.

In the context of this study, it would be ideal to establish the governance structures of buffer bodies in order to help determine their positional autonomy. This is because in developing countries, buffer bodies are reported to be suffering from weaker positional autonomy where they are viewed as extensions of the government. By so doing they end up moving towards a direction where they serve the government more than HEIs, therefore failing in their role to buffer tensions between the two parties. In order to assess positional autonomy, the legislation that led to the formation of the buffer body is normally used as it would clearly spell out the constituents of governance, the powers conferred upon different positions and the buffer body itself.

The accounting structures of buffer bodies are also very critical to understanding the dynamics of the tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies. In simple terms, accounting structures can be used to denote the routine patterns of reporting for buffer bodies. For buffer bodies whose decisions, input and reporting lie with the government, such bodies are likely to suffer from a number of tensions since they may be seen to be answerable to the government as opposed to playing a fair role of buffering the HEIs from the government (El-Khawas, 1992). This is in contrast to a situation where decisions, input and reporting are directed towards HEIs. In this case, buffer bodies whose sphere of influence lies with HEIs are also likely to experience tensions emanating from failure to lean towards the government.

The mandate of buffer bodies is also very important in understanding the tensions between the different roles and functions of buffer bodies. The debate on the mandate of buffer bodies and how they relate to internal and external tensions between roles and functions of buffer and their stakeholders centres around a narrow and a wide mandate. As observed in the literature, buffer bodies have several functions ranging from quality assurance, long-term planning of higher education, coordination and many others (Schmidtlein & Berdhal, 1992). In this case a narrow mandate would, for instance, refer to a situation where a buffer body would only be responsible for executing one of the functions of buffer bodies as opposed to covering a number of functions. In this scenario there are likely to be less internal and external tensions between the different roles and functions of a buffer body and its stakeholders (El-Khawas, 1992). On the other hand, buffer bodies with a wide mandate may find themselves in a trickier situation as they have to traverse an uneasy terrain between government and universities and this has to be

done repeatedly increasing the probability of clashes between a buffer body and its stakeholders.

After conceptualising the tensions in roles and functions of buffer bodies, this section provides a detailed presentation of the literature on policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination of higher education. The focus of the study is to look at the relationship between the state, buffer bodies and HEIs with regard to these three functions.

2.7.1 Policy formulation

Like any other sector, higher education requires long-term planning, which normally results in policy. These policies may differ from country to country and the main question around policy is: Who formulates? Who implements? Who monitors and who evaluates? In addition, higher education policies are concerned with the affordability of higher education, access to HEIs and accountability within the higher education sector.

Different countries have long-term plans regarding the future direction of higher education. The overall responsibility of higher education in most countries lies with the state. Ministries responsible for higher education are then entrusted with crafting long-term plans for the sector. As Cloete et al. (1996) put it, higher education policy belongs to the government and the government sets the priorities for the higher education sector through it. Jonathan (2006), arguing that the state possesses the legislative and executive powers to set the direction for higher education, shares this view. As a result, the state is responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of higher education, to steer development and provide oversight.

Ministries of education are also supported by buffer bodies acting as advisory councils. The role of such bodies is to advise the ministry on issues concerning the development of higher education. For example, the Department of Education in South Africa relied heavily on advice from NCHE for the formulation of a new policy on higher education (Cloete et al., 1996). In addition, the role of buffer bodies in some countries, as already stated, has been extended to include implementing government policy as well as implementing funding models for higher education.

2.7.2 Quality assurance

Quality assurance is defined as a planned and systematic review process of an institution to determine whether such an institution meets the set standards of education, scholarships and

infrastructure (Materu, 2007; Hayward, 2006). Quality has become an important aspect of monitoring and evaluating higher education.

Quality assurance takes place in different forms such as internal and external evaluations. External quality assurance defines those quality assurance procedures that are being administered by agencies external to HEIs. Internal quality assurance systems are those systems whereby scholarly research, curriculum and examinations are peer reviewed. These kinds of systems are very common in different higher education systems as a means of ensuring a continuous process of quality.

The external evaluation of quality in higher education began more than hundred years ago in the US (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002). This form of evaluation was carried out by non-governmental organisations and was mandatory for all institutions. It differed from the European system based on legislation and government control. With time, European governments realised that legislation and government control instruments were not effective in dealing with the challenges facing higher education and they saw fit to introduce quasi-non-governmental organisations that would ensure adherence to quality standards. Some of the drivers prompting the introduction of external quality assurance systems, as discussed by Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002), include: increased institutional autonomy in return for greater accountability; diversification of the student intake; the introduction of new methods of teaching and learning; and internationalisation and an increase in the number of private higher education providers.

The development of quality assurance systems in developing countries and particularly in Africa has been necessitated by a number of factors, including rapidly growing enrolment numbers; growth in private tertiary education institutions; decreased public funding of higher education; and the effects of the 'brain drain' (Materu, 2007). In Africa, quality assurance was first implemented in the form of affiliation by newly set-up local universities to metropolitan universities during the colonial era. With time, the first university established would itself become a mother university from which other colleges and campuses would eventually gain independence and go on to become universities in their own right. After independence, African states increased their grip on higher education; however, Materu (2007) argues that this did not favour the maintenance or improvement of quality.

Around the 1980s in Africa, governments set up national quality assurance agencies that aimed at ensuring quality in HEIs. These quality assurance agencies were established to ensure that

higher education were responsive to the interest of different stakeholders (Tertiary Education Council, 2008b). The various stakeholders in higher education have varying interests and expectations from HEIs. Despite these varied expectations, they share a common expectation relating to the accountability of HEIs and quality programmes in terms of their responsiveness to the labour market. The table below illustrates the various uses from external quality assurance for different stakeholders in higher education.

Table 1: Uses of quality assurance for different stakeholders

Users	Uses
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define tertiary education country wide • To assure quality labour force • To determine which institutions and programmes receive public funding • To accept into the civil service only those from accredited institutions • To generally use quality assurance as a means of consumer protection.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist in selecting institutions of study • To ensure accreditation between accredited institutions • To ensure articulation and mobility, admission at the graduate level at different institutions from undergraduate degree.
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure qualified employees.
Funding Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine eligible institutions for funding.
Tertiary Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve institutional information data • To enhance institutional planning • To facilitate membership in certain organisations • To facilitate transfer schemes • To assure a qualified student body.

Source: Adopted from Tertiary Education Council, 2008b.

The establishment of national quality assurance agencies has been questioned as some of these bodies have been considered too weak to regulate quality in higher education as they are controlled by national governments (Materu, 2007). The establishment of these agencies has also in some countries created tensions between buffer bodies and the already existing arrangements for quality assurance.

2.7.3 Coordination of higher education

The coordination of higher education takes many forms. Martin and Talpert (1992) have defined higher education coordination as “the formal system of planning, monitoring, allocation of resources, and control whereby governments and bureaucracies regulate higher education”. However, in higher education the main focus is on planning and allocation of resources.

The role of coordination as described above is normally performed by either an intermediary body such as a buffer organisation or a department within the ministry of education. For example, in the United Kingdom, the former UGC was responsible for planning and allocation of resources. According to Bekhradnia (2005) this was meant to avoid the possibility of the government exerting undue influence on the universities. In this case the UGC was only responsible for distributing funds and the government still made decisions on how much funding should be allocated to the higher education sector.

The coordination of higher education involves different stakeholders who range from the private sector that comprises multinational organisations and research centres, the government comprising different ministries, HEIs, which are both private and public, and lastly, the public, made up of students and parents. The overall responsibility of higher education lies with the relevant ministry. The ministry oversees higher education as regards compliance with the law, ministerial codes and legal statutes, formulation of higher education policy and national strategic priorities or development plan. The ministry is able to make informed decisions on higher education through support from buffer bodies in the form of national quality assurance bodies and a national level advisory body. The national quality assurance bodies are responsible for setting quality standards, and conducting evaluations, elaborating and implementing policies and standards for improving the quality of higher education. The national level advisory bodies are responsible for advising the government on issues related to higher education (Eurydice, 2008).

In addition to these bodies, a national level body comprises executive heads of all public and private institutions. This body presents proposals to the government regarding the development of higher education and also gives opinion regarding draft laws and other regulatory enactments and their role is limited to that. Even though HEIs enjoy a great deal of autonomy in some countries, they may be linked to the state through an institutional strategic plan that is mandatory for all institutions. Through this plan, institutions enter into performance

agreements with the state to provide strategies that specify the objectives of the university operations (Eurydice, 2008). In addition to this, HEIs may be also linked to the public and private sector through the annual production of mandatory reports, which differ from country to country. HEIs may also be required to disseminate their research findings as a way of strengthening the relationship between society and institutions. All these provisions are made possible through legal instruments such as acts.

2.8 Conceptual framework

The foregoing review of literature provides a conceptual framework for this study. As already stated, the purpose of the study is to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in higher education in Botswana along with the potential tensions that exist between the TEC and its related role players in higher education.

In order to achieve this, the study examines the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education. Their roles are defined together with the relationship that they have with each other. As shown in the literature review, key concepts involved in the governance of higher education are autonomy and accountability. These concepts are used here to help define the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education.

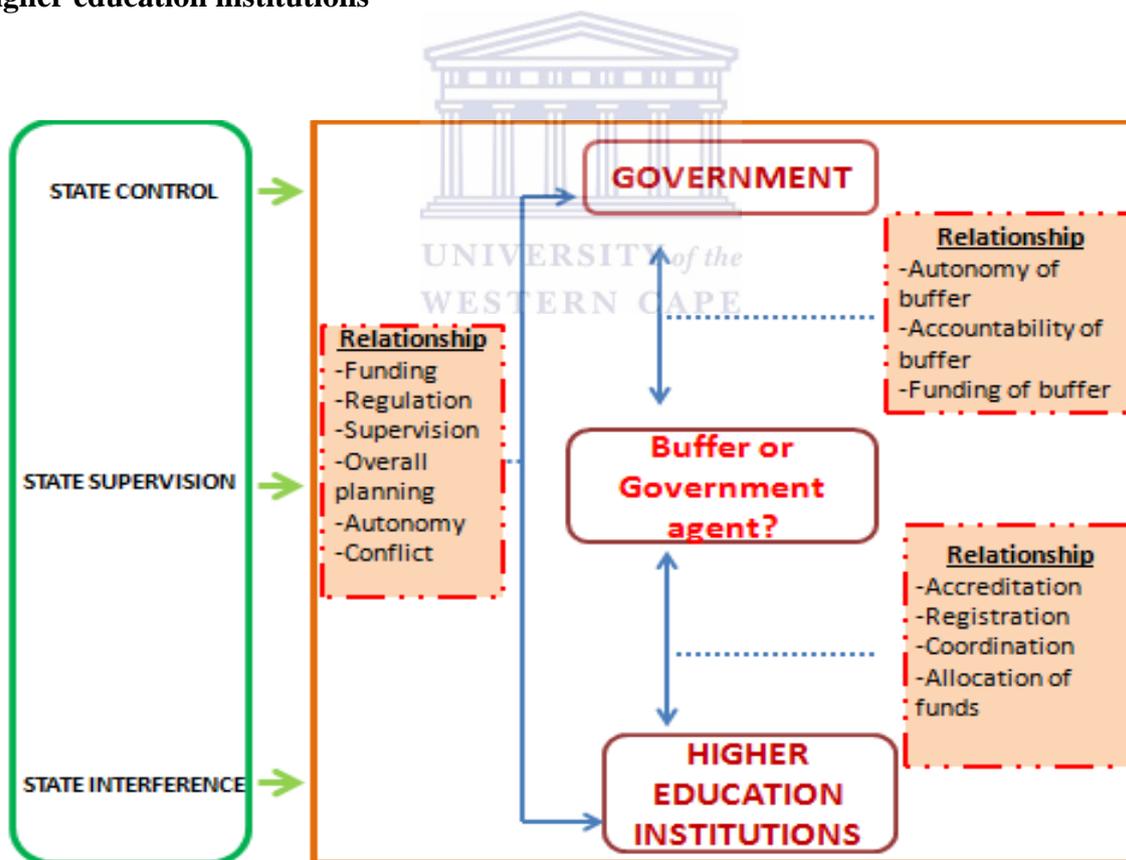
The conceptual framework developed for this study is an oversimplification of the complex reality involving the governance of higher education through the relationship that exists between buffer bodies, the government and HEIs. Therefore it should be treated as a guide or lens through which to view the complex relationship between these different components.

Before discussing the relationship between that exists between the different higher education stakeholders, it is important to mention the different modes of governance. This is because the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education takes place within the context of the mode of governance employed in a particular country. As shown in Figure 3 below, the different modes of higher education governance include the state control model, state supervision model and the state interference model. These models have been discussed extensively in the literature review section. Depending on the model adopted by a higher education system, autonomy and accountability manifest differently within the various higher education governance frameworks. Likewise, the relationship between the different stakeholders in the governance of HE is also affected by the mode of governance

adopted in a particular HE system. The following discussion will focus on the relationship between the different stakeholders involved in the governance of higher education.

Firstly, the framework explains the relationship between a buffer body and the government as one of funding, which in most cases the government provides, along with coordination and the autonomy of buffer bodies. Reviewed literature shows that funding is an integral part of the higher education system. In Africa, governments play an important role in the funding of higher education (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008). The bulk of funding for HEIs and buffer bodies comes from governments. Therefore, funding plays an important role in shaping and influencing the relationship between buffer bodies and the government. Other concepts used to explain the relationship between a buffer body and the government are those of autonomy and accountability.

Figure 3: Higher education governance and the relationship between government and higher education institutions



Secondly, the conceptual framework captures the relationship between buffer bodies and HEIs. This relationship is explained through accreditation and registration of HEIs by buffer bodies, allocation of funds and coordination as shown by the conceptual framework. As observed in

the literature, buffer bodies may serve one or more functions depending on how they are set up.

Thirdly, the framework depicts the relationship between the government and HEIs. This relationship is characterised by the government funding of higher education through scholarships and general funding of institutions. In some cases, HEIs are expected to account for the way in which they use public funds. In addition, governments also play supervisory and regulatory roles.

The concept of the buffer body forms the core of this study. In the conceptual framework, this component of the study is placed between HEIs and the government and labelled as “buffer body or agency?” This is very important in helping understand the role of a buffer body as discussed in the literature. According to El-Khawas (1992) and De Boer (1992), the role of buffer bodies as organisations standing between the government and HEIs is very precarious and makes buffer bodies vulnerable. It has been observed that “most buffer organizations cannot sustain themselves as neutral parties standing in between the government and higher education institutions” (El-Khawas, 1992:18). As a result they either tilt towards the government or towards HEIs and in the process defeat the idea of the notion of having a buffer body. A situation where a buffer body tilts to either of the two parties can render buffer bodies as being agents of either of the two parties, hence the denotation “buffer body or agent?” Consequently, different buffer bodies have unique relationships with their stakeholders. It is therefore important to investigate these relationships to establish existing tensions between buffer bodies and their associated stakeholders.

2.9 Summary

As shown above, buffer bodies operate in a challenging environment. A discussion of the different concepts related to the study has shown that buffer bodies find themselves in a delicate situation where they have to serve different stakeholders with differing expectations. As noted by El-Khawas (1992), buffer bodies were created to buffer the tension between the government and HEIs. However, the role of buffer bodies has been described as a ‘contradiction’ due to a difficult role that they are expected to play (El-Khawas, 1992:19).

The tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies are influenced by aspects of their organisational structure, the scope of their agenda and various cultural factors. Buffer bodies, as agents of the state and as representatives of the HEIs, find themselves in a position of having

to perform their role without disadvantaging either the government or HEIs making it difficult to avoid tensions. As a result, in the execution of their mandates, buffer bodies are susceptible to clashes with the different stakeholders leading to tensions in their operations.

The review of literature also reveals that higher education has been undergoing changes in terms of governance from state control to state supervision (Maassen & Cloete, 2006). This development has not come without cost. For instance, tensions have emerged between different stakeholders involved in higher education during this process. Very little has been done to assess the tensions between different stakeholders involved in higher education. In cases where attempts were made to study tensions between different stakeholders (for example by El-Khawas, 1992; Kivisto, 2007; and Ahmad et al., 2012), the focus has either been on the relationship between HEIs and the government or buffer bodies and the government, disregarding the other stakeholders involved.

Moreover, the review of literature has shown that there is a scarcity of higher education literature on tensions between the different roles and functions of buffer bodies in higher education, for example, tensions between the policy advice and formulation function, policy implementation function like quality assurance, and policy implementation monitoring and evaluation function, that may be performed by the same buffer body or by buffer bodies with distinct or overlapping mandates. This study makes a contribution to this literature by analysing tensions between different selected functions of the TEC of Botswana. There is a need for an integrated investigation that will focus on analysing tensions occurring between the main stakeholders of higher education (i.e. government, HEIs and buffer bodies) and within buffer bodies as far as different functions are concerned. This study has attempted to fill this gap by using the TEC as a case study.

Lastly, the review has provided a set of concepts that are useful to focus this study, develop research instruments (as discussed in the following chapter) and guide the analysis of the collected data (as provided in Chapter 5). The following chapter discusses and motivates the use of a specific research design, research methods and related considerations employed to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and explains the various methods and techniques used in the collection of the data. The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach has helped enhance the quality of data collected for the study. The justification for the selection and the use of the specific methodologies is given while the issue of research ethics is also addressed.

3.2 Research approach

The key aspect of this study is to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana by paying particular attention to the three functions of the TEC: policy formulation and advisory role, quality assurance, and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education. The potential tensions that exist between the TEC, the government and HEIs are also examined.

The study mostly uses the qualitative approach, complemented with some quantitative data. Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (1998:15) as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds complex, holistic pictures, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting”. It allows the researchers to “appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of the case, its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts” (Stake, 1995:16). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:235) are of the view that qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occurs in natural settings or the real world and are then studied in their complexity. It is a flexible research approach allowing for description, interpretation, verification and evaluation, although such flexibility makes it challenging for a novice researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:263). Simply put, qualitative research is “... any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17).

Methods of data collection associated with the qualitative research paradigm include observational methods such as semi-structured and unstructured interviewing, participant observation and the use of personal and archival documents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:53). Most qualitative research methods complement each other and can be creatively combined in the

same study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:263). The qualitative approach allowed the participants to air their views on the subject under investigation.

