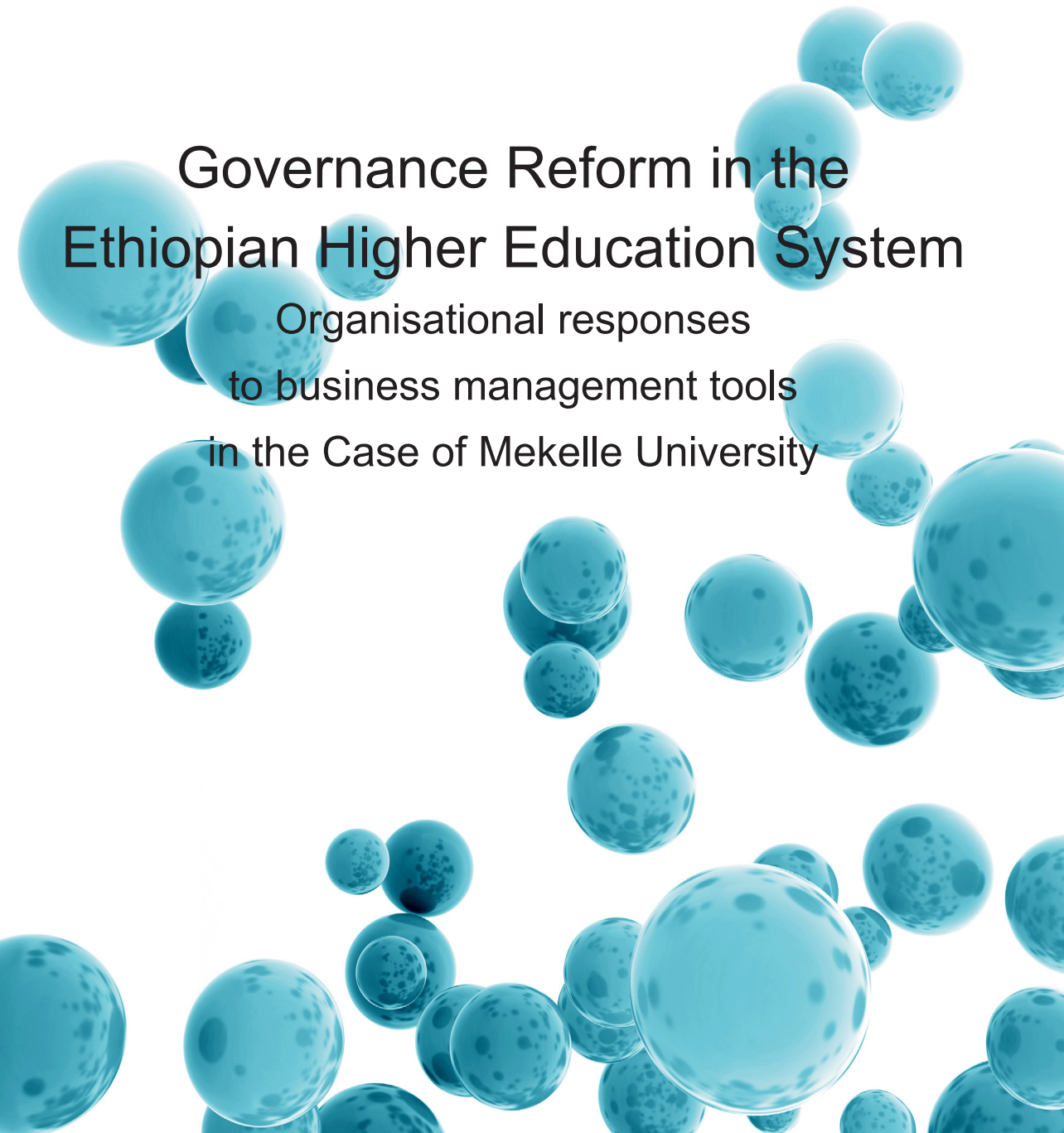


YOHANNES HAILU MEHARI

Governance Reform in the Ethiopian Higher Education System

Organisational responses
to business management tools
in the Case of Mekelle University





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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

YOHANNES HAILU MEHARI

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ABSTRACT

Changes in the socio-economic and political development of many countries have often resulted in changes in the governance arrangements of higher education institutions. The quest for efficiency, accountability, and transparency, which are the results of the changes in the external environment, have forced universities to adopt organisational strategies and management structures that are popular in business organisations. This development has brought enormous pressures to universities in their efforts to balance the pressures and requirements of business management tools with the internal values, beliefs, norms and practices of the universities. At the core of the process of adopting externally-driven business management tools are the perceptions and responses of universities and their academic units towards these tools. This study thus sought to understand and interpret the perceptions and responses of Mekelle University and its basic academic units to the pressures and requirements of BMTs. The study was guided by resource dependence and neo-institutional theories for understanding the organisational response of the case university. Qualitative data were used, including semi-structured interviews with key informants at the organisational level and members of the academic units, documents and archival data found in the university and from other major stakeholders. All the collected data were analysed thematically. The findings show that the BMTs are externally initiated and largely perceived as inappropriate tools for the culture and practices of the university and its basic academic units. As BMTs are initiated by the government, which is the sole funder of the public universities in Ethiopia, MU complied with the pressures, requirements and demands of the government to adopt these tools. However, as BMTs are largely perceived as inappropriate by the academic community to the university's values and norms, and their adoption is felt to be accompanied by an absence of quality and committed leadership at all levels of the university, MU and its basic academic units symbolically complied with the reform tools in order to insure survival and legitimacy not to improve efficiency and effectiveness as is envisaged by those who mandated the implementation of the tools. Moreover, this study indicates that most of the interventions and programmes created by the university following the adoption of BMTs are not structurally integrated with the values, norms, practices and policies of the university and its academic units. In other words, the results demonstrate that there is little evidence to support the government and the university's claims that the adoption of these BMTs brought radical organisational changes