Quantitative research, in contrast, is based on the notion that there is only one truth, an objective reality that exists independent of human perception (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002). With this paradigm the researcher and the subject matter are treated independently such that the researcher is not in a position to influence or be influenced by the subject matter. This is understood to confer a measure of objectivity on the investigation, which would enable an equally competent person to repeat the research and obtain similar results (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). One of the techniques used to obtain data for this kind of approach includes the use of written or orally administered questionnaires. Quantitative strategy was considered an appropriate choice for this study in terms of statistical data collection, especially on the HEIs.

The study uses a combination of methods, sometimes termed ‘mixed methods’ research. The use of mixed methods serves as a source of triangulation where data is gathered using different methods to see the convergence of results.

3.3 Research design

This study adopted a single case-study design. A case study is defined as “an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998:272). Similarly, Yin (1989:23) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. A case study does not rely on any particular method of data collection, therefore, any method of data collection can be employed (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2007).

In this study, the TEC was selected as the case under investigation and data gathered from multiple sources. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and they involved participants from the TEC and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. A questionnaire was administered to the heads of HEIs in Botswana.

Stake (1994) makes a distinction between three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. Intrinsic case studies are used to learn or understand something from a particular case or case without aiming explicitly to learn anything beyond the case.

Instrumental case studies provide insight into an issue of refining theory whereby the case is used to learn about something, for example, theory beyond the case, and collective case studies are used to draw thematically from several cases jointly with a focus on the comparison. This study is considered to be an intrinsic case as it aims to understand the roles and functions of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana, as well as an instrumental case, in that it hopes to contribute to the conceptualisation of buffer bodies in higher education and related questions, as the research questions indicate.

Although case studies have a great potential for theory development, they are not statistically generalizable; and it has been shown that many researchers do not even attempt to either relate findings to previous theory and research or discuss the theoretical relevance of their study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:283). However, generalisation is not the rationale for qualitative research, as each case is preferably understood in context. Rather, a case study design allows for an in-depth investigation within context and thus leads to a clearer understanding of the organisation. Generalisation in the sense of transferability of understanding from one context and case to another is, however, possible. Moreover, analytical generalisation from the case to new concepts and theory is also possible. This study reflects on the general, the empirical and theoretical contributions arising from the case study in the final chapter.

3.3.1 Case selection

As already stated, the unit under study was the TEC in Botswana. Selection of the TEC as a case was primarily purposive and based on the many functions that the TEC performs in comparison to other similar bodies. Comparable bodies, especially in terms of the mandate and functions, have separated some of their functions, for example, regulatory functions have been separated from quality assurance functions, by establishing different agencies for each of these functions (Tertiary Education Council, 2008a). However, in Botswana, the TEC mandate covers both regulatory and quality assurance functions including funding of HEIs. Furthermore, the TEC is the only body that deals with universities and colleges of higher education. It is upon this basis and the variation in models used by the TEC that the researcher selected the TEC as a case under investigation.

The other reason for undertaking research in this area is because the researcher, being a former employee of the TEC, already had some foreknowledge about the organisation, which helped in facilitating the data collection process.

3.4 Data collection

This study was designed in a way that could allow for the use of multiple sources of evidence. The findings were based on three sources of data: semi-structured interviews with directors from the TEC, a survey questionnaire that targeted higher education institutional heads and a review of policy documents, which were used as secondary data sources. A brief description of the data collection process is presented below.

3.4.1 Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is described as “conversations in which the researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:4). The researcher has a general plan of inquiry using basic individual, deep individual or focus group interviewing, but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words in a particular order (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher should take caution to frame questions in a way that minimises bias in responses and to avoid slipping into a normal conversation. The reason for selecting this interview method was that the researcher believed a variety of people would provide insights regarding the roles and functions of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana.

The interviews were conducted in two phases. The first phase, conducted in September 2011 by the researcher, focused on the performance of the TEC in relation to the selected functions. It entailed semi-structured interviews with key informants. The key informants included three participants from the TEC; a senior staff member from the policy and planning directorate, a senior staff member from the quality assurance directorate, and a senior staff member from the executive secretary’s office. These key informants were considered knowledgeable about the issue under investigation because of the wealth of their experience in their respective directorates. The researcher also interviewed the two former directors of policy planning and quality assurance to get their views on the performance of the TEC. They were considered the most relevant sources of knowledge given the wealth of their experience. The interview guides used for this set of interviews are provided in appendices H-J.

The second phase of interviews was done in April 2012 by a research team that included the researcher, which was part of a project of the Higher Education Research Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) undertaken by the Centre for Higher Education and Transformation (CHET) in Cape Town, South Africa. The purpose of the HERANA project was to develop a better understanding of the national higher education councils/commissions and their possible

role in policy coordination in various African countries. The researcher was part of the team that collected data for the Botswana case study. Data collected was deemed relevant to this study, hence its use.

As part of the HERANA project, key personnel at the MoESD and key personnel from the TEC were re-interviewed. The respondents were sampled purposefully due to their knowledge, expertise and experience related to the issue under investigation. A total of six respondents were interviewed. These interviews covered issues such as the perceptions and opinions about the autonomy, accountability and the overall governance of higher education in Botswana, the role and functions of the TEC including policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination (see appendices C-E) and funding of higher education in the Botswana.

With reference to the first phase of interviews, the researcher sent email invitations to each of the selected participants requesting them to take part in the study. Once a positive response was received, the researcher sent another email to request an interview on a specific date, time and place suitable to the participants. All interviews took place in the participants' places of work. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and the procedures prior to the interview (see appendix G). An interview guideline was customised to the function of the officials and used during the interviews (appendices H-J). The interviews ranged between 60-90 minutes depending on the respondent's level of engagement on the subject being discussed. All interviews were recorded using an audio tape following consent given from the respondents (see information and consent form in appendix G). The researcher took notes as the interview progressed especially if respondents refused to be tape recorded. Transcription of interviews was carried out by the researcher.

The same procedure was followed on the second phase of interviews, which were conducted in April 2012. The interviews were later transcribed with the help of a transcription service provider. A copy of the interview transcripts was given to the researcher and later used in data analysis together with the notes that were taken during the interviews.

3.4.2 Survey questionnaire

In addition to the interviews, the researcher chose to conduct a highly targeted survey among key role players in Botswana's higher education system. By using the surveying method, the researcher was able to reach the target population within a short period and within a limited budget. In particular, this method targeted the heads of all 32 HEIs in Botswana registered with the TEC during the time of data collection, which took place in September 2011. Thus, the

sampling method employed for the survey was purposive and involved an actual ‘census’ targeting all the heads of HEIs in Botswana.

The questionnaire contained 33 statements to rate in terms of the five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, and a provision for don’t know/refuse to answer (see appendix L). The reason for choosing the Likert scale is that it is easier to use and understand for both researcher and respondent. Additional space was provided to give respondents more leeway in terms of providing additional information and comments.

Prior to distributing the questionnaires, the researcher sent email letters to the 32 higher education institutional heads (see appendix A). Follow-up calls were made to the HEIs that had not responded to the email. The survey was sent via email and some were faxed to the institutions that indicated they did not receive the email for whatever reason. In some cases, second rounds of emails were sent to the participants. The participants were requested to return the questionnaires within a month. A consent form containing all information for the participants was attached on the front page of the questionnaire (see appendix L).

The researcher primarily received completed surveys through email, but a few of the responses were received via post. A total of 24 questionnaires were received. The return of 24 questionnaires meant a response rate of 75%. The response rate is therefore satisfactory in terms of a reasonable representation. Although attempts were made to increase the response rate, there were some participants, for example, UB, considered important to the study, but who did not respond to the questionnaire and their non-response affected the study. Their response would have enriched the findings of the study and also provided a better understanding of the role of the TEC in higher education, especially on the quality assurance function.

3.4.3 Document review

Document review is one of the three research techniques adopted by the researcher in this study. “Many documents are easily accessible, free and contain information that would take an investigator enormous time and effort to gather otherwise,” states Merriam (1998:125). A number of documents were reviewed to have a better understanding of the issues under study. These included policy documents, legal texts, reports, strategic plans, organisational profiles and newsletters. These documents were used to uncover information regarding the roles and functions of the TEC in higher education, particularly quality assurance issues. The following is a list of such documents:

- Tertiary Education Policy of 2008
- Tertiary Education Act of 1999
- National Human Resource Development Strategy 1999
- Revised national policy on education 1994.

An extended list of documents can be found in appendix F. The researcher was cognisant of the fact that documents are not completely objective since they are written from the author's perspective. Nevertheless, documentary information, according to Yin (2009) is more than likely to be relevant to every case study topic and useful for augmenting evidence from other sources. This method assisted in enriching the results obtained from the survey and interviews.

3.5 Data analysis

According to Stake (1995:71) ,“there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations”. The purpose of data analysis is to explain concepts in a simplified manner and to indicate clearly the relationship between variables. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), resultant interpretations from the study are assessed in terms of criteria, from the positivist tradition including validity, reliability and objectivity and those that stand up to scrutiny are then put forward as the findings of the study.

Data analysis for this study was divided into three broad areas: (1) interviews obtained through semi-structured interviews; (2) survey obtained through questionnaire; and (3) documentary analysis.

For the purpose of conducting a quantitative analysis of survey responses, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. According to Bryman and Cramer (1994), SPSS is the most used and the most comprehensive statistical programme in the social sciences. Quantitative data was manipulated in several stages using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The stages included: data coding, data entry, data cleaning, descriptive statistical analysis, the presentation of data and, finally, data interpretation. Descriptive tools such as tables and graphs were used in the analysis and interpretation of data. These are presented in chapter 4.

The qualitative data from the key informant interviews was supported by the survey data in the sense that the survey data verified the qualitative data, especially in that it has different respondents than the interviews. The first phase of interviews entailed the researcher transcribing raw data, which involves listening to recorded interviews and converting them into

text. Transcription helped the researcher become more familiar with the data. After interview transcription, the data was sub-divided and assigned categories in the form of tags or labels. This process, known as coding, was done to assign units of meaning for the descriptive data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Once coding was done, data was categorised into themes. Direct citations were also used to underscore certain positions.

3.6 Trustworthiness

The study adopted the triangulation method in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. As mentioned above, data collection for this study involved using a combination of several methods. The multiple sources of data were used in order to develop ‘converging lines of inquiry’ (Yin, 2009:115). The data collected by means of different methods enabled the researcher to view the evidence from different angles and aimed to ‘corroborate’ the findings of the study (Yin, 2009:116). Yin (2003) argues that no single method has a comparative advantage over the other; rather, the use of different methods is seen as highly complementary.

The rationale for triangulation is that it enables validation of results obtained from research (Modell, 2005); that is rather than the results reflecting the character of a particular method, they rightfully reflect the character of the trait being investigated (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Smith (1991) emphasises the importance of triangulation in the following statement:

Triangulation evokes means of measuring and mapping some area through knowledge of several pieces of information. Because each method has a unique informational strength and weaknesses, researchers should use a combination of methods, with the intent of counterbalancing the merits and demerits of each method. Multiple methods aid reliability and validity, through providing a corrective for irrelevant components of any measurement procedure (1999:512).

The combination of different methods is seen as a strategy that adds rigour, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry (Yin, 2003). Using multiple methods in a study helps a researcher overcome intrinsic biases and other problems emanating from the use of a single method.

3.7 Ethical considerations

When conducting research, one needs to be guided by the ethics associated with it. According to Oppenheim (1996:83), “the basic ethical principle is that no harm should come to the

respondents as a result of their participation in the research”. Following this assertion, the researcher made maximum efforts to ensure adherence to the necessary ethical standards.

Firstly, the research proposal along with all data collection tools were presented to and approved by the University of the Western Cape’s Senate Research Committee before data collection. The process of data collection commenced immediately upon approval of the research proposal and instruments. Secondly, approval and informed consent were sought from the participants and relevant institutions. This was to ensure that no harm was done to the study participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The respondents were presented with a consent form and a brief introduction to the study (see appendix A). This enabled them to make informed decisions when consenting to the study. All participants remained anonymous throughout the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2009). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout and all participants were advised of this. The researcher removed any details that might be harmful to the participants. The participants were however cautioned that their words could be quoted in the final report, but that their names would not be used in conjunction with the quotation. However, as study participants would be identified by the role they play in Botswana higher education, for example as TEC directors, an informed reader might be able to guess their identity. The participants have been alerted to this as part of the process of informing about the study and requesting their consent to participate.

Lastly, in the case of interviews, caution was taken by refraining from asking questions that could cause discomfort to the interviewees. The use of electronic recording devices was divulged to the participants before the interviewees. The interview transcripts along with the questionnaire data were securely stored in a password-protected computer file and will only be destroyed after a period of five years from the time the study is complete.

3.8 Limitations of the study

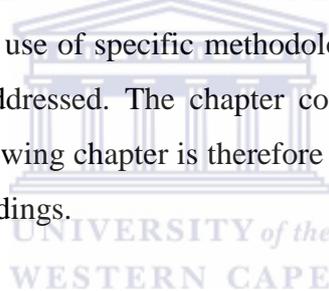
The researcher has worked at the TEC for a period of four years. For this reason, there is a possibility that the participants’ responses may have been affected. The researcher may also have personal biases that may affect data analysis and interpretation (Onwuegbuzie, 2002).

This study dealt with the TEC as a single case only, but the study could be extended to cover other bodies comparable to the TEC. In particular, the study could have included the two other units that are to be merged with the TEC. The significance of such a study could cover the

diverse practices and political context as well as cut across other bodies that have not been covered in this study. Despite the exclusion of other bodies, the scope of the study was sufficient to tease out the issues that the study set out to investigate as stated in the objectives of the study.

However, having identified the limitations, every effort has been made to ensure that the findings of the study are valid. The instruments used for data collection were checked by the supervisory team to ensure they addressed the study's objectives. More importantly, the research proposal was subjected to scrutiny by the senate and was approved. As such the proposal was found to be within the ambit of research ethics as set by the University of the Western Cape. This helped to eliminate any personal bias and helped ensure the credibility of the study's findings.

This chapter has discussed the methodology that this study followed. It has addressed the various methods and techniques that assisted the collection of data required by the study. The justification for the selection and use of specific methodologies has been made. The issue of research ethics has also been addressed. The chapter concludes with a brief note on the limitations of the study. The following chapter is therefore devoted towards data analysis and discussion of the key research findings.



CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapters, the purpose of this study was to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in the governance of higher education in Botswana along with the potential tensions that exist between the TEC and its primary stakeholders. The chapter therefore focuses on the presentation and analysis of data collected from the interviews, documents and survey. It attempts a discussion between the research findings, objectives of the study and the literature review.

4.2 Higher education in Botswana: context and role players

This section contextualises the research conducted on the TEC in Botswana. It includes a brief background overview of Botswana and description of its higher education system, followed by a preliminary overview and discussion of the key role players in Botswana's higher education and the tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and between the government, the TEC and HEIs.

4.2.1 The Republic of Botswana

Botswana is a landlocked country located in the southern part of Africa with a population of about 2.06 million people. Botswana, known as Bechuanaland before it gained independence in 1966, is bordered by Namibia to the west, Zambia to the north, Zimbabwe to the north east and South Africa to the south. It was a British Protectorate from 1885 until independence in 1966.

4.2.2 Higher education system in Botswana

In Botswana, higher education, otherwise known as tertiary education, is defined in the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 as “all post-secondary education and training” (Tertiary Education Act, 1999). Within the framework of the Tertiary Education Policy, tertiary education is understood to mean “all formal education programmes beyond the level of senior secondary embracing technical and occupation specific programmes and those with a strong theoretical foundation through to advanced research qualifications” (Government of Botswana, 2008:16).

Botswana had no HEIs of their own prior to independence in 1966. The only institution that existing prior to independence was the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland, which was established in 1964 and funded by the Ford Foundation and the British government. Upon attainment of independence in 1966, the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland

(UBLS) was established and equally funded by the governments of the three countries. In 1975 the Government of Lesotho withdrew from the regional university and nationalised its share of the UBLS and, as a result, Botswana and Swaziland developed a joint university. In 1982, the partnership between the University of Botswana and Swaziland ended because the two countries realised that in the long term the two university colleges would develop into independent national universities. The University of Botswana (UB) was then established through an Act of Parliament (Mokgwathi, 1992).

UB was the only university in the country until 2007 when five private HEIs were registered by the TEC, starting a new chapter in the higher education system of Botswana. The current landscape of HEIs in Botswana comprises 26 publicly funded tertiary education institutions (universities, colleges of education, institutes of health sciences and other tertiary education institutions), and 13 privately funded tertiary education institutions, as shown in the table below (Tertiary Education Council, 2013).

Table 2: Overview of higher education in Botswana, 2013

Type of higher education institution	Number of institutions
Public institutions	26
Private institutions	13
Total	39

Source: Tertiary Education Council, 2013. Also see Appendix (K) for a list of all higher education institutions in Botswana.

4.2.3 Key role players in Botswana’s tertiary education system

There are a number of key players involved in the higher education system of Botswana. Each of them plays a different but significant role. These key role players include the government, students, parents, the private sector, the TEC, HEIs, and different government ministries such as the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. Despite the many stakeholders involved in higher education, this study only focuses on the relationship between the government, the TEC and HEIs. This is mainly because of the existing gap in the literature on the tensions between the roles and functions of buffer bodies, government and HEIs.

4.2.3.1 The changing role of government

The higher education landscape has experienced significant reforms over the years. One of the changes with a bearing on the higher education sector is the changing role of the state, which has been redefined to move away from direct control towards supervision and oversight (Tertiary Education Council, 2005). By so doing, buffer bodies or agents in some cases have

been introduced to assume some of the roles previously carried out by the government. However, the transition of the role of the government from direct control to state supervision and oversight has not been a smooth one. In the process, the relationship between the government, buffer bodies or agents and the HEIs has been characterised by tensions. In this section, the changing role of the state in Botswana's higher education system and the inherent tensions will be discussed.