in the university's and basic academic units' work processes. In general, the leadership of the university is in a crossroad keeping the right balance between the values and norms of the academics, and the external pressures to adopt BMTs as tools for radical organisational change in general and instruments for efficiency and effectiveness in particular. Therefore, the study recommends that major academic reform initiatives should be internally driven rather than imposed from outside. The university should have meaningful institutional autonomy to assess its internal and external situations and to come up with relevant reform agendas that take into account the basic characteristics of the university and the external environment's demands. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that the university needs to introduce sustainable internal capacity development programmes and due focuses on establishing higher education study centre to have comprehensive understanding about the dynamics of change in universities. In general, the study call for much more nuanced approach by all stakeholders if reforms have to serve their purposes.

Keywords: perception and response, resource dependence theory, neo-institutional theory, business management tools, basic characteristics of universities.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Muutokset sosioekonomisessa ja poliittisessa kehityksessä ovat monissa maissa johtaneet usein myös korkeakoulujen johtamisen ja hallinnon mallien muutoksiin. Ulkoisen toimintaympäristön muutoksista johtuva tehokkuuden, tilivelvollisuuden ja läpinäkyvyyden tavoittelu on pakottanut yliopistot ottamaan käyttöön yritysmaailmassa suosittuja toimintastrategioita ja johtamismalleja. Tämä kehitys on tuonut suuria paineita yliopistoille niiden etsiessä tasapainoa näiden liike-elämässä kehitettyjen menetelmien ja yliopistojen omien sisäisten arvojen, uskomusten, normien ja toimintatapojen välillä.

Yliopistojen akateemisten perusyksikköjen reaktiot ja niiden jäsenten käsitysten muutokset ovat sen muutoksen ytimessä, johon ulkoapäin tuotujen, alun perin yritysjohton tarpeisiin suunnitelluilla johtamisen välineillä (Business Management Tools, BMT) pyritään vaikuttamaan. Tätä taustaa vasten tämä tutkimus pyrkii ymmärtämään ja tulkitsemaan Mekellen yliopiston ja sen akateemisten perusyksikköjen käsityksiä ja vastauksia BMT-välineiden käyttöönoton tuomiin paineisiin ja vaatimuksiin. Tutkimuksessa käytetään resurssiriippuvuusteoriaa ja uusinstitutionaalista teoriaa tapausyliopiston organisatoristen reaktioiden ymmärtämiseksi. Tutkimuksen aineisto on laadullinen ja se koostuu puolistrukturoidusta, organisaatio- ja yksikötason avainhenkilöiden haastatteluista, tapausyliopiston dokumentti- ja arkistoaineistosta sekä muiden merkittävien sidosryhmien politiikkadokumenteista. Kerätty aineisto kokonaisuudessaan on analysoitu teemaattisesti.

Analyysin tulokset osoittavat, että BMT-välineet on otettu käyttöön ulkoapäin annettuina ja että akateeminen henkilöstö pitää niitä pääosin yliopiston ja sen akateemisten yksiköiden kulttuuriin ja toimintamalleihin sopimattomina. Koska Etiopian valtio on julkisten yliopistojen ainoana rahoittajana ottanut nämä välineet valtionohjauksen instrumenteiksi, Mekellen yliopisto on mukautunut paineisiin ja vaatimuksiin ottamalla nämä välineet myös sisäisesti käyttöönsä. Kuitenkin, koska valtionohjaus BMT-välineiden käyttöönottamiseksi voidaan tulkita prosessiltaan pakottavaksi toimenpiteeksi, yliopisto ja sen perusyksiköt suostuivat symbolisella tasolla ottamaan välineistön käyttöönsä varmistaakseen näin legitimitettinsä ja selviytymisensä eikä niinkään lisätä tehoa ja vaikuttavuuttaan kuten valtio oli oletanut.

Tämä tutkimus osoittaa lisäksi, että valtaosa BMT-välineiden käyttöönottoon tähtäävien ohjelmien ja toimintojen kehittämisestä ei ole rakenteellisesti integroitunut yliopiston

ja sen akateemisten yksikköjen arvoihin, normeihin ja toimintamalleihin. Toisin sanoen, tämä tutkimus ei anna tukea väitteille siitä, että BMT-välineiden käyttöönotto olisi saanut aikaan merkittäviä organisatorisia muutoksia yliopiston ja sen yksiköiden työprosesseissa. Ylipäänsä yliopiston johdon voidaan havaita olevan eräänlaisessa tienhaarassa etsiessään tasapainoa akateemisten arvojen ja normien sekä BMT-välineiden käyttöönoton aiheuttamien ulkoisten paineiden välillä.

Näiden havaintojen pohjalta voidaan suositella, että onnistuakseen akateemiseen toimintaan vaikuttavien merkittävien reformien tulisi olla mieluummin sisäsyntyisiä kuin ulkoapäin ja määräyksillä toteutettuja. Yliopiston autonomian tulisi olla tarpeeksi vahva, että ne pystyisivät ulkoisen ja sisäisen tilannearvionsa pohjalta kehittämään organisatoristen ominaispiirteidensä ja toimintaympäristönsä vaatimusten mukaisia uudistumisohjelmia. Lisäksi tutkimustulokset tukevat suositusta yliopiston sisäisen johtamis- ja hallintokapasiteetin vahvistamiseen tähtäävän koulutuksen käynnistämisestä yliopiston vakaan kehityksen takaamiseksi. Kansallisen korkeakoulututkimuksen keskuksen perustaminen ja toiminta auttaisivat yliopistojen johtoa yliopisto-organisaation erityislaatuiseen dynamiikan ymmärtämisessä. Kaiken kaikkiaan, tutkimustulokset korostavat tarvetta jonka mukaan kaikkien sidosryhmien tulisi syvällisemmin ymmärtää yliopistoille ominaista muutosten dynamiikkaa pystyäkseen saamaan aikaan tavoittelemaansa muutoksia.

Avainsanat: käsitykset, resurssi riippuvuusteoria, uusinstitutionaalinen teoria, liikkeen johdon työkalut, yliopiston ominaispiirteet, institutionalisoituminen, rakenteellinen integraatio

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| AC | Academic Commission |
| APRT | Academic Process Reengineering Team |
| BAU | Basic Academic Unit |
| BMT | Business Management Tool |
| BPR | Business Process Reengineering |
| BSC | Balanced Score Card |
| CC | College Council |
| CSA | Central Statistics Agency |
| CSR | Civil Service Reform |
| CSRP | Civil Service Reform Programme |
| DC | Department Council |
| EPRDF | Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| ESDP | Education Sector Development Programme |
| ETP | Education and Training Policy |
| FDRE | Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HEP | Higher Education Proclamation |
| HERQA | Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency |
| HESC | Higher Education Strategy Centre |
| MBC | Mekelle Business College |
| MC | Management Council |
| MoCB | Ministry of Capacity Building |
| MoCS | Ministry of Civil Service |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoFED | Ministry of Finance and Economic Development |
| MU | Mekelle University |
| MUC | Mekelle University College |

| | |
|--------|--|
| NPM | New Public Management |
| PSCAP | Public Sector Capacity Building Support Programme |
| RCS | Research and Community Service |
| RCSPT | Research and Community Service Process Reengineering Team |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Programme |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UC | University Council |
| UCAA | University College of Addis Ababa |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| VPA | Vice President for Academics |
| VPRCS | Vice President for Research and Community Service |

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have passed through numerous waves of reforms (de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007) and pressure to ensure their societal relevance (Pierry, 2012; Temple, 2011). This signifies the pivotal role of higher education in economic, social and cultural development (Reed, Meek, & Jones, 2002). Studies show that the foci of many of these reforms are basically characterised by shifts in the relationships between universities and the state (Maassen, 2003; Reed, Meek, & Jones, 2002). As a result, reforming the governance relationships between the state and higher education have remained a part of the political agenda of most countries (Maassen, 2003). These shifts in state-university relationships in turn have brought new challenges predicated by new management structures in HEIs (Maassen, 2003). Thus, it seems that the question of how to govern higher education systems and their institutions has remained a fundamental issue in higher education policy debates over the last three decades (de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2003).

Studies show that shifts in the relationship between the state and universities are largely influenced by economic, ideological, and pragmatic factors (Kickert, 1997; Pierre & Peters, 2000; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000). These shifts in turn have brought changes in the forms, mechanisms and style of HEIs' governance (van Kersbergen & van Waarden, 2004; Maassen, 2003). This new phenomenon has been reflected in the higher education literature emphasising the shift from 'government to governance' (de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007; Maassen, 2003), and the shift from control and regulation to supervision and application of the self-regulative capabilities of the universities (Hölttä, 1995b; van Vught, 1997). Studies in the field of higher education have shown interest in examining these developments by producing various concepts and models of higher education governance (see Clark, 1983; de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2003; Maassen, 2003; Maassen & van Vught, 1994). These developments can be clearly observed from the multiple governance reforms that have been adopted in HEIs over the past few decades. A closer look at various higher education governance reforms shows that the reforms have not only influenced the shape of HEIs but also their foci, which are predicated by the quest for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability (de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008). In fact, according to Reed, Meek and Jones (2002, p. xv):

The implications of these reforms are broad and far reaching, and include changes in how institutions of higher education are defined and understood, their role in society, their relationship to the communities in which they function, the nature and status of academic work, and the ways in which these institutions are funded and supported.