The history of higher education in Botswana has shown that the higher education system has undergone significant reforms in terms of governance structure. As in other countries, the role of the state has shifted from that of direct-control to state supervision and oversight, as will be discussed further in subsequent sections (Tertiary Education Council, 2005). Through the recommendations of the Revised National Policy on Education (Government of Botswana, 1994), a statutory TEC was established in 1999.

The introduction of the TEC meant that some of the roles traditionally carried out directly by the government were transferred to the statutory body. The transformation of the tertiary education sector in this regard has brought about changes in the different functions of the TEC and that of the government. By relinquishing some of its roles, the government's role in higher education has had to be redefined. Its relationship with the different stakeholders has been redefined together with the roles it is expected to perform. Bjarnason and Lund (1999:17) describe the role of the government in the higher education sector as follows:

The role of Government in the [higher] education sector is twofold. Firstly, it provides overall planning direction, supervision and general guidance through curriculum development, certification and regulation of all educational activities. The second major role is provision of education and training across the whole spectrum of the education system. This provision is mainly in the form of direct financing of educational institutions under the Ministry of Education or grants to various non-governmental organisations. Government also provides loans and grants to students attending tertiary institutions both in Botswana and outside the country.

Currently, the government through the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) is entrusted with regulating and funding higher education with some of the regulating function transferred to the TEC. Since independence, the Government of Botswana has consistently invested one percent of its gross domestic product in higher education. This

represents a significant commitment, which is high by international comparison (UNESCO, 2007).

4.2.3.2 The governance structure of tertiary education institutions in Botswana

As mentioned above, HEIs in Botswana can be separated into two groups: public HEIs and private HEIs. Firstly, there are public institutions that continue to be fully funded by the state. These include health institutions, colleges of education and technical training colleges. These tertiary education institutions are governed by different government ministries and managed on the same basis as other government departments, thus the colleges of education fall under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, the Botswana College of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture and institutes of health sciences under the Ministry of Health. The management of these institutions is limited to the day-to-day activities, which include, among other things, the execution of the learning process and internal running of the institutions. All employees of public HEIs are government employees and are hired by the Department of Public Service Management.

In addition, there are two public universities: UB and Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST)², which are regulated under separate acts and therefore enjoy a relatively high degree of autonomy under the governance of their own councils and board of directors. Their councils comprise different representatives from the private sector, government, university management, representatives from staff unions (academic and non-academic) and the Student Representative Council (SRC). Although these universities are funded by the government, they make independent decisions through their councils. These institutions are headed by the President of Botswana as the Chancellor. However, a looser coupling to the government has been signalled symbolically in that the sitting president, who is by default the chancellor of these universities, has instead nominated different chancellors for both UB and BIUST (Kotecha, 1999). UB has a relationship with the public higher education colleges and institutes through a complex institutional affiliation arrangement. Under this arrangement, the colleges of education are quality assured by UB and are required to meet the university's standards. Their graduates use the UB approved seal in their certificates and, as such, they are expected to meet UB standards.

² Note: Botswana International University of Science and Technology is the country's second university and it is funded under a public-private partnership, but with a relatively large proportion of capital development coming from the government.

Given the direct involvement of various ministries in the governance and management of public higher education colleges and institutes, along with the special status of UB and BIUST, the TEC argued in its 2006 landmark policy report, *Towards a Knowledge Society: A proposal for a Tertiary Education Policy for Botswana*, that:

The result of this overall governance model is fragmentation with tertiary education institutions subject to direction and control from disparate agencies resulting in an absence of system coherence and a consequent lack of system level strategic direction. (Tertiary Education Council, 2006:44)

Secondly, there are the private HEIs. They are independent from the government with complete decision autonomy. Most of these private institutions adopt a business-like management structure, where the head of the institution is called the managing director. The Government of Botswana sponsors its citizens in the private HEIs through loans. The role of the private institutions has been limited to the provision of technical and vocational training, where the private sector continues to play an important role (Ramatsui et al., 2008:33). Most of these private HEIs offer franchised programmes from various institutions.

4.2.3.3 Other role players

There are other role players involved in higher education governance besides the government and HEIs. These include the private sector, students and parents. Currently, the role of the private sector is restricted to participation in policy initiatives and representation in institutional boards/councils. The different stakeholders responsible for managing higher education meet regularly to discuss issues affecting higher education in the country. With the implementation of the Tertiary Education Policy (2008), the private sector is expected to play a significant role in tertiary education through funding and working closely with institutions to enhance the skills of the graduate students (Tertiary Education Council, 2008a)

Students also play a role in higher education, albeit a role limited primarily to the institutional level where they participate in matters related to their welfare through the SRCs. Moreover, a student representative is part of the TEC council (see below). Parents have no formal role in higher education governance in Botswana, although they do play a role by funding their children to attend HEIs.

The Tertiary Education Council was established as a statutory organisation to play various roles and execute a diverse range of functions. The remainder of this chapter analyses in detail the

data collected pursuant to the research questions of this study; namely (1) How do different stakeholders conceive of the role of the TEC in higher education? (2) What are the potential tensions that exist between the TEC, government and HEIs in terms of the roles and functions of the TEC? (3) What is the perceived impact of these likely tensions on the performance of the TEC in relation to the three functions: policy formulation and advisory role, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education?

4.3 The Tertiary Education Council: Establishment, statutory functions and organisation

The TEC is defined as an autonomous body established under the Tertiary Education Act, Cap 57:04 of 1999 (Government of Botswana, 1999). However, the origin of the TEC dates back to the Report of the National Commission on Education in 1993 (paragraph 7.5.29), which recommended that such a body be established (Government of Botswana, 1993). This recommendation was endorsed by the Government in the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), passed by the Parliament in 1994. In 1999, tertiary education legislation was enacted to bring the TEC into being. The Tertiary Education Act of 1999 gave statutory backing to the creation of the TEC as a body responsible for "... promotion and coordination of tertiary education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in tertiary institutions" (Section 5 (1)).

Although the recommendation that led to the establishment of the TEC was endorsed by the government in 1994, it took 10 years for the TEC to start operating. The main reason advanced for this delay is the slow bureaucratic nature of government processes. However the delayed establishment of the TEC may also indicate tensions between the different stakeholders involved in higher education. For example, one of the reasons mentioned by study participants for the delay was the already well-established structure in place catering for some of the responsibilities that the TEC was to undertake. This was in the form of government institutions and the Botswana College of Agriculture affiliating to UB. Therefore the establishment of the TEC seemed to create tensions between these different stakeholders. This will be dealt with in detail below.

The TEC is governed by a council consisting of the chairperson, the executive secretary, council members drawn from government, the private sector, labour, tertiary institutions, the academic community, students and a representative from the wider community (Tertiary Education Council, 2012). The council comprises 14 non-executives and the executive secretary who are all appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills Development. The

council is responsible for setting the direction of the TEC in line with the Tertiary Education Act of 1999.

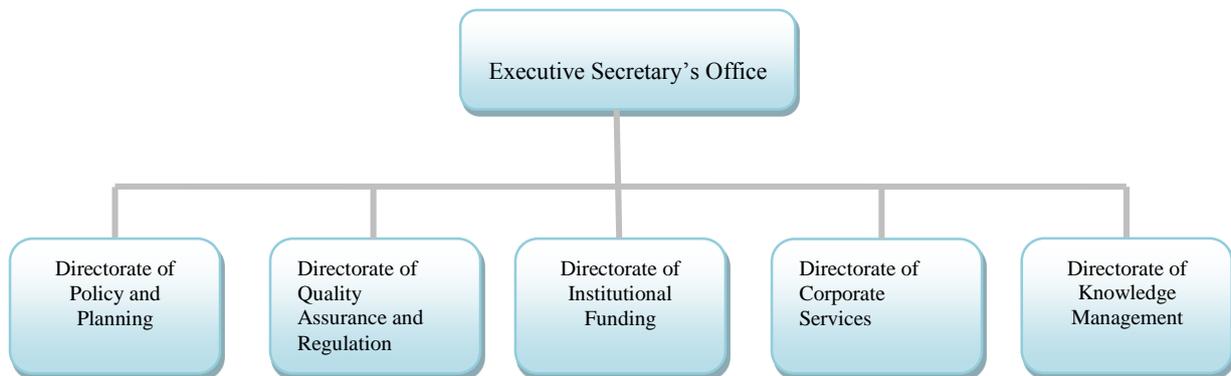
The statutory functions of the TEC are varied and include the following (Government of Botswana, 1999:4):

- (1) Formulating policy on tertiary education and advising government accordingly.
- (2) Coordinating the long-term planning and overall development of tertiary education.
- (3) Planning for the funding of tertiary education research including the recurrent and development needs of public tertiary institutions.
- (4) Receiving and approving applications from persons seeking to establish private tertiary institutions.
- (5) Promoting coordination among tertiary institutions.
- (6) Reviewing and approving programmes of study in respect of private tertiary institutions.
- (7) Ensuring that quality assurance procedures are in place at all tertiary institutions.
- (8) Ensuring the audit of physical facilities and the assessment of their adequacy in tertiary institutions.
- (9) Accrediting private tertiary institutions.

The different functions are organisationally clustered in the Executive Secretary's Office and in the directorates of the TEC. The directorates are as follows: policy and planning, quality assurance and regulation, corporate services, institutional funding, and knowledge management. The head of the TEC is the Executive Secretary whose role is to spearhead the mandate of the TEC and report to the council. Each directorate is respectively headed by a director. Overall, the TEC has a staff compliment of about 45. An organogram of the TEC is provided in the figure below.

Figure 4: Organisational structure of the Tertiary Education Council

Source: TEC, 2010a.



The five directorates are responsible for different functions: (1) the directorate of policy and planning is responsible for research, policy and for strategic planning and development of tertiary education; (2) the quality assurance and regulation directorate oversees registration of all tertiary education institutions, accreditation of programmes in private tertiary education institutions and carries out institutional audits in public tertiary education institutions, as well as being responsible for quality assurance in all tertiary education institutions; (3) the directorate of institutional funding advises the government on financial needs of the public tertiary education institutions; (4) corporate services directorate oversees the activities internal to the TEC; and lastly, (5) the knowledge management directorate is responsible for supporting the work of the TEC in terms of information technology, communications and marketing and data management.

The discussion above has shown that it took 10 years for the TEC to start operating after the first proposal to establish the TEC by the Report of the National Commission on Education in 1993. After starting operations, in less than 10 years, recommendations from the Tertiary Education Policy of 2008 were made to dissolve the TEC to form a new organisation in the form of the Human Resources Development Council. The rationale for the recommendation to dissolve the TEC emerged from the weaknesses identified in the existing government and support agencies such as BOTA, the TEC and MPU. According to the Government of Botswana (2009), the existing agencies are characterised by fragmentation, duplication and overlapping mandates.

In an endeavour to fulfil its mandate, the TEC was faced with challenges relating to tensions between its diverse roles and functions and between its various stakeholders. Available literature on the TEC has not yet focused on ascertaining the tensions between its roles and

functions and its stakeholder environment. Hence the following sections will focus on the tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and its stakeholders.

4.3.1 Conceptualising the TEC as a buffer body

As highlighted in the literature review section, the concept of the buffer body came into being following the realisation that there was a need for a body to advise the government and give those operating within the sector the confidence that their affairs were being managed by people who understood their culture and concerns (Fielden, 2000). Some of the terminologies used in the literature to describe these organisations include intermediary bodies or agencies. Although there may be different terms loosely used to describe buffer bodies, de Rudder (1992:50) warns that not all of the terms fit align with the commonly understood definition. De Boer (1992:36) defines a buffer body as a “formally constituted organisation standing between the government and the institutions for higher education”.

In this section, a conceptualisation of TEC will be carried out to help define TEC as either a buffer body or an agent of government. As already mentioned above, the TEC was established under the Tertiary Education Act 1999 to act as a buffer body for the higher education sector. In this section, more emphasis will be placed on describing the roles and functions that make the TEC a buffer body and conceptualising the TEC as a buffer body. Firstly, the roles and functions of TEC as a buffer body will be described. This is followed by a description of the different stakeholder perceptions on TEC’s role as a buffer body.

The TEC has been mandated with a number of roles and functions, but not all of them are buffer roles/functions. One of the functions where the TEC acts as a buffer body is that of quality assurance. In the case of quality assurance the government and HEIs do not deal directly with each other; instead the TEC has been tasked with the role of ensuring quality in HEIs. However, this role is limited to private HEIs and not public institutions. With this function, the TEC is responsible for ensuring that HEIs offering higher education in the country meet set quality standards. This function was realised after the number of private HEIs increased from one institution in 1966 to nine institutions in 2013. The quality assurance function involves, among other things (Tertiary Education Council, 2008b:5):

- 1) Receiving and approving applications from persons seeking to establish private tertiary education institutions.
- 2) Reviewing and approving programmes of study in respect of private tertiary institutions.

- 3) Ensuring the auditing and adequacy of physical facilities in private tertiary institutions.
- 4) Accrediting private tertiary institutions.
- 5) Ensuring that quality assurance procedures are in place in all private tertiary institutions.

This function requires that all private HEIs interested in offering academic programmes from diploma level up to PhD level register with the TEC. Accreditation involves two processes. The first process requires that all new private HEIs that do not meet the set standards be given a letter of interim authority. The letter of interim authority is meant to afford institutions enough time to be able to prepare to meet the set standards (Tertiary Education Council, 2013). After a given period (three years after registration or one year of operation) the institutions would then go through the process of accreditation as outlined further below.

The second process involves institutions already in operation. For these institutions a set of regulations (regulations for operating private and public institutions) was developed to help register these institutions and guide their operation. The regulations for operating public and private institutions are meant for already existing public and private HEIs. After registration, the institutions undergo an accreditation process. Under this process, institutions prepare a self-study report for submission to the TEC using the regulations provided. The accreditation procedure as stipulated on the TEC website is as follows (Tertiary Education Council, 2013):

1. An institution is supposed to submit a self-study report and the programme content of programmes to be accredited.
2. The self-study report is evaluated by the Tertiary Education Council through independent assessors.
3. The Council thereafter convenes a team of independent assessors of subject matter experts on the programme to be accredited.
4. The assessors would then produce a report which will be forwarded to the Academic Planning and Development Committee (APDC) for consideration. The APDC will then make a recommendation to the council; the council in its meeting also considers the recommendation and asks the Minister to make a decision on whether to accredit or not accredit the programme. In this regard TEC plays an advisory role in the accreditation process.

The registration process commenced in 2006 and to date the TEC has registered 39 public and private HEIs.

Another function where the TEC is expected to perform its role as a buffer body is that of funding. This function is captured under sections 5(2)(a) and 9(a) of the Tertiary Education Act of 1999. Section 5(2)(a) stipulates that TEC should plan for the funding of higher education research, and the recurrent and development needs of tertiary institutions. Subsection (e) states that the TEC shall receive and review budgets for tertiary institutions. Section 9 (a) requires that the Executive Secretary of the TEC develop resource allocation and utilisation models and also coordinate the preparation of annual budgets for public institutions. However this function has not been fully executed as there are a number of formalities still to be concluded and key among those formalities is the development of a funding model for HEIs. At the moment the development of the funding model is at an advanced stage and is awaiting approval by parliament.

The TEC is also mandated with the function of coordinating higher education in the country and in this sense performs a buffer role. Through this function the TEC is expected to coordinate long term planning and overall development of higher education, as well as promoting coordination among HEIs.

As observed in the literature, different people have different understandings about what constitutes a buffer body (De Boer, 1992). The term buffer body is used in literature to refer to an organisation standing between the government and the institutions (De Boer, 1992). However, this definition does not distinguish between buffer bodies and other bodies, such as agents, which also act as intermediaries between the government, HEIs and the public. Bekhradnia (2006) uses two sets of criteria to distinguish between buffer bodies and those with similar roles or functions.

The first criterion concerns the legal status of buffer bodies. When compared to other bodies like government agents, buffer bodies are organisations created by legislation with their powers and responsibilities clearly spelt. This helps buffer bodies secure their independence from the government. Fielden (2008) argues that it is this independence that helps them protect the interests of academic affairs and institutional autonomy.

The second criterion involves the functions that are carried out by buffer bodies. The functions of buffer bodies include quality assurance, academic programme review, policy analysis,

strategic planning, budget development/funding advice/allocation, programme administration, monitoring and accountability, and deciding on enrolment figures (El-Khawas, 1992).

It is these set of criteria that will be used as a yardstick against which the notion of buffer body as understood by different role players in the Botswana higher education system will be measured. In order to assess the conceptualisation of the TEC as a buffer body, officials from the TEC and the government were interviewed. According to a TEC official, the TEC acts as a buffer and ‘middleman’ between the government, HEIs and other key stakeholders. The excerpt below captures this official’s understanding of the TEC as a buffer body:

Actually buffer bodies around the country are like process offices ... we are buffering the key stakeholders ... we are in between. The institutions cannot go direct to the government on matters of higher education, they have to go through TEC then we take the advice as a whole to the Minister. The ministry may have an intervention, it has to go procedurally according to protocol, they have to go through the TEC. TEC should be the one that takes that pronouncement to the institutions. (Interview with TEC official, April 25, 2012).

The views expressed in the above excerpt were reinforced by another TEC official as reflected in the following excerpt:

We are buffering the key tertiary education stakeholders – we have parents, we have students, we have the community, we have the private sector – you name it, and then there is government. We are in between. (Interview with TEC official, April 25, 2012).

From the perspective of the government, one respondent echoed the views of a TEC official by saying that the TEC provides a ‘bridge’ between the government and the private HEIs. These words were captured from a MoESD official who had this to say:

I would say it has been a nice bridge between government and the private sector ... in terms of quality assurance, TEC is still not able to have a hand over what happens at the University of Botswana ... but, of course, we need to understand that government will not always like to easily give away control - particularly with strategic institutions. But I would say yes, for the private sector, that buffer seems to be working, but not necessarily in terms of the public institutions. (Interview with MoESD official, April 25, 2012).

The views cited reveal some interesting issues surrounding the conception of the TEC as a buffer body. The use of metaphors “process offices” and “nice bridge” reflect the buffer role

that the TEC plays. As “process offices” or “nice bridge,” the TEC ensures that private institutions offer quality education to the society. The government does not have to deal directly with these institutions; instead, the institutions are registered and accredited by the TEC. In this instance, the TEC is playing the role of a buffer body and this view is shared by all the stakeholders. However it has to be noted that the TEC is not at liberty to carry out its mandate without any influence from the government. As evidenced by excerpts from interviews with government officials, the government is not always willing to give away control particularly with strategic institutions. The fact that the government may not be willing to give away the control of public HEIs may have implications on the TEC’s role in coordinating higher education. This has the potential to bring about tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC, as will be discussed later.

The respondent affirmed, when asked, that the TEC also protected the ministry. The interview therefore supports the argument in the literature that these bodies “literally buffer the ministry of education from the periodic conflicts that may arise between members of the university community and the government by providing an initial recourse for dispute resolution” (Saint et al., 2009).

The Government of Botswana has been concerned with mushrooming private tertiary education institutions offering poor quality education coupled with under-qualified staff members and increasing enrolment figures. These institutions are blamed for lack of investment in facilities and, as such, the resultant implications for lower quality of education. Moreover, it has been noted that the staff employed by some of these institutions do not possess the relevant qualifications and this also affects the quality of higher education in the country. Since private institutions are profit oriented, they try by all means to maximise profits through increasing enrolment numbers. Unfortunately, they do not always improve their facilities to accommodate such an increase. These problems pose serious quality issues for the higher education industry. As a result the TEC has been formed to mediate this tension between the government and HEIs and provide a forum for conflict resolution. The TEC has put in place measures to avert these problems including the registration and accreditation procedures (Ramatsui et al., 2008:33).

A reflection on the discussion above shows that the TEC is a buffer body as concerns the function of quality assurance. With this function, the TEC registers and also facilitates the accreditation of HEIs. However, the TEC does not act as a buffer body in the role of facilitation

of registration but acts as one on the role of the registration of institutions. Under the role of the registration of institutions, the TEC takes institutions through five stages.

The registration process begins with the initial screening of applications and is followed by an evaluation by assessors, verification by the inspection committee, processing of the reports by APDC, and finally the approval or non-approval of the institution by the council. Approved institutions are then given certificates and only those that hold certificates are eligible for accreditation after a period of three years in operation. Within the accreditation role, the TEC takes institutions through five steps, which are preparation of study portfolios, peer review, site visits, preparation of a report by reviewers, and finally the recommendation for accreditation by the TEC council to the minister.

When it comes to the function of accreditation, the TEC does not perform the accreditation process like other quality assurance bodies in other countries. For example, in South Africa, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), a statutory body entrusted with quality assurance performs a buffer role as opposed to an agency role (CHE, 2013). Under this role, the accreditation process goes through four stages, namely: receipt of application, evaluation, outcome and, lastly institutional, response. Although the steps followed by both the TEC and CHE are almost the same, there is a difference in the manner in which accreditation is conferred upon institutions. As opposed to the TEC, which makes a recommendation to the minister for accreditation, the CHE has an accreditation committee that makes the final recommendation, which is then sent to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). In this regard, the TEC does not perform the accreditation role like CHE. This is due to the fact that the final stage in accreditation (recommendation) lies with the minister as opposed to a situation where it lies with the buffer body like in the case of CHE. Therefore, as the TEC does not perform both quality assurance roles, it acts as both a buffer (in terms of registration) and an agent (in terms of accreditation). This conceptualisation of the TEC as an agent will be discussed below.

4.3.2 The conceptualisation of the TEC as an agent

As already discussed the literature review section, an agent is an intermediary body that sometimes is loosely referred to as a buffer body. As opposed to mediating tension between two or more parties, agents are normally associated with governments and perform certain functions on behalf of the government (Kivisto, 2007). The distinguishing factor between buffer bodies and government agencies is that agencies are not independent from the government and normally fall within a given government ministry, whereas a buffer body is

independent from the government (Bekhradnia, 2005) and can sustain its intermediary role between government and HEIs. In this section, more emphasis will be placed on conceptualising the TEC as an agent of the government. This will start with a description of the roles and functions of the TEC that make it an agent of the government. Lastly, the different conceptions of the TEC as an agent from the perspective of the TEC and government officials will be offered.

The function of 'policy formulation' is that of agent, as opposed to buffer body. Under this function, the TEC is expected to formulate policy on tertiary education and advise the government accordingly. To perform this function, the TEC works very closely with the government as opposed to working closely with all stakeholders. Initially this function was to be housed under the Ministry of Education, but due to the absence of a tertiary education department it was allocated to the TEC.

In order to further discuss this role of agent, the TEC and government officials were interviewed to gain their perspectives. A number of key points were raised by the interviewees that suggested the TEC's role as agent. One of the issues raised is that the TEC has been criticised by stakeholders for working too closely to the government, as opposed to acting as a buffer body. In fact, in their strategic plan, (Tertiary Education Council, 2010b) the TEC acknowledges stakeholder concerns around this issue. The stakeholders in this case are the HEIs. One interviewee stated that:

The stakeholders - particularly the institutions - when we were reviewing our first strategic plan, they accused us of leaning too much to government; seeing government as the dominant stakeholder as opposed to themselves. And, to some extent, they were right. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

Government officials described the TEC as leaning towards the government, as opposed to other stakeholders. They noted that the TEC's lack of financial independence would always ensure this bias. The following excerpt from an interviewed government official expands on this:

... TEC will always be close to the ministry and to the government because government provides funding, and in an economy like ours it would very difficult for the TEC to claim any financial autonomy because where are they going to get money from? (Interview with MoESD official, April 25, 2012)

From the excerpt above, it is clear that the TEC leans towards the government. Even though the government official does not specify the functions in which the TEC leans towards government, there is a definite acknowledgement of a close relationship.

This section has discussed the role played by the TEC as either a buffer body or a government agent. The following section will focus on discussing the tensions between the functions of the TEC.

4.4 Tensions and conflicts within the functions of the TEC

It is important to reflect and point out some key observations made in the literature concerning the way buffer bodies should function and how tensions and conflicts may play out. According to El-Khawas (1992), buffer bodies are intended to manage the tension between the government and HEIs and therefore should act as neutral parties. Ideally, buffer bodies should not be seen to be close to either the government or HEIs. This ‘neutrality’ is meant to empower the organisation and provide autonomy. However, El-Khawas (1992) argues that it is not easy for buffer bodies to remain neutral in their endeavour to coordinate higher education. It is argued that buffer bodies are prone to manipulation due to a number of factors such as the organisational structure, scope of activities and cultural factors. This makes them vulnerable and leads to failure in that the organisation cannot maintain its position as a neutral entity resulting in tensions and conflicts between its functions and between its stakeholders.

Key among the factors mentioned above is the structure of the organisation, which includes the source of funding, governance structure and patterns of reporting. In the case of the TEC, most of its funding is provided by the government, board members are appointed by the minister and a significant number of them are from the government. Lastly, the organisation reports directly to the Minister of Education, who then reports to Parliament. As observed in the literature (El-Khawas, 1992), this arrangement makes the TEC vulnerable and also drives it closer to the government. In the process the organisation is likely to fail in its endeavour to maintain a neutral stand in the execution of its functions. With its neutrality in question, the TEC does not always win favour from any stakeholders, including the government. The advice given to government is not always heeded if it does not align with current government thinking. This is demonstrated by experiences of the TEC (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012).

The next section discusses internal and external conflicts and tensions within the functions of the TEC.

4.4.1 Quality assurance

As part of its overall mandate, the TEC's role with regards to quality assurance is to ensure that quality assurance procedures are in place in all tertiary education institutions. This function came about as the number of private HEIs increased expanding the country's higher education system. In order to assess the tensions between this and other functions, this study relied on information gained from interviews, questionnaires and documents.

There are many challenges that accompany this function and they are rooted in the timing of the establishment of the TEC. The TEC started operating in 2004 and by this time some of these institutions were already operational. In order to ensure the quality of education in tertiary institutions, the TEC developed four sets of regulations and guidelines (Ramatsui et al., 2008:38) namely:

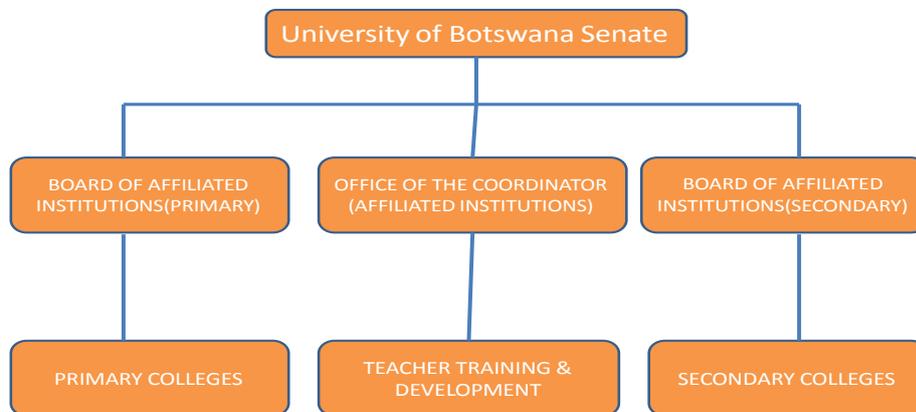
- (1) Regulations for establishing new private tertiary institutions (issuing of letter of interim authority);
- (2) Regulations for the registration of existing public and private tertiary institutions;
- (3) Regulations for the accreditation of private tertiary institutions; and
- (4) Norms and standards that guide tertiary education institutions concerning minimum requirements including facilities, students, staff, etc.

While the TEC has done very well by developing quality assurance regulations and guidelines for tertiary education institutions, the implementation of these instruments has not presented challenges. At the time that the TEC became operational in 2004, UB was already operating a university-based quality assurance system (Thobega, 2010). Prior to the establishment of the TEC, the Government of Botswana had entrusted UB with the responsibility of assuring quality throughout the entire higher education system in the country, using a system of affiliation. In order to undertake this responsibility, UB had established the Centre for Academic Development (CAD).

CAD is a quality assurance centre responsible for assuring quality in programmes offered by UB and its affiliates, including all colleges of education, institutes of health sciences, vocational technical colleges and the Botswana College of Agriculture (Thobega, 2010). The centre's mandate is to promote and facilitate the overall development of academic staff and students in the university, and offer appropriate advice and support to the university's affiliated and associated institutions. This is meant to improve the academic quality, effectiveness and

efficiency of the institutions, and establish an outreach programme for the institution (University of Botswana, 2013). A dedicated structure, the Unified Board of Affiliations, at UB services the affiliated institutions (Hopkin, 1999) - see figure below.

Figure 5: Affiliation structure of the University of Botswana



Source: Hopkin, 1999.

Under this system, colleges of education, institutes of health sciences and the Botswana College of Agriculture were affiliates of the UB and quality assurance for the public higher education sector was largely a preserve of UB. According to Ramatsui et al. (2008), most institutions are automatically affiliated to UB through the Unified Board of Affiliations and this system of affiliation is said to be common in many countries around the world. As of 2013, these institutions remain affiliated to UB pending a change in status to semi-autonomy. Consequently, as UB-affiliated institutions, their programmes are quality assured by UB and they are required to meet UB standards.

(Thobega, 2010) claims that CAD is superior to the TEC in terms of its capacity in managing quality assessment and standards. He attributes this to a well-established university-based quality-management system complete with checks and balances, which ensure quality and the maintenance of standards. As a result, UB continues to form new programmes without seeking approval from the TEC. However, it has been noted that a fundamental limitation of the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 was that it did not address the issue of the existing public university and the legislation responsible for its creation. As a result, UB is automatically positioned separately and outside of the quality assessment oversight function of the TEC. Due to this, the TEC's ability to function as a buffer is limited. This has created tensions between

the public HEIs and the TEC when they are requested to follow the TEC procedures over and above the ones set by UB. This places an undue burden on the institutions as there are too many standards and requirements to meet. However, this is expected to change when the institutions become semi-autonomous and are reorganised under the proposed institutional rationalisation option. Under this arrangement, all institutions will be reporting to one accreditation body as opposed to the current situation. In this case tensions and conflicts that are reported above will be minimised.

Programme accreditation in HEIs is another area in which the TEC has faced challenges. Programme accreditation is viewed as unfair as the process is only imposed on private HEIs. Public HEIs are not subjected to accreditation by the TEC because the TEC is not permitted by the law to accredit programmes in public institutions. Nonetheless, they are audited by the TEC. This point is expanded on by one of the interview respondents from the TEC:

We have insisted that all the institutions be subjected to accreditation both public and private alike. But the current situation is that we are not permitted by the law to accredit programmes for public institutions; we only register but don't accredit their programmes. The assumption again is that public institutions have mechanisms - internal mechanisms - that make it possible for themselves to accredit their own programmes. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

The only 'voice' that the TEC has when it comes to commenting on public institutions is through recommendations to government. This is outlined in the following response.

The problem is with, say infrastructure. At the moment, we are not actually funding the institutions, the only thing we can do is tell the government [which is the funder] that you need to devote a lot more funds to develop this or that. But when we take over the funding of the institutions, and we see that the institutions are not effective in the way programmes are delivered, then we are going to say to them: look, unless you increase the quality of your staff, we are going to be denying you funds in this or that area. But for the moment we don't have that leverage. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

Another respondent echoed similar sentiments by stating that:

The only way, given the limitation of the law, to at least begin to see whether there are quality assurance mechanisms in public institutions is through the annual reports that they must submit every year. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

Although there is evidence of some engagement of the TEC with public institutions, the bulk of work on quality assurance matters relates to private HEIs. This supports the argument in the literature review chapter that the emergence of bodies like the TEC should be seen and appreciated within the context of the rapid expansion of the private HEIs. In effect, the TEC became a buffer body primarily as a result of this expansion and in the larger higher education sector, these private institutions remain a small percentage of HEIs. In view of this, Thobega (2010:2640) raises a concern about whether the TEC will ultimately be able to take control of the whole tertiary education system in Botswana arguing that if this does not happen then the mandate of the TEC might have to be revisited.

As already discussed under the policy formulation and advisory function, the TEC continues to be both player and referee, even in the quality assurance function. In this regard, one of the interviewees depicts the challenges facing the TEC as follows:

... in our case we have really been a player and a referee. We set standards, we have a quality framework which the institutions must follow, which is set by us, and we go on and monitor whether they are following this set of criteria. And I think it is wrong. These functions must be separated. (Interview with TEC official, September 20, 2011)

The above citation indicates that TEC carries out many functions some of which should be with other bodies. Although a TEC official argues that this arrangement is not ideal, there is no evidence to suggest that this has caused problems, tensions or conflicts between the functions of the TEC and its stakeholders. Contrary to the claim above there is nothing wrong with the TEC performing several functions.

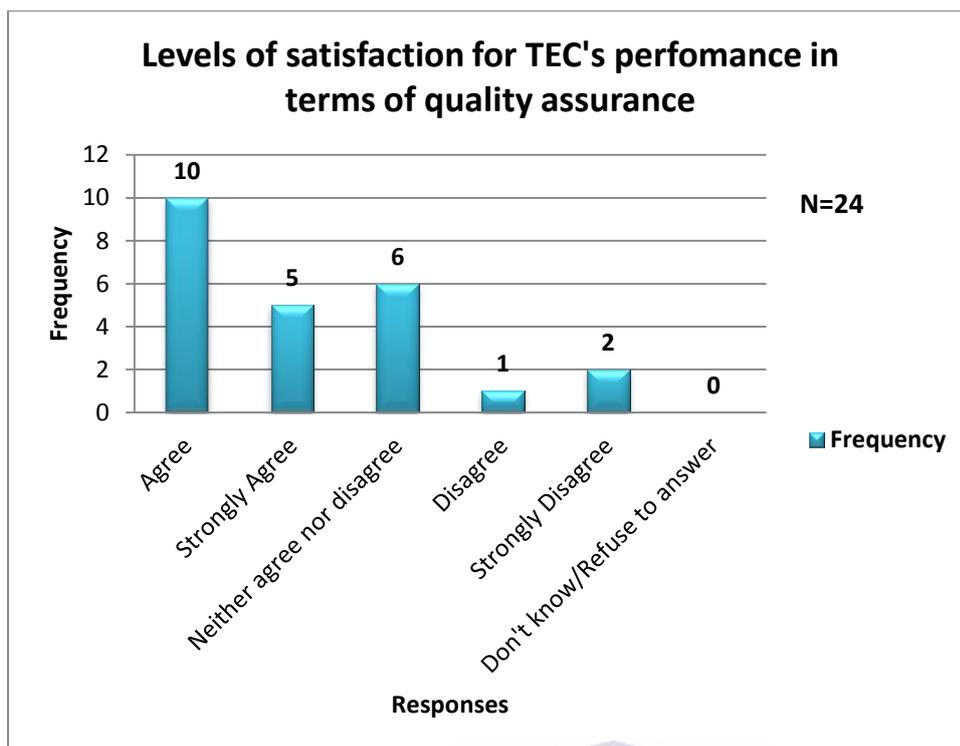
Although there are no tensions and conflicts that have arisen as a result of the TEC setting up a quality framework and then monitoring it, there have been allegations of corruption and favouritism levelled against the TEC. An interview with a TEC official shed light on the following in that regard:

We play the middle man's role. People are not used to having a regulatory body like TEC ... and sometimes [we are] accused of corruptly registering institutions and not going far enough in terms of quality assurance. Sometimes we are accused by those being rejected from registration of being biased. (Interview with TEC official, September 21, 2011)

It has been reported that some institutions, in failing to meet the required standards, appealed to the Minister of Education and Skills Development to intervene in the accreditation process; they were referred back to the TEC by the ministry. This indicates a lack of understanding as to what is expected of the TEC and the procedures to be followed during the accreditation process. This however does not indicate that there are tensions or conflicts between the roles and functions of the TEC. According to the TEC accreditation rules and regulations for private institutions (C.665: 13) "... an institution may lodge with the Minister an appeal against a recommendation by the council within 14 days of notification of the council's decision". Therefore, if institutions appeal to the minister this should not be viewed as an act against normal practice.