One of the most prominent changes in the governance of higher education reform is the introduction of managerialism¹, which takes the form of New Public Management (NPM)². Even though NPM is a complex concept and takes various forms and interpretations across time, its central ethos remains the same: the transfer of business management concepts and practices to the public sector (Deem, 1998; Tahar, Niemeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). Several researchers in higher education have reported the rise of managerialism in higher education governance (see Birnbaum, 2001; Braun & Merrien, 1999; de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007; Deem, 1998; Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007; Harvey & Lee, 1997; Kehm & Teichler, 2013; Tahar, Niemeyer, & Boutellier, 2011; Teelken, 2012). The increasing use of business management tools (BMTs) in HEIs is characterised by two major developments. First, BMTs have taken a common ground in HEIs with a particular focus on efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency (Birnbaum, 2001; de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Deem, 1998; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008; Tahar, Niemeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). In this context, BMTs³ (sometimes also referred as reform tools) refers to a set of concepts or practices that aim to transform the planning, organising, controlling and steering of HEIs, such as Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Balanced Score Card (BSC), among others. Second, the need to put more responsibility and power into the hands of management has forced governments to make continuous organisational reforms characterised by strengthened internal hierarchies and new organisational structures in universities (Billing, 2004; Dill, 1996; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008). This is largely evidenced in the shift from the collegial model to a managerial mode of governance.

However, the increasing pressures of governments to reform HEIs based on BMTs have brought contradictory reflections by researchers in the field of higher education (Davis, Jansen, & Venter, 2014). It seems that the drive for adopting BMTs, or managerialism, targets two major weaknesses within universities. First, it strengthens the capability of HEIs to adapt to the rapidly changing institutional environment. Second, it changes the traditional collegial governance that causes inefficiencies compared to a more managerial approach (Santiago & Carvalho, 2004, p. 427). Therefore, some researchers argue that

1 The term managerialism in this context refers to the adoption in HEIs of “organisational forms, technologies, management practices and values more commonly found in the private business sector” (Deem, 1998, p. 47).

2 NPM emphasises “professional management in the public sector, standards and measures of performance, output controls, emphasis on the shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector, competition, private sector management practice, and stress on discipline and parsimony in resource use” (Salminen, 2003, p. 55-56). It is also characterised by both professional management and the discretionary power to achieve results, and the decentralisation of managerial authority over the use of allocated resources in the context of greater accountability for results (Aucoin, 1995 in Salminen, 2003).

3 In this dissertation BMTs is also referred as reform tools.

despite the difficulties in easily adopting business values in universities, the adoption of BMTs in HEIs could facilitate enhanced performance and status (Kolsaker, 2008) and enable universities to become more responsive, fulfilling multiple constituents' pressures more efficiently (Davis, Jansen, & Venter, 2014). Scholars argue, though, that introduction of BMTs in universities must be done with great caution (Temple, 2005) and "in the right proportion and in the right context" (Chan, 2001, p. 109).

On the other hand, the adoption of such managerial practices has also been frequently criticised by researchers in higher education (see Adcroft & Willis, 2005; Birnbaum, 2001; Bryson, 2004; Larsen & Gornitzka, 1995; Stensaker, 1998; Temple, 2005). Much of the criticism centres at the mismatch between business and higher education values, structures and focuses (Birnbaum, 2001; Bryson, 2004; Larsen & Gornitzka, 1995; Trow, 1994). The central argument for researchers, who are against the adoption of any managerialism, is the fact that BMTs are influenced by the rational system of thinking, which has no place for the values, norms and practices of universities, and thus they contend that BMTs are foreign elements in academic culture and that it is natural to expect contradictions in the adaptation process.

This argument is relevant to this study because universities are not organised like businesses (Birnbaum, 2001). In essence, universities have a particular organisational makeup that makes them different from other organisations (Clark, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999), especially from business ones (Bryson, 2004). The special features of HEIs that in one way or another affect the adoption of BMTs in universities include the fact that universities are professional organisations (Mintzberg, 1994) in which university leaders have limited authority over researchers who prefer to work autonomously and in a very stable structure. Similarly, unlike business organisations, universities due to their disciplinary orientation (Clark, 1983; Whitley, 1984) are loosely-coupled organisations (Weick, 1976) hence top-down management or control through managerial coordination is difficult (Birnbaum, 2001). Moreover, the metaphorical label for universities as 'organised anarchies' (Cohen & March, 1974) shows that having specific and measurable goals, which are central premises of BMTs, are problematic and ambiguous within the higher education context (Larsen & Gornitzka, 1995). This study is thus curious about the roles the special characteristics of HEIs have in determining the response of universities to BMTs-related pressures, demands, expectations and requirements.