As already mentioned, there are claims that all tertiary education institutions should be accredited by the TEC (Thobega, 2010). However, it has to be noted that in some other countries like Australia, some institutions are accorded the status to self-regulate due to their good internal quality-assurance systems (Van Damme, 2004). This does imply the existence of parallel systems of accreditation where there is a national quality assurance system and various quality-assurance systems for different higher education institutions. Despite this being the case, there are no reported tensions that have taken place in such a system. However, this differs with the situation in Botswana where, as already stated some higher education institutions are torn in between two parallel systems of quality assurance in the form of the CAD at UB and the TEC.

Figure 6: Stakeholder's satisfaction with TEC's performance in quality assurance



Source: Institutional head questionnaire data.

This study assessed the performance of the TEC on the function of quality assurance by asking HEIs to state their level of satisfaction on a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. From the figure above, 15 (62%) of the respondents are in favour of the statement “*stakeholders are satisfied with TEC’s performance in quality assurance.*” This is supported by one of the interviewees by stating that: “so far I am satisfied with the overall performance of TEC in ensuring quality considering that there was nothing when we started so I am very much satisfied” (TEC official, September 23 2011).

In summary, it can be argued that there are no tensions and conflicts between the roles and functions of the TEC and its stakeholders on the function of quality assurance. As demonstrated in literature, buffer bodies, agents and higher education councils are able to conduct one or more functions depending on the needs of a particular country. The concerns and issues raised around unequal treatment for public and private HEIs and the existence of parallel systems of accreditation are found to be due to the limitations on the TEC’s mandate according to the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 and that some institutions are according self-regulatory powers depending on the level of their internal quality-assurance systems. This, however, does not indicate the existence of tensions between the role and function of quality assurance and the TEC stakeholders.

4.4.2 Policy formulation

According to Section 5(2) of the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, the TEC is mandated to “formulate policy on tertiary education matters and advise government accordingly”. This mandate was partly fulfilled by the organisation when it released the first Tertiary Education Policy for Botswana titled *Towards a Knowledge Society* in 2008 (Tertiary Education Council, 2008b). In this policy, the TEC articulates the need for an integrated and cohesive approach to human resource planning in Botswana, hence the establishment of the Human Resource Development Council. The policy also talks about increased access for students, relevant education that supports the economic and social needs of the nation, and improved research capacity. Therefore, the TEC plays an important role as regards this function.

However, this role contradicts the norm in the country where policy formulation is the sole responsibility of the government. Cloete et al. (1996), as highlighted in the literature review chapter, argues that higher education policy belongs to the government as the government sets priorities for the higher education sector. The respondents’ views are also in agreement with this. One respondent from the TEC illustrates this point thus:

The formulation of policy is not the responsibility of the TEC. The issue of policy formulation is the responsibility of the state. But you know the challenge that we are facing in our organisation or even education sector. There should be a department within the Ministry of Education that deals with tertiary education matters. The department, on behalf of the state, should be responsible for the formulation of the tertiary education policy. All the education levels are represented within the Ministry of Education, i.e. primary education, secondary education and vocational education. But there is no department of tertiary education and at the end of the day we, as a buffer body - TEC, we are compelled to do the policy formulation. It shouldn’t be our responsibility. (Interview with TEC official, September 23, 2011)

The MoESD official interviewed for the study also agreed that:

The tertiary education policy is currently housed at the TEC, but that is a provisional arrangement - because then there was no structure within the Ministry of Education to take charge of the policy domain, because the TEC is supposed to be responsible for the implementation side. But then what happened, because of the gap that existed, the policy ended up being housed at the TEC. (Interview with MoESD, April 25, 2012)

Another respondent from the TEC concurred with the above claims by stating that:

... policy belongs to the state, to the ministry. But like I indicated to you, there is a problem within our Ministry of Education. You will find that at all the levels of education - pre-primary, primary, secondary - they have departments, and you will find that in the department that deals with higher education there is nothing. So issues of higher education, we take them directly to the [Permanent Secretary] and then to the minister, and even the Permanent Secretary you will find that it's not a priority. We really struggle. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

The apparent trend in literature is such that policy formulation function is the responsibility of the government and not of the TEC. This function temporarily resides with the TEC as there is no dedicated tertiary education department within the MoESD. As a result, the TEC finds itself in a position where it has to formulate policy and, at the same time, implement it. According to the TEC, the absence of a department of tertiary education in the education ministry is a major problem as they play both 'judge and jury' (Interview with TEC official, September 23, 2011) raising concerns about the objectivity of their recommendations. The following excerpts were captured from interviews with a MOESD official and a TEC official respectively:

... policy is a government property, and then the TEC is an agent to implement the government policy. As I say it was just a temporary arrangement that the policy be housed there. But the policy, like all other government policies, has to come and reside in the government and then the TEC will be responsible for facilitating the process of implementation. (Interview with MoESD official, April 25, 2012)

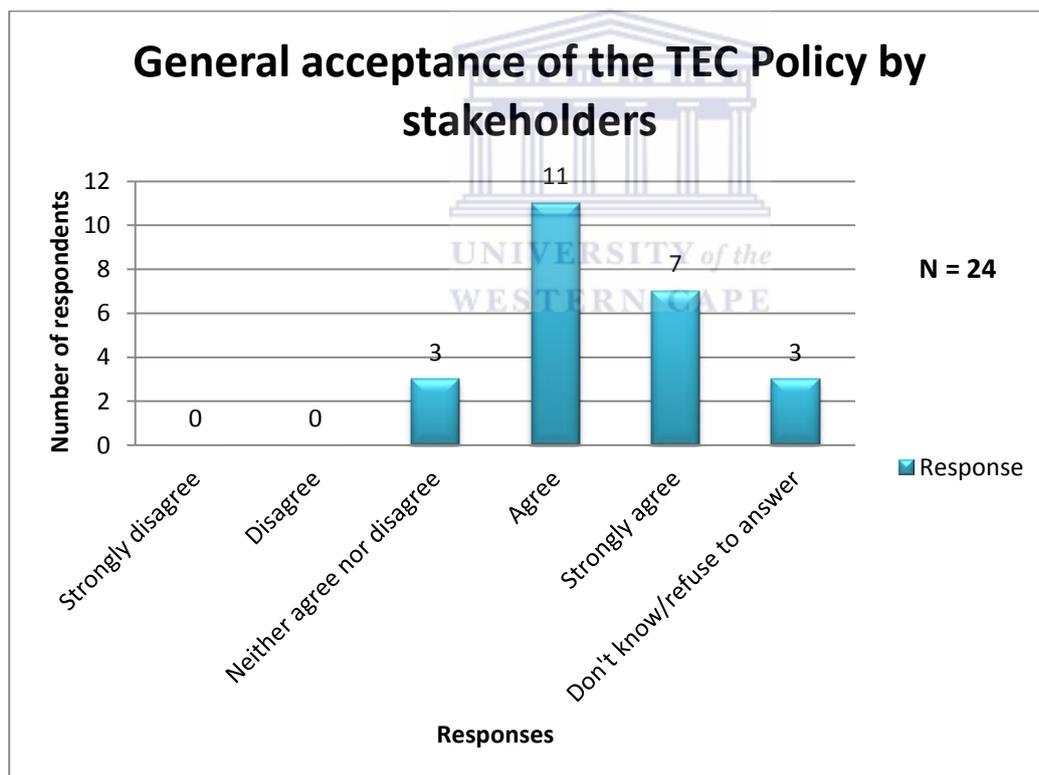
An interviewee from the TEC expressed the following views regarding the issue:

... the mandate is very broad, it ranges from quality assurance, regulation; it even speaks of policy formulation which is quite strange because you don't find a government agency being responsible for that. (Interview with TEC official, April 24-25, 2012)

However, one could argue that there is nothing inappropriate with the TEC implementing a policy that they have devised as it is common practice in other countries around the world. Despite the TEC's complaints that they cannot play "judge and jury", there have been no conflicts nor tensions reported as a result of this arrangement. The TEC feels their role in the policy function ought to be purely advisory. As already mentioned, buffer bodies, agents and higher education councils are able to play several roles and, as such, this should not be a problem for the TEC.

In addition to assessing conflicts and tensions with the function of quality assurance, the study also sought to assess the performance of the TEC as regard this function. A survey method was used and it was administered to the heads of institutions. In this survey questions were asked about the TEC’s policy formulation function. Although the respondents agree that it is not the responsibility of the TEC to formulate policy, they note that the organisation has done a good job as the policy has been widely accepted by higher education stakeholders. This is evidenced in the figure below where 18 (75%) of the respondents to the survey conducted for this study agree/strongly agree with the statement “*the TEP is generally accepted by all stakeholders.*” In addition, the results of the study show that there are no tensions or conflicts caused by the TEC performing this role. Therefore it can be concluded that the TEC has executed this function very well without generating any conflicts.

Figure 7: General acceptance of the Tertiary Education Policy by the stakeholders



Source: Institutional head questionnaire data.

It is clear from the interview responses that different stakeholders feel that the function is misplaced within the TEC. Although the TEC has been mandated with formulating policy for higher education in the country, there seems to be a general consensus that the function of policy formulation should not be divorced from the government (De Boer, 1992; Schmidlein & Berdhal, 1992; Bekhradnia, 2006; Fielden, 2008). Instead, buffer bodies should concern

themselves with higher education sector planning in which they assess the needs of the industry, set goals and also recommend priorities (Schmidtlein & Berdhal, 1992). In addition, Schmidtlein and Berdhal (1992) argue that buffer bodies should also be involved in policy analysis and problem resolution through conducting research on the long-term issues of the higher education industry.

Despite the TEC's role in policy formulation, in contradiction to what is being done in other countries, no tension or conflict is indicated between the roles and functions of the TEC and its stakeholders. In addition, the assessment of the TEC's performance on this function, based on the survey results, indicates that a significant number of respondents agree that the TEC has done a good job.

4.4.3 Coordination of planning and development of higher education in Botswana

The specific mandate of the TEC as regards the coordination of planning and development of higher education in Botswana is part of the already stated functions of the TEC. According to section 5 (2) of the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 TEC is mandated to “coordinate the long term planning and overall development of the tertiary education” (Republic of Botswana, 1999). In order to assess the tensions related to this function, secondary data sources, interviews and questionnaires were used.

As part of its coordination function, the TEC is expected to plan for the funding of tertiary education research including the recurrent and development needs of public tertiary institutions by receiving and reviewing budgets of public tertiary institutions (Tertiary Education Council, 2010a:2). Consequently, the TEC has developed a funding model to help guide the funding of higher education and submitted it to the Minister of Education and Skills Development. In this case, before HEIs are funded by the government, they are subjected to a rigorous process of budget assessment by the TEC. However, there are delays in finalising the model and so the government continues to fund higher education without the input of the TEC. Although the TEC has not fully assumed this function, it is expected that as the funding model is finalised, the TEC will administer or allocate budgetary funds directly to the institutions.

The coordination of higher education by the TEC has proven a challenge for the organisation and this is blamed on the fragmented nature of the higher education system. Commenting on the institutional level, Thobega (2010) notes that the different government institutions are placed under the training division of relevant ministries. For example, teacher training colleges fall under the Department of Teacher Training and Development administered by the Ministry

of Education and Skills Development, institutes of health sciences are administered by the Ministry of Health and the Botswana College of Agriculture falls under the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, the Botswana College of Agriculture, the institute of health sciences and teacher training colleges are also affiliated to UB. All these issues were raised as concerns within the Tertiary Education Policy of 2008. Although the notion of these institutions falling under relevant ministries was initially a good one, the arrangement is reported to constrain the TEC in its efforts to coordinate higher education in the country and to carry out some of its functions relating to quality assurance and coordination. This is evidenced by the following quote from one of the interviewees:

... the tertiary education landscape as it is now – we have several institutions falling under several or different line ministries, so that the College of Agriculture falls under the Ministry of Agriculture; the accountancy college under Ministry of Finance, the institutes of health training falling under the Ministry of Health. We have the wildlife training institute falling under the Ministry of Wildlife, Environment and Tourism. So we have that kind of fragmentation at the moment. Each of these individual or respective institutions submits their budgets directly to their line ministries. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

Another respondent from the TEC had this to say:

There is so much fragmentation within the sector, even at the system level. That is the reason why BOTA and the TEC are merging - the fragmentation at this level is so pronounced. Look at what is happening. BOTA was under the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs. TEC is under the Minister of Education. If you go to the institutional level it's worse. Botswana College of Agriculture is under the Minister of Agriculture, the Institute of Health is under the Minister of Health; others are under finance, under education - what kind of system is that? It's not coherent... You will find one institution with two registrations. It's really cumbersome. So there is so much duplication of roles and it defeats the whole effort of synergy. That is the reason why we do systems and institutional reconfiguration. So the system is the one of merging TEC and BOTA, and reconfiguring the whole education - we are pulling all of these institutions into the Ministry of Education and we have started that process. (Interview with TEC official, April 24, 2012)

As indicated in above quote, the HEIs fall under different ministries. It is argued that this makes it very difficult for the TEC to coordinate the tertiary education sector. One institution would have two accreditations, one from BOTA for certificate programmes and one from the TEC for

diploma and degree courses. In relation to fragmentation, the respondents claimed a duplication of roles by both the TEC and BOTA, which defeats the whole effort at creating synergy. The respondent went on to state that this duplication is the rationale for merging TEC and BOTA and pulling all HEIs into the MOESD.

Data emerging from both the interviews and document review and as acknowledged in Botswana's Tertiary Education Policy "*Towards a Knowledge Society*" (2008), is that Botswana's higher education system is characterised by fragmentation at governance level. This fragmentation is prevalent throughout and especially evident among public institutions that are established and operating under different ministries. This fragmentation manifests itself in the form of multiple and ambiguous accountabilities and a lack of coherence (NHRDS, 2009). Consequently, this makes it very difficult for the TEC to coordinate the higher education system and also affects their execution of other functions, in particular that of quality assurance, as discussed above. This problem is deeply rooted in the role that the state plays in higher education and relates to the way in which it manages HEIs in general and public institutions in particular. By virtue of being public institutions, colleges of education and institutes of health sciences remain the responsibilities of the various ministries. Therefore, it is claimed that the TEC finds it difficult to apply itself to these institutions due to existing arrangements such as those relating to the accreditation of programmes via UB and the ownership of public institutions.

At the system level, the relationship between the TEC and BOTA and their overlapping mandates is a recurring theme. Both bodies are both responsible for accrediting HEIs in Botswana. In order to solve the problem of overlapping mandates, the Tertiary Education Policy of 2008 recommended that the TEC and BOTA merge to form a new organisation, to be named the Human Resource Development Council (Government of Botswana, 2008). It is argued that for as long as Botswana's tertiary education continues to be fragmented the TEC will find it difficult to achieve its role of coordinating tertiary education. In terms of the different government institutions that fall under different ministries, it was agreed that colleges of education and institutes of health sciences would be pulled together through a rationalisation process. However, Thobega (2010) observes that eight years after this resolution was taken, the merger and establishment of the new body is yet to take effect.

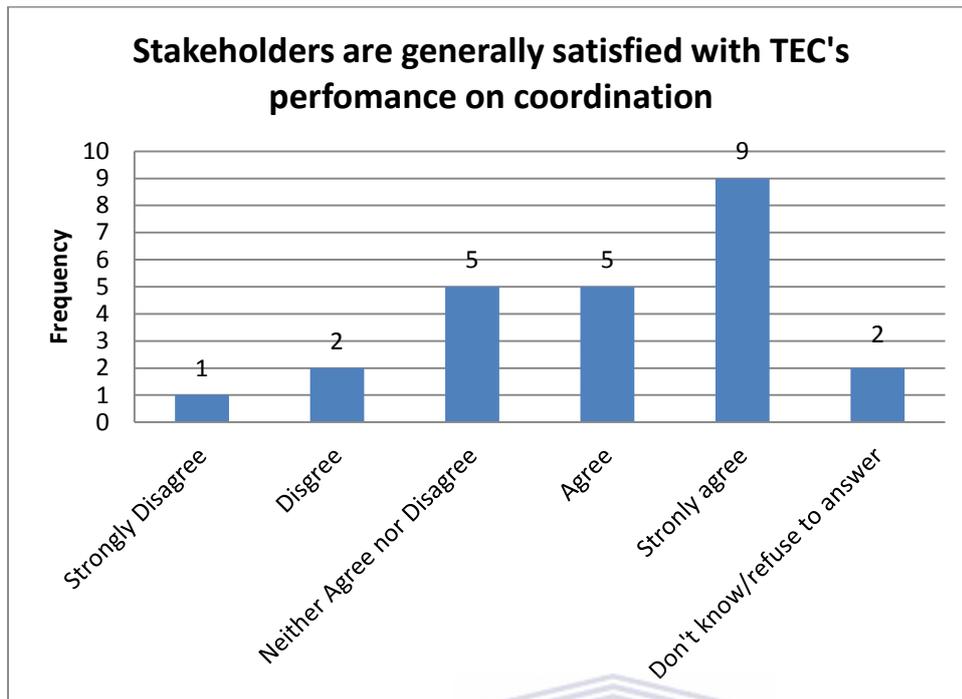
The Botswana higher education scenario makes for interesting debate around coordination of HEIs. The discussion above suggests that all institutions should be put under one administration

and the TEC be accorded the responsibility of overseeing them. However, a review of the literature indicates that Botswana's fragmented higher education system is not the only one. For example, the South African higher education sector has the same challenge (Cloete & Muller, 1998:13). Cloete and Muller (1998) further noted the existence of two camps: one opposing the aggregation of technikons and universities and the other one favouring aggregation. Those in opposition argued that the knowledge function of technikons did not match that of universities and since their orientation is purely vocational, they ought to remain as such. On the other hand, those who favoured aggregation argued that a unified but highly differentiated higher education system can respond well to the demands of the industrial labour force making it easier for institutions to respond to market demands. In 1996 through its report, the NCHE ultimately recommended that higher education continue to be offered by different institutions with some offering higher education programmes and some offering degree programmes. The commission also recommended that the South African higher education system be conceptualised, planned and governed as a single coordinated system in recognition of the diversity of HEIs.

Based on the South African experience, it can be concluded that the view that all HEIs should fall under the administration of the TEC is not the only ideal arrangement. In fact, in other countries, different types of HEIs are being accredited by different organisations. Therefore, in conclusion, Botswana's higher education system, although reported to be fragmented, is not different from other higher education systems. In fact, it is the default system used in other countries with differentiated higher education systems.

Lastly, the study sought the perceptions of the TEC as regards its performance on the function of coordination of planning and development of higher education in Botswana. The results of the survey are shown in the figure below. According to the survey results, 14 (58%) of the respondents agree/strongly agree that the TEC has performed very well on the function of coordination in the planning and development of higher education. However, 3 (13%) of the respondents disagree/strongly disagree that the TEC has done well on the function mentioned above. A further 38% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that the TEC has done well on the coordination of planning and development of higher education in the country. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the TEC has performed very well on this function as shown by lack of conflicts and tensions caused by this function and the perceptions of the respondents on its performance.

Figure 8: The performance of the TEC on the function of coordination



Source: Institutional head questionnaire data.

4.5 Autonomy

The TEC has been mandated with the role of coordinating higher education in the country and acting as an intermediary between HEIs and the government. In order to fulfil this role buffer bodies should ideally be free to perform their role without outside interference (Saint et al., 2009). Autonomy is the terminology used in the literature to describe a situation where buffer bodies are able to execute their functions without outside interference. As observed in the literature there are different kinds of autonomy: relational, financial and positional autonomy. Using these different kinds of autonomy, the TEC was assessed to determine the extent to which it is autonomous from the government.

In order to assess the autonomy of the TEC as a buffer body and a government agent, firstly interviews were carried out with the TEC and government officials to establish their level of understanding of the concept of autonomy and also gain an insight into the autonomy of the TEC from their perspective. Secondly, a question of how autonomous the TEC is perceived to be was posed to the respondents of a questionnaire, which was distributed to heads of HEIs. It has been observed that different stakeholders hold different views on what constitutes autonomy. These differing perspectives are key to understanding the autonomy of the TEC.

Lastly, documents were used to complement data obtained from the use of questionnaires and interviews.

Different conceptions of autonomy were revealed in the interviews with government and TEC officials. Common dimensions identified by interviewees included positional and financial autonomy. According to Maton (2005), in positional autonomy, positions of governance determine the autonomy of agencies where the board of an organisation dominated by government officials has limited autonomy and vice versa. In the case of the TEC, there is a governing council set up to help run the organisation. As indicated under the section on the governing structure of the TEC, the council comprises 14 non-executives and the executive secretary who are all appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills Development. Guided by the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, the council is responsible for setting the direction of the TEC. Of great significance about the composition of the TEC is the number of positions reserved for the government and the powers bestowed upon the Minister. As argued in the literature, this has a bearing on the way buffer bodies are able to execute their mandate. Maton (2005) posits that in a situation where organisations are dominated by outsiders in terms of governance positions, that organisation's autonomy is likely to be eroded. Likewise with TEC, where the majority of positions in the council are reserved for government officials indicating that TEC's autonomy is under serious threat. In terms of positional autonomy, most positions of governance in the organisation's board are held by stakeholders from the government. All members of the council are appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills Development. The Minister's powers are clearly outlined in the Tertiary Education Act of 1999. The Minister wields more power than any other member of the council. In particular, section 8.2 of the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 confers upon the Minister the power to remove members of the TEC Council for reasons outlined in the Act. In addition, according to the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, the chairperson of the council is appointed by the President, whereas other council members are appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills Development. According to a document prepared by the European Association of Quality Agencies (EAQA), buffer bodies should be independent such " ...that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders" (EAQA, 2005). As things stand with the TEC, the degree of power bestowed upon the Minister of Education and Skills Development makes the organisation vulnerable and results in relatively weak positional autonomy.

One other form of autonomy referred to during the interviews was financial autonomy. As the situation stands, the TEC is almost fully funded (about 95%) by the government and the remainder generated by the organisation through payment of fees and other sources of revenue (TEC official, April 25, 2012). One respondent argued that for as long as the organisation is funded by the government, it will not be independently run from the government. According to the ministry official:

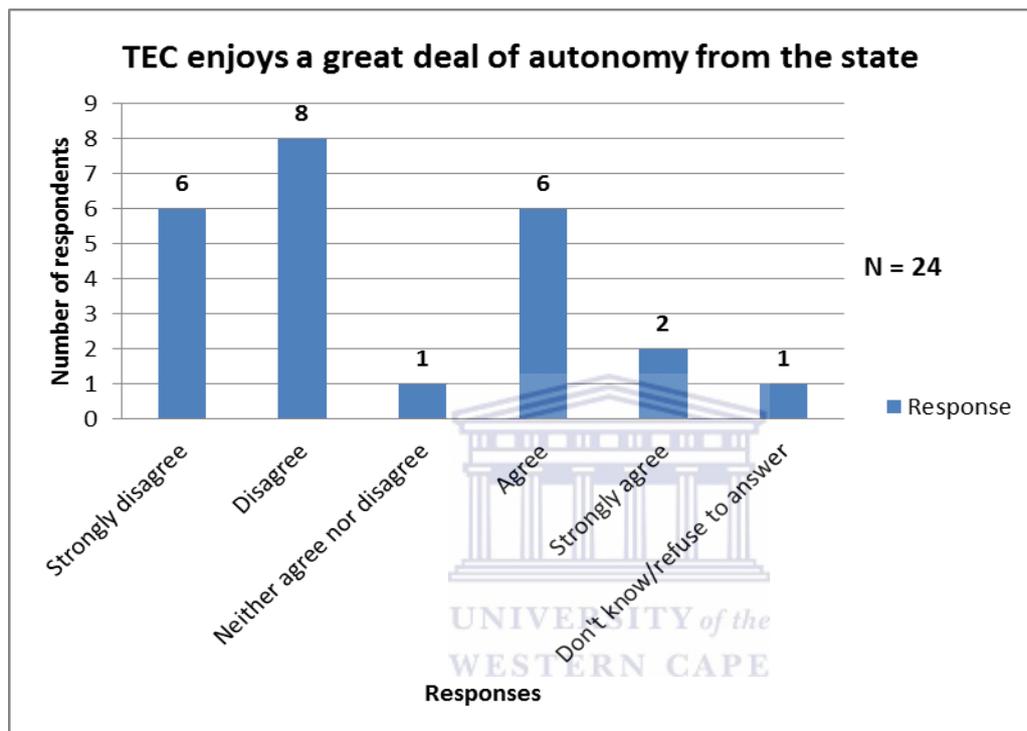
... TEC will always be close to the ministry and to the government because government provides funding, and in an economy like ours it would very difficult for TEC to claim any financial autonomy because where are they going to get money from? (Interview with MoESD official, April 25, 2012)

One interviewee stated that "...once you are financially dependent on the government, you can only be limited in what you can and what you cannot do" (Interview with TEC official, April 24-25, 2012). However, El-Khawas (1992) has noted that there are some exceptions in which, despite being funded by the government, some bodies were able to maintain their independence from government for a very long time. However, the interviewees concur that the TEC is suffering from a lack of financial autonomy. Consequently, the lack of financial autonomy for the TEC could also have implications on its functions. However, in this study the extent to which lack of financial autonomy could impact on the TEC's functions has not been investigated and is therefore not known. In comparison to other countries in Africa, available literature actually shows that higher education organisations in Africa, including buffer bodies, are normally funded by government (Banya & Elu, 2001; De Villiers & Steyn, 2006). Despite El-Khawas's claim that buffer bodies funded by the government are more likely to favour the government at the expense of HEIs affecting their autonomy (El-Khawas, 1992), there is no evidence in the literature linking lack of autonomy to funding. In addition to the use of interviews, a survey questionnaire was administered to the institutional heads in the 32 HEIs to assess stakeholder perceptions on the autonomy of the TEC. The respondents were asked to state their level of agreement on the statement: "*The TEC enjoys a great deal of autonomy from the state*". It generally emerged that the majority of the respondents did not agree that the TEC enjoyed "a great deal of autonomy."

The figure below shows that 14 (58%) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "*the TEC enjoys a great deal of autonomy from the state*". Conversely, only 8 (33%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the TEC enjoyed a great

deal of autonomy and consider it therefore an autonomous organisation. This was mainly blamed on the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 that gives the government more control on the operations of the TEC. An additional issue was raised regarding accountability procedures. Instead of accounting to the Minister, the respondents felt that the TEC should account directly to Parliament to avoid any political interference from the Minister of Education.

Figure 9: The respondents' views on the autonomy of the TEC



Source: Institutional head questionnaire data.

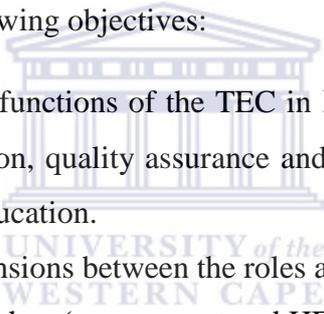
The need for highly autonomous buffer bodies is emphasised in a document prepared by ENQA whose recommendation was that buffer bodies should be accorded some independence from the government, HEIs and other stakeholders (ENQA, 2005). According to this document, buffer bodies should be independent to the extent that they have control over their operations. This is meant to empower them enabling impartial execution of their duties. In addition, at least in the context of the US, HEIS were found to be responsive to quality assurance control measures in contexts where highly autonomous bodies were in charge as compared to where the government was in charge (Ewell, 2008). Consequently, this emphasises the need for buffer bodies to be accorded greater autonomy to allow them to operate freely so that they can deliver on their mandate. This means that a situation where the TEC naturally leans towards the government with the interference of the government, the TEC's autonomy is likely to be affected.

Reports that the TEC's autonomy is under serious threat need to be placed in context. The Tertiary Education Act of 1999 clarifies some of the misconceptions around the TEC's autonomy. The Act never refers to the TEC as a buffer body and instead defines the TEC as a "council tasked with the responsibility of promotion and coordination of tertiary education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in tertiary institutions" (Government of Botswana, 1999:3-15). In effect, the Act describes the TEC as more of government agent than buffer body. It is not surprising therefore that the findings of the study indicate that the TEC enjoys limited autonomy from government.

4.6 Summary of the key findings

Before highlighting the key findings of the study, it is important to first reflect on the objectives of the study as stated in the introduction. The study set out to examine the roles and functions of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

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- a) To examine the roles and functions of the TEC in Botswana's higher education with regard to policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education.
 - b) To explore the potential tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and those of some of its key stakeholders (government and HEIs).
 - c) To establish the perceived performance of the TEC in relation to three functions of policy formulation, quality assurance and coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education.

First of all, the study attempted to establish whether the TEC was acting as a buffer or an agency in terms of three selected functions. In terms of the function of quality assurance it has found that the TEC acts both as government agent and buffer body regarding the accreditation and registration of institutions respectively. The registration process where TEC acts as a buffer involves five stages and starts with the initial screening of the application, followed by an evaluation of the application by assessors, verification by the inspection committee, processing of reports from the management by APDC and, finally, the approval or non-approval of the application by the TEC with the awarding of a certificate of approval. The accreditation process follows the registration process and only institutions with registration certificates are eligible to apply. This process starts with the preparation of self-study portfolios by HEIs and this is

followed by a peer-review exercise by academics and professionals, site visits, response from institutions, recommendation by the APDC to the council, which then makes a recommendation to the minister on whether to accredit an institution or not. An important distinction under the quality assurance function is that the TEC registers both public and private institutions, but when it comes to the accreditation function only private institutions are subjected to this exercise. This finding is consistent with observations made in the literature where buffer bodies could either be responsible for regulating either private institutions only, or public institutions only, or a combination of both (Nkunya, 2012). The second function that was assessed relates to the formulation of policy. In this respect, the TEC has been found to be performing a role associated with government agents. This is because most of the literature cited on the function of policy formulation associates this function with the government (De Boer, 1992; Schmidlein & Berdhal, 1992; Bekhradnia, 2006; Fielden, 2008). In fact, Fielden (2008) has listed this function as one that should be devolved from the government.

Secondly, the study sought to establish how different role players perceive the TEC in terms of the role that it plays. The findings of the study have revealed that the TEC is perceived to play both a buffer and a government agent role – albeit these perceptions differ in relation to different stakeholders and TEC functions.

Evidence gathered from the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, views of stakeholders and other sources indicates that the TEC is more government agent than buffer body. However, it has also been revealed that the TEC acts as a buffer body in some functions, such as the quality assurance function, while acting as an agent for others, such as the policy formulation function. Although the TEC officials may view the TEC as a buffer body, this is contradicted by the mandate given to the TEC by the Act, in which it is described as a government agent.

In order to address the third objective, literature focusing on Botswana's higher education system was reviewed. An attempt has been made to describe the higher education system in Botswana, the different role players and the influence they exert on the role of the TEC. It has emerged that Botswana's higher education governance is reportedly characterised by fragmentation and a duplication of roles, which limit the mandate of the TEC creating tensions between the TEC and other constituencies in Botswana's higher education system. Organisations such as BOTA and UB through CAD are reported to be performing the same role as the TEC with respect to certain programmes and institutions. Thus, BOTA is responsible for accrediting vocational training institutes and CAD of UB is responsible for quality

assurance of colleges of education, the institutes of health sciences and the Botswana College of Agriculture.

However, it has to be noted that the assertion that Botswana's higher education system is characterised by fragmentation is subject to debate. The literature on the background of Botswana's higher education assumes that the TEC is the only body that should be responsible for overseeing higher education and this does not acknowledge the fact that the higher education is differentiated. As observed in South Africa, the higher education system is made up of universities and technikons, an acknowledgement that there are different levels of higher education.

Likewise, the higher education system of Botswana should acknowledge that vocational education and university education are not the same and therefore cannot be treated in the same way. Furthermore, the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 clearly outlines out the TEC's focus of responsibility as that of HEIs excluding vocational training institutions. On the issue of CAD being responsible for quality assurance in colleges of education, it has to be noted that colleges of education offer UB programmes and as affiliates of UB, they are accredited by them. The findings also revealed a problem in having the function of policy formulation being temporarily housed at the TEC. It has since been recommended that this function be moved to its rightful place in the government, since matters of policy are better dealt with at government level.

The study also sought to establish whether tensions exist between the functions of TEC and its stakeholders. Although it has been reported that the TEC is torn between performing its role as a buffer body or a government agent and some institutions are being torn between adherence to the TEC and UB requirements, there has been no evidence of tensions between the TEC and UB. UB does not perform the same role as the TEC, instead ensuring that all the courses offered by its affiliates meet university standards.

Lastly, the study sought to establish how the TEC has fared in fulfilling the selected functions. The findings of the study have revealed that the stakeholders are satisfied with TEC's performance. The majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that TEC has performed well on the three selected functions. The respondents are satisfied with TEC's role on policy formulation in which it has crafted a tertiary education policy and other documents used to guide the development of higher education in the country.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the analysis of the interviews, documents and questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with eight key informants from the TEC as well as the MOESD; a survey was carried out with the heads of HEIs and policy documents and other related institutional documents were reviewed. The results of the analysis have revealed that the TEC acts as both a buffer body and government agent. Furthermore, the study has revealed that Botswana's higher education system is characterised by a duplication of roles, limited mandated of the TEC and functional tensions between the TEC and other related constituents. The next chapter provides a more detailed discussion of the findings and a conclusion for the study.



CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in higher education governance in Botswana along with the potential tensions that may exist between the TEC, the government and HEIs and its related stakeholders in higher education. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study explored the three research questions presented below:

- (1) How do different stakeholders conceptualise the role of the TEC in higher education in Botswana?
- (2) What are the potential tensions that exist between the government, the TEC and HEIs in terms of the roles and functions of the TEC?
- (3) What is the perceived impact of the tensions on the performance of the TEC in relation to the three selected functions?

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the study adopted the use of a conceptual framework developed based on the literature on higher education governance and key concepts to help understand how different stakeholders conceptualise the key issues that are related to the study. By so doing, literature was reviewed to help identify the relevant concepts, including state steering, state control, autonomy, accountability and buffer bodies. These concepts were then used to help gain insight into the roles and functions of the TEC as well as investigate the tensions between the TEC's functions and between its stakeholders.

As a means of gaining data to answer the research questions, a survey was conducted among institutional heads to help understand their perceptions of the roles and functions of the TEC and interviews were carried out with the TEC and MoESD officials. In addition, data from all of the above was complemented with interview material obtained from the HERANA project, as well as documents related to the TEC.

This concluding chapter, therefore, provides a discussion of the findings of the study and places them within the relevant literature to help highlight the study's contribution to the field of higher education. This will be followed by sections on the implications and recommendations of the study, its limitations, and the overall conclusion of the study.

5.2 Discussion

This section of the study offers a discussion of the key findings of the study. They are discussed in relation to the literature to help highlight the study's contribution to knowledge within the field of higher education governance.

5.2.1 Botswana's higher education system and quality assurance

Higher education in Botswana is characterised by fragmentation. This fragmentation has been one of the major concerns highlighted in the Tertiary Education Policy (Tertiary Education Council, 2006) document. The fragmentation resulted from the placement of public institutions, such as institutes of health sciences, Botswana College of Agriculture and colleges of education, in different ministries. These different ministries placed certain expectations on the institutions and expectations differ according to each ministry and only private institutions are subjected to this exercise. Rather, a special dispensation exists for public institutions that involve UB's CAD. It has been argued that the current arrangement makes it difficult for the TEC to execute its mandate as there are complaints that institutions are not being treated equally.

However, it has to be noted that despite the concerns raised about Botswana's higher education system being fragmented, the system is similar to other countries, in particular South Africa, which allows for different kinds of HEIs to co-exist (Cloete & Muller, 1998). The TEC was established at a time when there was an already-existing, well-established quality assurance system in place for all public HEIs affiliated to UB and these affiliations remain in place to date. It is reported that there are two parallel quality-assurance systems operating in Botswana's higher education system. On the one hand, the TEC registers and exercises quality assurance among private HEIs and, on the other hand, some public institutions are still affiliated to the UB through the CAD. The CAD is internationally recognised quality-assurance centre that ensures the overall development of academic staff and students in UB as well as offering support and advice to its affiliated and associated institutions. When contrasted with the TEC, CAD is relatively more advanced and well established (Thobega, 2010). However, it is important to highlight the fact that CAD is an internal quality-assurance unit within UB and not a parallel quality-assurance system in competition with the TEC. Although the centre is still responsible for accrediting colleges of higher education and institutes for health sciences as these institutions offer university programmes. Consequently, the TEC performs external quality-assurance roles whereas UB is responsible for its internal quality-assurance programmes.