This study is also particularly interested to understand the role of academic units in responding to external pressures. A growing body of literature in higher education studies looks at the organisational and subunit-levels to understand the changing academic knowledge production and organisation, and continuity and change in academic activities (see Becher & Trowler, 2001; Bleiklie & Henkel, 2005; Clark, 1983; Dill & Sporn, 1995). These studies show that the organisational response of universities as open systems cannot be fully studied without incorporating the roles of subunits or academic units that have the capacity to determine the fate of their survival (Hölttä, 1995b). Academic units function

based on their disciplinary affiliations and thus they are fragmented (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Clark, 1983; Dill & Sporn, 1995); this leads them to have different interactions with the external environment (de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2003; Reale & Seeber, 2011). This means by virtue of the disciplinary differences and orientations, diverse responses to external pressures emerge from academic units (Reale & Seeber, 2011).

Therefore, as we move on into the 21st century with the emergence of an information society, rapid and unprecedented changes occur in all sectors including HEIs (Berge, 2000). The Ethiopian higher education system, as part of the global system, has been affected by a rapidly changing policy framework since the early 1990s. A wide range of government-led public reforms has been introduced to the higher education system that are largely influenced by the concept of managerialism. The Ethiopian higher education system has shown massive expansion over the past two decades. It has grown from a system with just two universities in the early 1990s to one with 32 public and more than 50 private universities and colleges in 2014. Student enrolment has also shown exponential growth since then (see Chapter 4). The development from an elite system to a widely-accessible one has necessitated frequent reforms in the higher education arena of Ethiopia. As discussed above, these reforms are parts of the NPM or managerialism governance approach that largely focuses on efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency.

Similar to the worldwide trend, universities in Ethiopia have followed traditional collegial model of governance since the establishment of the first university in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1950. In the move from a collegial to a managerial governance model, Ethiopian public universities have been engaged in adopting BMTs, such as BPR and BSC, since 2008. Some studies show that success in business today is partially determined by the existence of an organisational culture that is highly adaptable and responsive to rapidly changing environments (Berge, 2000; Porter, 1993). The most important questions regarding the adoption of BMTs in universities are, therefore, how have Ethiopian HEIs been responding to the ever-increasing pressures from the environment? Can they respond to the new and changing environment by using the same approach businesses have, regardless of their organisational culture and structures? Or can they remain ‘independent’ without fundamentally responding to the external environment? These are some of the basic points this study emphasises by using the Ethiopian higher education system as an interesting case study where several BMTs have been implemented as part of governance reform over the past few years.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Recently, a considerable literature has grown up around the advent of managerialism in HEIs as a tool for improving their efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency, and to help universities become more entrepreneurial, adaptive and commercially responsive (see Braun & Merrien, 1999; de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007; de Boer, Goedegebuure,

& Meek, 2010; Deem, 1998; Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007; Kehm & Teichler, 2013; Kolsaker, 2008; Robert, 2004; Santiago & Carvalho, 2004; Tahar, Niemeyer, & Boutellier, 2011; Teelken, 2012). Despite the fact that these studies on managerialism have had a wide range of different foci within universities (Davis, van Rensburg, & Venter, 2014), it seems that many of the studies focused more on the drive for managerialism, the implementation process and its effects on the performance of universities. Moreover, even though some studies have recommended that the adoption of BMTs and environmental pressures in universities should be studied by incorporating the basic characteristics of HEIs (Gornitzka, 1999; Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999; Stensaker, 1998; Teelken, 2012), the perception of and response to external pressures and demands by both universities as organisational entities and their academic units, taking into account the particular characteristics of HEIs, are still not well researched (Gornitzka, 1999; Leisyte, 2007).

More importantly, a review of the literature shows that research on the increasing adoption of managerialism in developing countries' HEIs is scanty (Davis, Jansen, & Venter, 2014). Despite the fact that the Ethiopian higher education system has passed multiple of governance reforms over the past two decades, a closer look at Ethiopian higher education research shows there are no scholarly studies supported by sound empirical evidence that comprehensively show how public HEIs in Ethiopia perceived and responded to the implementation of BMTs. Furthermore, despite the need felt by Ethiopian scholars for studying these phenomena, it seems that the issues have not been comprehensively studied using relevant theoretical perspectives that have been proven to be important by higher education research. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand and interpret the organisational perceptions and responses of Mekelle University (MU) and its basic academic units (BAUs)⁴ to external pressures and the adoption of BMTs. Under the umbrella of this study purpose, this study addressed the following three research questions:

1. How do Mekelle University and its basic academic units perceive the pressures and requirements of adopting business management tools and how these perceptions affect the adoption process?
2. How do Mekelle University and its basic academic units respond to the pressures and requirements of business management tools?
3. What are the main challenges of adopting the business management tools in Mekelle University and its basic academic units?