5.2.2 Conceptualisation of the TEC as a buffer body versus agent

Against the background of a fragmented higher education system in Botswana, it is understandable that the study has found that different stakeholders hold different conceptions of the TEC as a buffer body and agent. To the government, the TEC is an agent of the government that provides a useful ‘bridge’ between the government, the private higher education sector and the public sector. Conversely, the TEC views itself as a more neutral ‘process office’ between the government, HEIs and the private sector. Although buffer bodies serve different functions including policy advice, funding, quality assurance and many others, there is a consensus on how they are defined. As noted by Saint et al. (2009), these bodies literally buffer the government from the periodic conflicts that may arise between HEIs and the government. Similarly, they also serve to shield tertiary institutions from intervention by the government.

The findings of the study have revealed that the TEC views itself as a buffer body whereas the government sees it as a government agent. However, the Tertiary Education Act of 1999, a legal document which clearly outlines the constitution of the TEC describes the TEC as a government agent. Although the TEC aspires to becoming a buffer body, its constitution clearly outlines its mandate as government ‘agent’. Literature on the agencification (Eisenhardt, 1985; Eisenhardt, 1989; Gornitzka et al., 2004) reveals that the arrangement between the TEC and the Government of Botswana is a common one found in many countries. Worldwide, governments have resorted to steering higher education through organisations like the TEC, which are known as government agents even though they perform the functions of buffer bodies. Therefore it is not surprising that there seems to be confusion over whether the TEC is a buffer body or a government agent.

5.2.3 Autonomy and accountability of the TEC

The autonomy of buffer bodies is an important aspect in the governance of higher education. This study therefore sought to investigate the TEC’s autonomy from government in Botswana’s higher education governance. As observed in relevant literature, autonomy is a very difficult concept to measure. This is also indicated in this study the researcher struggled to conceptualise and find empirical indicators. Generally the indicators showed that the TEC is perceived to be suffering from a lack of autonomy from the government. In fact, with respect to its policy advice and formulation function, this study has shown that the TEC has been operating more like a government department than a buffer.

As shown in Chapter 2, for most parts of Africa, the concept of higher education councils is still new (Saint et al., 2009) and these councils have had to face very dominant governments not willing to give away some of their powers. Consequently, bodies find it very difficult to work in such environments therefore this weakens the organisations' autonomy.

Autonomy, as it relates to buffer bodies, is defined as the ability of buffer bodies to function without outside interference (Saint et al., 2009). In the literature, different notions of autonomy have been discovered. These include positional, relational and financial autonomy. However in this study not all different notions of autonomy apply. The most common notion in this study is positional autonomy. According to Maton (2005), positional autonomy defines the nature of relations between specific positions in the social dimension of a context of field and positions in other contexts such that buffer bodies whose positions of governance are dominated by outsiders are said to be suffering from a weak positional autonomy and vice versa.

In terms of positional autonomy, the study has revealed that TEC has relatively weak autonomy. This is evidenced by a governance structure dominated by outsiders, in particular government representatives. Moreover, more powers are concentrated with the Minister of Education and Skills Development who has the power the power to appoint and dismiss members of the governing council.

Accountability is another important factor that has been used in this study to assess the role of TEC as a buffer body and an agent. Accountability is considered as "requirement to demonstrate responsible actions to one or more external constituencies" (van Vught, 1994:355). This is meant "to constrain the corruptions of power, including fraud, manipulation, malfeasance and the like" (Trow, 1996:310). This normally takes place in the form of stakeholder representation in decision-making bodies, external evaluation by quality assurance bodies and regulation by buffer bodies.

Surveyed literature shows that there are different ways in which higher education councils are held accountable and this depends largely on who formed the buffer body, as well as the source of funding (TFHES, 2000). Buffer bodies formed and funded by the government are normally accountable to the Minister of Education while buffer bodies formed by representatives from HEIs, private sector and the community account to such representatives. HEIs are likely to feel more aggrieved with the former arrangement creating tensions between the different stakeholders involved in higher education.

This study has revealed that the TEC is a statutory body formed by the government and, as such, accounts to the government, in particular to the Minister of Education and Skills Development. The Minister then accounts to Parliament. In addition, Parliament has set up a parliament statutory committee responsible for auditing the TEC. The way in which the TEC accounts leans more towards the government as opposed to the government, HEIs and the community at large. This kind of accounting has the potential to create tensions between the TEC and the other stakeholders.

5.2.4 Tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and between its stakeholders

This study has revealed a number of findings on the internal tensions between the different functions of the TEC. Firstly, the higher education system in Botswana is a fragmented one in which different institutions belong to different ministries. This reportedly makes it very difficult for the TEC to coordinate HEIs as some institutions are regulated by other bodies, such as BOTA. In addition, when it comes to quality assurance, the TEC is only responsible for regulating private institutions. Public institutions such as colleges of education, institutes of health sciences are affiliated to UB through CAD. As a result, it is reported that there are two systems of quality assurance operating in the country, one for the TEC and one for UB. This arrangement reportedly has constrained the TEC in its effort to regulate HEIs in the country. As regards policy formulation, it has been found out that the TEC plays the role of advising the government on policy formulation while also being responsible for policy formulation itself. This does not sit well with stakeholders who feel that the role of policy formulation is the responsibility of the government and the TEC should only be responsible for advising the government on such. Although there are problems related with the structure of the higher education system, the study has not found any tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and its stakeholders. The findings of the study seem to suggest that the TEC should be treated as a supreme body responsible for HEIs. However, as in other countries, Botswana's education system is differentiated with different kinds of HEIs (i.e. universities, colleges of education, institutes of health sciences and vocational training centres). Therefore, it is normal to have bodies like BOTA holding responsibility for vocational training centres. Mention was also made of the existence of parallel quality assurance in the form of the CAD and the TEC. It is noteworthy to mention that the CAD is not an external quality-assurance body, but rather an internal quality-assurance system for UB programmes and its affiliated institutions.

In addition to establishing the internal tensions between the different functions of the TEC, the study sought to discover the perceived effect of the tensions on the performance of the TEC.

In order to achieve this, the study sought the opinion of different stakeholders and also relied on secondary data sources. Although Botswana's tertiary education system is reported to be fragmented, what is being referred to as a fragmented higher education system is actually a differentiated higher education system that acknowledges the variance in the types of HEIs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the problems reported could be tension related. The tensions that have been identified could have had an impact on the performance of the TEC. In addition most of the problems reported above stem from the fact there is confusion over the nature of the TEC. However the Tertiary Education Act of 1999 clearly describes the TEC as a government agent and it therefore should not be confused with a buffer body.

5.3 Limitations and recommendations of the study

In this section, limitations, implications and recommendations of the study are presented. The findings of the study as presented above have certain implications in the way in which the TEC operates and the governance structure of the higher education system. The implications and recommendations presented herein are possibilities and options as guided by the findings of the study and therefore are subject to amendment.

5.3.1 Limitations of the study

First of all it is worth mentioning that the study investigated only certain functions of the TEC and left out others, primarily due to time and financial constraints. The functions that were selected were the policy formulation and advisory role, coordination in the planning and development of tertiary education, as well as quality assurance. There are functions that have not been included in the study, such as funding. The functions chosen for the study are the ones considered key to the existence of the TEC and therefore important to include in this study, at the expense of those excluded.

Methodologically, this study has been limited due to a number of factors. Key among the limitations of the study is the choice of the methods used in the study. Methods that were chosen such as survey questionnaires, key informant interviews and document review have their own limitations, which were mentioned in the methodology section. However, in this study, these methods were not used in isolation; rather, triangulation has been employed to help overcome the limitations of these methods.

A third limitation is about the survey. While all efforts were made to ensure input from the key actors, there were instances where responses from some key actors like UB were not received.

This is considered a limitation in that the UB is considered as a key actor in the higher education sector in Botswana, therefore their response would have provided a better understanding of the role of the TEC in higher education, especially on the quality assurance function. In addition, due to the complexity of the topic under study, the researcher found it difficult to conceptualise and find empirical indicators for the study. Hence, further research is needed to further develop the conceptual framework as well as develop empirical indicators for the study.

Furthermore, it is important to state that the researcher is a former employee of the TEC. Although efforts were made to ensure objectivity, it is possible that subjective interpretations could have been made. The researcher prepared a proposal that was accepted by the University, received ethics clearance for the research methods, and followed standard research guidelines under the supervision of two supervisors. The findings obtained from the study were discussed in relation to the reviewed literature to help minimise subjectivity and also give credibility to the findings.

The fact that the researcher is a former employee of the TEC also benefitted the study in many ways, as it was easy for the researcher to gain access to the respondents. This is because the researcher knew who was in charge of the different organs of the TEC from the Executive Secretary to the directors of different directorates ranging from Quality Assurance and Regulation, Policy and Planning to Institutional Funding. Having access to the different personnel in charge of the TEC helped accelerate the process of data collection and also helped the researcher obtain information that would have been very difficult for an outsider to have access.

5.3.2 Recommendations

The analysis and discussion of data has brought about the following recommendations;

1. There is a need to further analyse the autonomy of the TEC from the government. This is borne from the fact that this study was very limited on the subject of autonomy owing to its scope, which was mainly concerned with whether the TEC was a buffer body or an agency and the tensions between the TEC and its stakeholders and between its roles and functions. Therefore the subject of autonomy was not dealt with in any depth. Given the wide-spread 'agencification' of higher education governance in Africa and beyond, gaining a better understanding of the precarious position (El-Khawas, 1992) of bodies such as quality-assurance agencies, policy advisory bodies, funding agencies, and so on in higher education is important. In this respect, this study has made an initial contribution to the

limited knowledge about higher education governance at system level in Botswana with a special focus on the TEC.

2. Recommendations for further research are suggested. More detailed research on the specific experiences of buffer agencies in developing nations will provide information on the uniqueness of buffer bodies in higher education.

5.4 Conclusion

The first chapter introduced the study by providing background information, statement of the problem, research aim, objectives, questions, scope, rationale, significance and the organisation of the study. The second chapter reviewed available literature on the governance of higher education by identifying the pertinent issues in the area to help inform the study. The topics discussed in this chapter included governance of higher education, governance models and the role players in higher education. The chapter thus presents a conceptual framework for the study. Chapter three discussed the methodology adopted for the study as well the justification for adopting such a methodology. The methods used in the study include a survey, interviews, document analysis and analysis of data and additional interview material obtained from the HERANA project. The fourth chapter provided an integrated presentation and analysis of the data. It starts by providing background information on Botswana's higher education, the various stakeholders involved, and it signals how this contributes to the tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and between the TEC and its stakeholders. The chapter also provided an analysis of the tensions between the roles and functions of the TEC and between the TEC and its stakeholders. The last chapter has focused on profiling key findings of the study by discussing them alongside findings from existing literature. In addition, the chapter has proposed recommendations for future research, as well as outlining the limitations of the study.

The study was based on the premise that the transformation of higher education in Botswana has seen the introduction of a buffer body, the TEC, tasked with the regulation of higher education in the country. However, the TEC has not found it easy to carry out its roles and functions. Background information shows that the establishment of the TEC took a long time to implement following recommendations for its establishment in 1993. The purpose of this study was to examine the roles, functions and perceived performance of the TEC in higher education. More specifically, the study assessed the potential tensions that exist between the TEC and its role players and how these tensions, if any, impact on the performance of the TEC.

In order to address the research problem, there were a number of questions posed by the study. The first question was “*How do different role players conceive of the role of the TEC in higher education?*” With respect to this question the study utilised literature on the conceptualisation of buffer bodies to establish their meaning, how they operate and what their typical mandate is. It was found that buffer bodies are ideally autonomous, independent organisations that mediate tension between the government, HEIs and other stakeholders. Their mandate includes, but is not limited to quality assurance, funding and coordination in the sector. For this study, the TEC officials and government officials were asked to state their own understanding of the TEC as a buffer body. The results revealed different conceptions about buffer bodies by the government and the TEC officials. In addition a survey questionnaire was also distributed to heads of institutions to help assess the TEC’s perceived autonomy which showed that 58% of the respondents disagreed that the TEC enjoys autonomy.

The second question asked by this study was “*What are the potential tensions that exist between the different role players in terms of the roles and functions of TEC?*” In order to answer this question available literature was reviewed and interviews were carried out with the TEC officials and government officials. In relation to this question the study has revealed tensions relating to the existence of other bodies having similar mandates like the TEC, such as UB (through CAD) in the function of quality assurance. There is also a tension involving the TEC and the government. This tension relates to the government channelling its own priorities through public institutions. The TEC is therefore constrained in its effort to regulate higher education as public institutions are not treated the same way as private institutions, in that they are exempted from some activities. These tensions can be better understood in terms of the differentiation inherent in higher education in Botswana resulting in a fragmentation of higher education governance that affects the TEC’s ability to perform its functions evenly across the sector.

Last, but not least, the study wanted to find out the perceived performance of the TEC on the selected functions. In order to address this question the study relied on the use of questionnaires, interviews and documents. The study found that generally the perception is that the TEC has done fairly well in terms of delivering on its mandate amid the unfavourable environment in which the organisation is operating. Some of the key deliverables by the TEC include the formulation of the Tertiary Education Policy, development of regulations for programme accreditation and continuation of the registration of both public and private HEIs. In all these respects the survey conducted with institutional heads has shown that the TEC has

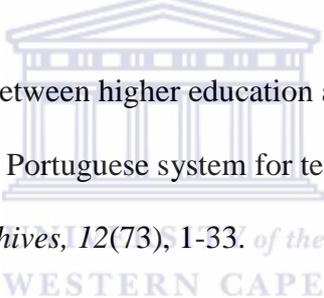
done well in fulfilling its mandate and there have been no conflicts or tensions between its roles and functions and its stakeholders. In conclusion, the question arose in the course of the study as to whether the TEC was acting more as a buffer body or as an agency in the way it discharged the three selected functions. Documents and key informants interviews provided the material to consider this question. The results revealed that the TEC is acting as a buffer body in some functions, more especially the quality assurance function, and as an agent of government in other functions, most evidently so with respect to policy formulation. Furthermore, the TEC's role is clearly a different one in relation to private HEIS than public institutions over which it does not have as much authority. The study has therefore shown the effect of the differentiation inherent in the higher education landscape and the concomitant fragmentation of higher education governance in Botswana on the TEC's role and the tensions that arise in relation to different role players and functions of the TEC. The study has therefore contributed to the understanding of higher education governance in Botswana and helped clarify some of the dynamics associated with buffer bodies in the governance of higher education.



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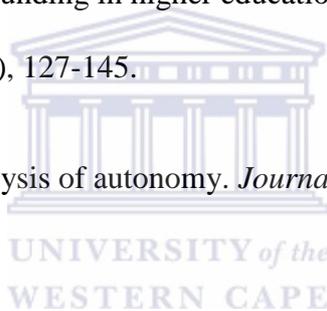
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Appendix A: Introduction letter

Keitumetse Gofaone Lebotse

P O Box 40283

Gaborone

15th July 2011

Dear Sir/ Madam

As a University of the Western Cape (South Africa) student, I am currently conducting a study on the roles and functions of the Tertiary Education Council in higher education in Botswana. In essence, the study seeks to investigate the tensions that exist between the TEC and the role players in higher education as well as tensions between the different functions of the TEC. The study forms the thesis component for the degree of Magister Educationis (HEMA). All the instruments pertaining to this study have been checked and approved in an ethical review process conducted by the University of the Western Cape, Senate Research Ethics Committee.

Therefore, I will appreciate your completion of the enclosed questionnaire by 20th August 2011. You do not need to put your name on the questionnaire. I do realize that your schedule is busy and your time is valuable. I hope that the 20 minutes it will take you to complete the questionnaire will provide useful information for the success of this study.

Thanking you in advance for your participation.

If you have questions about the study, you can contact any of the persons below;

Ms. Keitumetse Lebotse (researcher) Tel: (+267) 72758545 or Email: mkhethob@yahoo.com

Dr Gerald Ouma (supervisor) Tel: +27 219599360 or Email: gouma@uwc.ac.za

Dr Thierry Luescher-Mamashela (supervisor) Tel: +27 833505959 or Email: tluescher@uwc.ac.za

Yours faithfully,

Keitumetse G. Lebotse (Ms)

Appendix B: Interview guide for policy and planning directorate

1. How long have you been Acting Director?
2. When was the function introduced in the TEC? How does it work?
3. The TE Act gives the TEC the power to formulate policy. What role does the Ministry of Education and Skills Development play in policy-making in higher education?
4. Once the TEC has formulated policy, according to the Act, it is then supposed to “advise Government accordingly.” What does this mean?
 - How does it work?
 - What weight does the ‘advice’ carry?
5. Does the Ministry have to accept the policy advice given by the TEC? What is the legal status of the advice? If not, how and to whom does the Minister account for not accepting the advice?
6. Does the TEC have a dispute mechanism or a mechanism for challenging the Minister’s decision?
7. Are there any tensions between the TEC and the Ministry around its functions?
8. At the seminar last year (2011), you said that the Ministry is meant to make policy and the TEC to implement but that the TEC is both a player and referee. Please explain.
9. Who (between the Minister and the TEC) has the power to initiate the policy-making agenda?
10. What role does the public play in policy formulation and at what stages? Is the TEC reactive or proactive in giving policy advice?
11. Does the policy advice/policy formulation have to be based on research (reviews or commissioned)?
12. Does the ministry interfere with the TEC’s operations in any way?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C: Interview guide for the executive secretary's office

1. The TEC was proposed in the 1993 National Commission on Education report. Can you give us a bit of background about the discussions and debates around that time?
2. The Tertiary Education Act outlines three main functions of the TEC:
 - Policy-making
 - Planning and institutional oversight and coordination
 - Quality Assurance
3. The NCE report proposed a wide range of functions for the TEC. Were all of these part of its establishment? If not, why not?
 - What changes in functions have there been over the years?
4. The TEC appears to have a strong and important role in the governance of higher education in Botswana, e.g. it is expected to formulate policy and also accredit institutions etc. How has this role changed over time since its establishment?
5. What is the TEC's relationship with the Ministry like? Are there tensions around powers and accountability?
6. What comments can you make about the level of expertise in the TEC versus that in the Ministry of Education and Skills Development?
7. Funding:
 - How is the TEC funded? (Government. fees charged etc.)
 - Does the organization have sufficient funding to carry out its mandate?
 - What impact do the funding arrangements have on the organization's autonomy?

8. Structure and composition

Council or board:

- The TE Act provides for 14 members of council. Is this the number in practice?
- What are their tasks/responsibilities?
- What decision-making powers do the council members have?
- What is the composition of the council? Stakeholder representation rather than expert body?

- How are they appointed? By whom and based on what criteria?
- Are vacancies advertised?
- Is there a public nomination or application process?
- Are candidates interviewed?
- For what term? What has the practice been about the term of membership?
- Can members be removed? Has any member been removed or forced to resign?
- If a person was appointed while in position as vice chancellor or permanent secretary, do they remain if this position changes?

- What factors are taken into account when reappointing?
- Have members normally been reappointed?

9. Executive Secretary:

- What are the Executive Secretary's responsibilities?
- How is s/he appointed? By whom?
- Who can hire and fire?
- What are the appointment criteria?
- What kind of professional background should s/he have?
- To whom does the Executive Secretary account/report?
- Appointment for what period?

10. Staffing:

- What is the staff composition?
- What are their qualifications?
- Does the council have autonomy to appoint staff?
- Who can hire and fire?
- Has the staff complement grown or changed over the years?
- What is the staff turnover like?
- What is the level of expertise among staff/council members in comparison to the parent ministry?
- Does the TEC have sufficient capacity to carry out its functions?

11. Autonomy and accountability:

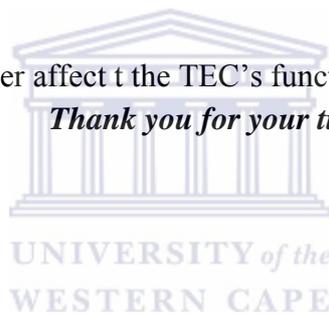
- Was the organization established as a semi- or fully autonomous body?
- What kind of autonomy (legal, and/or political)?
- Autonomous from which actors (politicians, other external stakeholders)?
- The Tertiary Education Act confers complete autonomy on the TEC regarding the exercise of its functions.
- Where does the TEC's real autonomy lie? Where is its autonomy contested?
- Does the TEC submit annual reports to the Minister and Parliament?
- What happens to this report?
- Who holds the TEC accountable for (1) finances (2) carrying out its mandate?
- The TE Act says that the TEC is accountable to the Minister for a range of functions. How does this work in practice?
- What powers does the Minister have over the TEC's decisions/operations?

- Have there ever been legal challenges to the decisions of the TEC and the Minister?
- To whom is the organization accountable for its substantive work and the public funds? (the minister, parliament, higher education institutions?)
- What form does such accountability take?
- To what extent is the TEC's independence/autonomy key to fulfilling its functions and role in the governance system?
- Who judges/evaluates the performance of the TEC?
- If the TEC makes an accreditation judgment (e.g. accepting or rejecting the application for a new university or programme), who judges that judgment?

12. The merger

Botswana Training Authority (vocational), the TEC (HE), unit in Ministry of Finance (manpower planning)"

- Status update?
- How will the merger affect t the TEC's functions/role in governance?



Appendix D: Interview guide for directorate of quality assurance and regulation

1. How long have you been Director of Quality Assurance?
2. How is quality defined?
3. The TE Act outlines the following quality assurance functions for the TEC:
4. Accredite and approve establishment of private education institutions and to review /approve programmes of study in private institutions. Is this accurate? Does the Minister oversee accreditation of public TEIs?
5. TEC must ensure that the quality assurance procedures are in place in all TEIs and to ensure audit of facilities and assessment of the adequacy in TEIs?
6. Is there a specific structure/committee that oversees the quality assurance function?
7. How are members appointed? What criteria are used?
8. How autonomous is this from the Minister?
9. To whom does it account?
10. What kinds of decisions does it make?
11. Can aggrieved persons appeal against its decisions? Or can its decisions be reversed? By whom and on what grounds?
12. Is the Minister or Ministry involved at any stage in the monitoring process?
13. Can you give examples from practice on the questions above?
14. This leads to a question about autonomy: e.g. in the monitoring reports of the CHE there is no evaluation of the quality assurance function. So who judges the quality assurance function then?
15. Are the quality assurance and policy-making/policy advice roles linked in any way? Is there a tension between these two functions?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix E: Interview guide for Ministry of Education and Skills Development

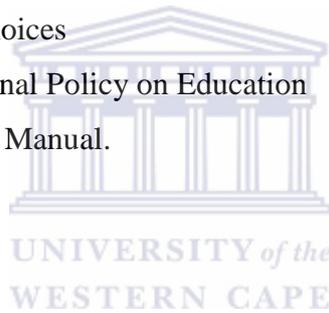
1. The TEC was proposed in the 1993 National Commission on Education report. Can you give us a bit of background about the discussions and debates around that time?
2. The NCE report proposed a wide range of functions for the TEC. Were all of these part of its establishment? If not, why not?
3. What changes in functions have there been over the years?
4. The 1993 NCE report proposed that the TEC would be a buffer of some kind between the TEIs and government. Has this been the case?
5. What is the perception of where the TEC is located-closer to the government or TEIs? Does this vary according to function?
6. The TE Act gives the TEC the power to formulate policy. What role does the MoESD play in policy-making in higher education?
7. Who (between the Minister and the Tec) has the power to initiate the policy-making agenda?
8. Can the Minister or government reject a policy formulated by the TEC?
9. What role does the public play in policy formulation and at what stage?
10. What is the TEC's relationship with the ministry like? Are there tensions around powers and accountability?
11. Why is higher education not represented in the Ministry of Education and Skills Development?
12. What do you regard as the TEC's most important functions?
13. Are there any functions which you don't think it should be undertaking?
14. Which does it do well and which does it not do well at?
15. Is there a conflict of interest between the TEC's role of accrediting institutions and programmes on the other hand, and assessing quality at the same time?
16. Is the TEC adequately staffed/resources to carry out its functions?
17. Is there any overlap in the functions between the TEC and the MoESD?
18. If the TEC wasn't there, which body/ies would be carrying out those functions?
19. What is the relationship the MoESD and the TEC's Council and staff?
20. Is the TEC sufficiently/ appropriately accountable?
21. What do you think have been the major changes over the years in terms of the TEC's functions?
22. What changes do you see on the horizon?
23. Given that the TEC is publicly-funded, is it regarded / is there a perception that it is serving the interests of government, and at the expense of the private institutions?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix F: Guide for document review

List of documents consulted for the case study:

1. Governance of Higher Education
 2. Higher Education Planning, Coordination and Development
 3. Quality Assurance in Higher Education
-
- Tertiary Education Policy of 2008
 - Tertiary Education Act of 1999
 - Previous Consultancy Reports
 - Report on National Human Resource Development Strategy
 - Tertiary Education Annual Reports
 - Challenges and Choices
 - The Revised National Policy on Education
 - Quality Assurance Manual.



Appendix G: Informed consent to participate in the study

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role and functions of the TEC in higher education in Botswana along with the tensions that may arise between the TEC and related role players in higher education and between different functions of the TEC. As a higher education expert, your perspectives will be extremely helpful in understanding the research.

Study procedures

Should you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one tape recorded interview at your place of work with the possibility of one follow-up telephone interview. Face-to-face interviews are expected to last one hour and telephone interviews will last approximately half an hour. Both interviews will take place during normal hours at a time convenient to you.

Alternative

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this study.

Risks

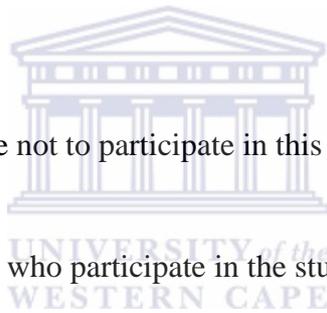
There are no known risks to those who participate in the study.

Confidentiality

All your study records will be highly confidential. However, the participants should note that their words may be quoted in the final report but that their names will not be used in conjunction with the quote. Participants are warned that people might guess who they are from their positions. All interview transcripts will only be accessible to the researcher. None of the data will be shown to any other person besides the researcher. However, it is important to note that my supervisors have the right to access these records, but must keep them completely confidential. The researcher will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

If you are willing to take part, please sign below.

I give my consent to take part in this study. By signing this form I am agreeing to take part in the study.



Signature of the person taking part in this study

Date

Questions/concerns/complaints

For any information concerning this study, please contact any of the persons below:

Ms K. G. Lebotse (researcher) at mkhethob@yahoo.com

Dr Gerald Ouma (supervisor) at gouma@uwc.ac.za

Dr Thierry Luescher-Mamashela at tluescher@uwc.ac.za



Appendix H: Interview guide - policy and planning

1. How long have you been working here?
2. Could you describe your job position in your organization?
3. Briefly describe the mandate and functions of Tertiary Education Council related to the Tertiary Education Policy?
4. As a member of Policy and Planning directorate, do you think the Tertiary Education Council has done enough in terms of policy formulation? Please explain.
5. Do you think the policy is generally accepted and supported by all stakeholders? Explain.
6. To what extent is the Tertiary Education Policy relevant to the country's current PESTLE environment?
7. What aspects of the TEP do you think need to be addressed in order to improve the tertiary education sector? Explain.
8. How effective is the Tertiary Education Policy in dealing with tertiary education challenges?
9. a) What is the government's level of involvement in policy formulation?
b) How does this affect TEC's ability to formulate policy?
10. Being the Policy formulator, do you think the TEC should go ahead in implementing and monitoring the Policy?
11. What challenges does TEC face in delivering to its functions?
12. What is your overall impression of your department in terms of performance?

Conclusion

Is there anything you would like to comment on that we may have not covered in this interview?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix I: Interview guide - quality assurance

1. How long have you been working here?
2. Could you describe your job position in your organization?
3. What is QA in relation to the TEC mandate and TEIs?
4. How do you quality assure the TEIs?
5. a) Which guiding principles/instruments are in place to ensure quality in TEIs?
b) Are these instruments adequate enough to guide quality assurance in TEIs?
6. How does TEC ensure quality instruments are maintained?
7. How often are quality instruments reviewed?
8. Does TEC have the capacity to guide QA in TEIs?
9. What role do stakeholders play in contributing towards quality assurance in tertiary institutions?
10. a) What challenges does TEC face in delivering to its functions?
b) What do you think can be done to overcome such challenges?
11. Are you satisfied with the overall performance of TEC in ensuring quality in tertiary institutions?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix J: Interview guide - executive secretary's office

1. How long have you been working here?
2. Could you describe your job position in your organization?
3. Briefly describe the mandate and functions of Tertiary Education Council?
4. Do you think the TEC has done enough in terms of policy formulation? Please explain.
5. Is the policy generally accepted and supported by all stakeholders?
6. How relevant is the TEP to the country's current PESTLE needs?
7. How effective is the TEP in dealing with tertiary education matters? Explain
7. a) Is there any strategy aimed at the coordination and long term planning of tertiary education?
 - b) Is the strategy used to inform decision making in tertiary education? Explain.
8. Does TEC have the capacity to implement the strategy? Explain.
9. What do you think can be done to improve the coordination and planning tertiary education?
10. a) Which guiding principles are in place to ensure quality in TEIs?
11. What are the outcomes of QA?
12. Does TEC have enough capacity to guide QA in TEIs?
13. What role do stakeholders play towards QA in TEIs?
14. What challenges does TEC face in delivering to its functions?
15. Are you satisfied with the overall performance of TEC?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix K: List of all Tertiary Education Council's registered higher education institutions

Public Institutions

1. Bamalete Lutheran School of Nursing
2. Botswana Accountancy College
3. Botswana College of Agriculture
4. Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (Letter of Interim Authority)
5. Botswana College of Engineering and Technology-BCET (Letter of Interim Authority)
6. Botswana International University of Science and Technology (Letter of Interim Authority)
7. Botswana Wildlife Training Institute
8. Deborah Retief Memorial School of Nursing
9. Defense Command and Staff College (Letter of Interim Authority)
10. Francistown College of Education
11. Francistown College of Technical and Vocational Education (Letter of Interim Authority)
12. Gaborone Technical College (Letter of Interim Authority)
13. Institute of Development Management
14. Institute of Health Sciences, Francistown
15. Institute of Health Sciences, Gaborone
16. Institute of Health Sciences, Lobatse
17. Institute of Health Sciences, Molepolole
18. Institute of Health Sciences, Serowe
19. Molepolole College of Education
20. Serowe College of Education
21. Seventh Day Adventist School of nursing
22. Test tender
23. Test tender
24. Tlokweng College of Education
25. Tonota College of Education
26. University of Botswana

Private Institutions

1. ABM University College
2. Assembly Bible College (Letter of Interim Authority)
3. Ba Isago University College (UNISA study centre)
4. Boitekanelo Training Institute (Letter of Interim Authority)
5. Botho College (formerly NIIT Education and Training Centre)
6. Damelin (Letter of Interim Authority)
7. Flying Mission Services ((Letter of Interim Authority)
8. Gaborone Institution of Professional Studies
9. Gaborone Universal College of Law (Letter of Interim Authority)
10. Kgolagano College of Theoretical Education (Letter of Interim Authority)
11. Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology (Letter of Interim Authority)
12. Management College of Southern Africa-MANCOSA (Letter of Interim Authority)
13. New Era College of Arts Science and Technology (Letter of Interim Authority)



Appendix L: Questionnaire

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION COUNCIL

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS TO BE FILLED BY INSTITUTIONAL HEADS IN THE TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The questionnaire aims to assess the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) with regard to how it has performed and delivered on its functions. The questionnaire is part of a study which forms the thesis component of a Masters of Education (Higher Education Studies) at the University of the Western Cape, Bellville, South Africa. The questionnaire and study has been checked and approved in an ethical review process conducted by the University of the Western Cape, Senate Research Ethics Committee.

All participants of this study will be kept anonymous by the researcher. However, the respondent should note that their words may be quoted in the final report but that names of the respondent or the institution will not be used in conjunction with the quotation.

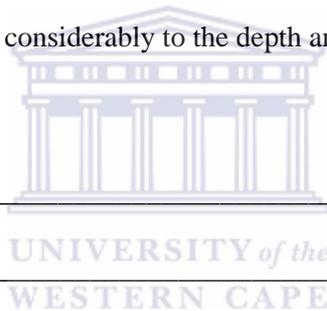
Your full and frank answers will add considerably to the depth and relevance of this study.

Name of institution _____

Name of respondent _____

Position at the institution _____

Please sign to indicate your consent _____



For any information concerning this study, please contact any of the persons below:

Ms. Keitumetse Lebotse (Researcher) Telephone: +26772758545 and email: lebotsek@gmail.com/
mkhethob@yahoo.com

Dr Gerald Ouma (Supervisor) Telephone: +27 21 9599360 Email: gouma@uwc.ac.za

Dr Thierry Luescher-Mamashela (Supervisor) Telephone: +27833505959 and email:
thierryluscher@hotmail.com

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please indicate with a tick [✓] the response category that best reflects your view. You are welcome to add comments and explanations at the end of each set of questions.

1. How familiar are you with the following Tertiary Education documents?

Item	Likert Scale Scores					
	Very Familiar	Somewhat familiar	Neither familiar nor unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Never heard of	Don't know/ Refuse to answer
A. Tertiary Education Act of 1999						
B. Consultation Paper - Tertiary Education Policy for Botswana (2005)						
C. Human Resource Development Strategy (2009)						
D. Norms and Standards - Establishment of Tertiary institutions, Regulations 2005						
E. Quality Assurance Manual (2009)						
F. TEC Strategic Plan 2005-2009						
G. TEC Annual Reports 2004/05-2008/09						

Comments _____

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Item	Likert Scale Scores					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/ Refuse to answer
A. TEC should be allowed to design the Tertiary Education Policy (TEP).						
B. TEC has formulated the TEP that fits the country's tertiary education system.						
C. The TEP is generally accepted and supported by all stakeholders.						
D. TEC should formulate and oversee the implementation of policy.						
E. Being the policy formulator, the TEC should monitor the implementation of policy.						
F. The TEP has fully taken into account the strengths and weaknesses in the Botswana tertiary education system.						
G. The TEP should be reviewed after every 5 years to assess the conditions under which it is implemented.						

Comments _____

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Item	Likert Scale Scores					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ Refuse to answer
A. The Tertiary Education Act does not give TEC adequate powers to execute its mandate.						
B. The mission of TEC is in line with the objectives of the policy.						
C. TEC has changed its strategy overtime to adapt it to challenges in tertiary education.						
D. Generally TEC has played a meaningful role in addressing tertiary education issues/challenges.						
E. TEC and Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) serve the same purpose and therefore they should be merged.						

Comments _____

4. Your opinion on the overall performance of TEC regarding its function to coordinate higher education in the country.

Item	Likert Scale Scores					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ Refuse to answer
A. My institution sits in a body that advises government on issues related to tertiary education.						
B. My institution enjoys a great deal of autonomy from the state.						
C. My institution is required to produce and disseminate mandatory reports/annual reports to TEC on the running of the institution.						
D. TEC encourages my Institution to forge partnerships with the private sector.						
E. Generally, my institution is satisfied with the TEC's overall coordination of tertiary education.						

Comments _____

5. Your opinion on the performance of TEC regarding quality assurance in higher education institutions.

Item	Likert Scale Scores					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ Refuse to answer
A. Stakeholders are involved in drawing up quality assurance standards.						
B. TEC offers assistance to institutions to help clarify the contents of the quality assurance framework and implement them.						
C. The quality assurance framework is adequate to guide quality assurance in tertiary education.						
D. TEC has the capacity to implement the quality assurance framework.						
E. The TEC has enough powers to be able to address quality issues in tertiary education.						
F. Tertiary institutions are treated equally in terms of adhering to the quality assurance framework.						
G. My institution uses the TEC quality assurance manual (2009) to improve quality.						
H. I am satisfied with the performance of TEC in ensuring quality in tertiary education institutions.						
I. I am satisfied with the overall performance of TEC (with respect to functions other than QA).						

Comment _____

Please add additional final comments

Thank you for your time!