These research questions are addressed by applying a theoretical framework combining resource dependence and neo-institutional theories, and by giving more attention to the basic characteristics of HEIs. In so doing, the first question addresses the opinions, evaluations and judgments of the leaders and practitioners of MU and its BAUs concerning their new institutional environment, and how these views created a new meaning system in the university to which they have to respond. The second question targets four interrelated

⁴ In this dissertation, BAUs refer to colleges, departments and course/research teams of Mekelle University that are actively engaged in teaching and research and community service.

issues, namely the nature of the responses, the response strategies used, the level of structural integration of the new programmes and interventions with the values, norms and practices at all levels of the university, and the institutionalisation process of the reform tools. The third research question focuses more on examining the interaction between the organisational context, such as the values, beliefs and practices of the university and its academic units, and the relevance of the pressures from the institutional environment.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study is significant in various ways, and it provides academic and practical contributions. As mentioned in the statement of the problem in the previous section, even though the organisational response of universities to environmental pressures (i.e., managerialism) has attracted the attention of higher education researchers, the role of the basic characteristics of universities has not received much attention. In this case, this study extends the existing scanty literature in organisational response to externally initiated reforms by incorporating the core culture, values, norms, beliefs, structures and practices of HEIs.

Moreover, similar to those of many developing countries, the Ethiopian higher education system has not been well researched. As discussed above, the Ethiopian higher education system has been expanding swiftly since the early 1990s. It has grown from only two universities in the 1990s to 34 public universities and more than 50 private universities by 2014. The enrolment rate too has shown tremendous growth in the past couple decades. In addition to this, the policy environment in which Ethiopian universities operate has changed rapidly. Due to these circumstances, on one hand, Ethiopian public universities are expected to engage with various reform initiatives that are introduced by the government. On the other hand, public universities face enormous pressures from academics to maintain their identities while responding to the government reforms.

Therefore, this study has the potential to provide practical recommendations for policy makers at the national level and for practitioners at the institutional level. At the system level, it provides strong empirical evidence for policy makers about the reform processes in general, and the adoption of BMTs in particular vis-à-vis the nature of HEIs. The recommendations of the study might motivate the government to revisit its approach of reforming universities and give insights for further policy design and reforms that focus on transforming the structure and mission of universities. At the institutional level, it provides well-organised information for university leaders and members of the academic community about the adoption process and the patterns of responses to BMTs. It contains sound empirical evidence about the lessons that should be taken from past reforms and the preconditions that should be met before responding to any reform initiatives in terms of continuous leadership capacity development and the value of preserving the particular characteristics of universities.

1.4 Context of the study

Mekelle University is one of the largest public universities in Ethiopia. It is located in the city of Mekelle, which is the capital of the Tigray National Regional State, 783 km north of Addis Ababa. The history of the university began when the Mekelle Business College and Mekelle University College were founded in 1991 and 1993 respectively. The merger of the two former colleges led to the creation of Mekelle University in May 2000 by the Council of Ministers, under Regulation No. 61/1999 of Article 3, as an autonomous HEI. The two colleges had a complicated history before they came to have their present shape.

Documents from MU show that Mekelle Business College (MBC) was first established as a School of Economics in 1987 by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)⁵. It was established to produce middle-level professionals to manage the financial and administrative responsibilities of EPRDF offices. Soon after the fall of the military government in 1991, the school was upgraded to a college offering diploma-level programmes and renamed MBC; thus, the establishment of the first HEI in the Tigray region occurred in the last decade of the 20th century (MU, 2014b).

Mekelle University College (MUC) came into full existence in 1993 as the Arid Zone Agricultural College in Mekelle after a series of relocations to different parts of the country. First, during the military regime, the college was intended to be located in Selekleka town, in the north-western part of Tigray. However, it was instead first established in Asmara University⁶ as a faculty, but then moved to Agarfa, in southern Ethiopia, due to the political turmoil in the beginning of the 1990s. After a one-year of spell in Agarfa, it then moved to Alemaya University, which is located in south-eastern Ethiopia. In 1993, the Arid Zone Agricultural College was permanently relocated to Mekelle as the College of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resource Management at Endayesus Campus. In its new location, it began with three degree programmes and 42 students. Two years after its official establishment, the Faculty of Science and Technology was also established at the same campus, and together they formed MUC.

In the two decades since the merger of the two colleges to create MU, the university has shown remarkable development. From a total of less than 300 students in both colleges in the early 1990s, it now has over 31,000 students in the regular, summer, evening and distance education programmes in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Along with the dramatic growth in the student population, the number of academic staff had risen to 1,510 by 2015. At present, the university has seven colleges—Business and Economics; Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources; Law and Governance; Social Sciences and Languages; Veterinary Medicine; Natural and Computational Sciences; and Health Sciences—and eight institutes—Pedagogical Sciences; Paleo-environment and Heritage Conservation; Water and Environment; Climate and Society; Institute of

⁵ The current ruling party in Ethiopia.

⁶ Asmara University is now found in the present day country of Eritrea. Eritrea was part of Ethiopia until it declared full independence in 1991.

Gender, Environment and Development Studies; Institute of Geo-Information and Earth Observation Sciences; and the Ethiopian Institute of Technology-Mekelle.

MU is thus now one of the largest and rapidly-growing public university in Ethiopia, with strong national and international collaborations. MU's ultimate mission is to pursue standards of excellence in teaching and research and community service. Moreover, since its establishment, MU has been through various reforms, and has played a leading role in adopting BPR and BSC initiatives since 2007 (see Chapters 5 and 6).

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The empirical scope of this study is limited to an analysis of the organisational response of MU to externally-initiated BMTs. MU has been adopting various reforms since its establishment; however, this study is specifically interested in two major reform tools, BPR and BSC, that are believed to have had profound impacts in shaping the governance of the university and its strategic directions. Even though the reform tools target both the administrative and the academic parts of the university, the focus of the study is only limited to the academic part of the university, which has been characterised by complex problems. Moreover, the study only focuses on public higher education as the governance reform processes (i.e., the adoption of managerialism) have only targeted public HEIs of the country.

1.6 Organisation of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises seven chapters, with three major parts: the conceptual, empirical and reflective. The theoretical and methodological underpinnings represent the conceptual part of the study. Chapter 2 presents a brief overview of the literature and the theoretical framework of the study. This chapter includes the main features of the two theories this study employs in its examination of organisational responses—the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories—and how they complement each other. In addition to this, it provides an overview of how these theories have been utilised in higher education research, and how they are conceptualised to study the organisational response of MU and its BAUs to the pressures and demands of BMTs vis-à-vis the particular characteristics of HEIs. In Chapter 3, a detailed account of the research methodology, including research strategy, research design, details of the case university and its selected subunits, procedures of data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness is presented.

The second, empirical part of this dissertation is represented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 provides the contextual background of the Ethiopian higher education system and related reforms over the past 60 years, with strong emphasis on the current higher education reforms. This provides readers a general overview of the higher education

system of Ethiopia and the policy directions in that country. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings and analyses of the study. In Chapter 5, the perception and response of MU as an organisational entity is provided and analysed. Chapter 6 presents descriptions and analysis of the perceptions and responses of MU's BAUs.

Chapter 7, the reflective third part of the study, contains the discussion of the major findings of the study, the conclusions drawn from analysis of the study's findings, the implications of the study, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

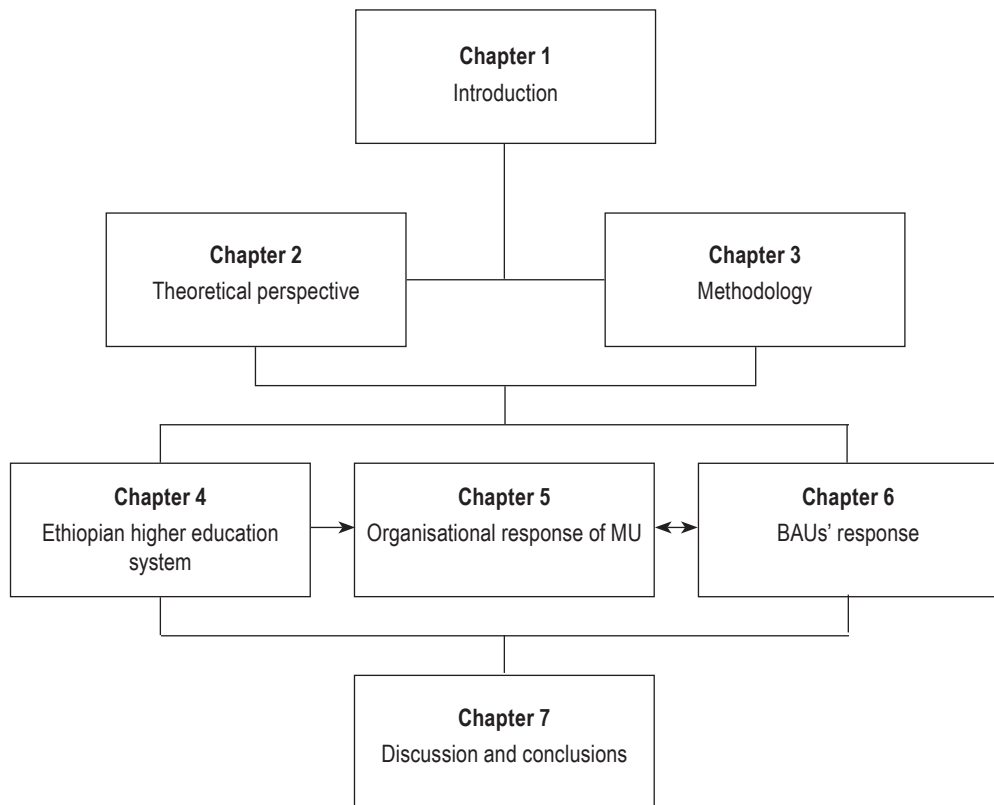


Figure 1. Organisation of the dissertation

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is discussed. It provides an overview of the theoretical considerations of this study on governance reform of HEIs through the adoption of BMTs. In this study, governance reform is understood as a process of exercising formal and informal authority that is characterised by the imposition of policies and rules that dictate the right and responsibilities of various actors and the rules by which they interact (Hirsch & Weber, 2001). Two levels of HEI governance are considered here: institutional and external (i.e., system). Institutional governance refers to the institutional arrangements within the university that show the processes, structures and power relationships inside the university, whereas external governance refers to the macro- or system-level institutional arrangements within which the regulatory framework and policies for HEIs are designed. Therefore, in this context governance reform refers to the coordination of both the internal and external institutional arrangements of the university.

The focus of this discussion is an exploration of the way universities perceive and respond to environmental pressures at the organisational and academic-unit levels. The pressures from the environment are examined by revealing the nature of the technical and institutional environments, because it is believed that both have significant roles in shaping organisational responses. Therefore, this study assumes that adopting BMTs within MU led to different institutional environments for both the university and its BAUs.

In the organisational studies literature, various theories have been developed and used to investigate and understand the implementation of a range of reforms and the responses of universities vis-à-vis their environmental pressures (see Bastedo & Bowman, 2011; Csizmadia, Enders, & Westerheijden, 2008; Gornitzka, 1999; Kirby-Harris, 2003; Reale & Seeber, 2010; Siegel, 2006). Two of the theories that are most applicable in this case are resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The responses of public HEIs at the organisational and BAU levels to governmental reforms (i.e. the introduction of BMTs) are thus theorised by combining these two theories into a framework for this study.

Moreover, as these two theories are concentrated on environment and organisational relationships, this study tries to examine the particular characteristics of HEIs and the roles these play in the reform processes. This also helps to understand how HEIs change and relate to their institutional environments. This section also provides the conceptualisation of MU's and its BAUs' perceptions and responses to the pressures of BMTs based on the theoretical framework outlined above.

However, before discussing the theoretical perspectives in detail, it is imperative to first discuss what kinds of changes have been taking place globally in the governance of higher education systems in relation to the advent of BMTs as solutions for the perceived crises in universities or as means of legitimization of their survival, and why these changes have occurred. A brief overview is given of the increasing use of organisational strategies, structures, management instruments and values that are commonly found in business and industry. This study assumes that the BMTs that have been adopted in the Ethiopian public sector in general, and in the HEIs in particular, in one way or another take the form of NPM or managerialism. Therefore, it is convenient to briefly discuss the basic concept of NPM and managerialism at this juncture, so as to clearly understand the historical, political and economic rationale behind it. The emphasis here is on examining on how such institutional changes affect the response of the university and its basic academic units.

2.1 The development of NPM in HEIs

2.1.1 NPM and its related BMTs

The global economic upheavals of the 1970s and 80s forced governments to reform all sectors in general, and service-providing organisations in particular. Scholars indicate that almost all governments, irrespective of their level of development and the level of seriousness of the problems they had, faced three major problems: financial problems, the apparent decline in trust of governmental organisations (Norris, 1999), and increases in expectations with regard to the quality of public services (Csizmadia, Enders, & Westerheijden, 2008; Pollitt et al., 2001). Governments have thus focused on alleviating financial problems by economising, building-up trust, and improving the quality of the services they provide (Norris, 1999). As a result, over the past few decades, several reform initiatives targeting comprehensive and structural changes in the public sector have been implemented. Regardless of the differences in missions, objectives and work processes between private and public organisations, it seems that public organisations are forced by the external environment to adopt management tools that are borrowed from business and industry. In many developed countries, new business management concepts have been introduced accompanied by changes in the style of management and governance (Csizmadia, Enders, & Westerheijden, 2008). These developments have often been termed as New Public Management (NPM) or public management reform or managerialism (Hood, 1991; Pollitt, 1993). Some scholars, however, argue that organisations adopt these BMTs as means of legitimization by showing how well they respond to the demands of society (Brunsson, 1989; Czarniavska-Joerges, 1993).

The term NPM, also sometimes labelled as ‘managerialism’ or ‘new public management’, refers to reforms in public administration (Salminen, 2003; Pollitt, 1990; Maassen, 2003; Aucoin, 1990), and has become a ‘catchy’ word internationally in the contemporary

public sector reform (Hood, 1991; 1995; Lapsley, 2008; Pollitt, 2003; 2009). Despite the popularity of NPM in public sector reforms in the past few decades, its meaning is defined and understood differently by its advocates (Hood, 1991, p. 4). This partly indicates that the concept of NPM is “a reflection of a number of different trends” (Adcroft & Willis, 2005, p. 387). However, many scholars do agree on the main components of NPM when implemented in the public sector. Hood (1991, p. 4-5) summarises several administrative doctrines which have dominated the bureaucratic agenda that clearly show how NPM is defined. He classified them as follows: professional management in the public sector; explicit standards and measures of performance; output controls; focus on disaggregation of units in the public sector; competition in the public sector; private sector management practices; and stressing greater discipline and parsimony in resource use.

NPM is also defined as a process in which public sector organisations adopt organisational forms, technologies, and management practices, as well as values such as efficiency, effectiveness and excellence, which are highly popular in the private sector (Deem, 1998; Teelken, 2012). Similarly, NPM or managerialism is also viewed as a deliberate change to the structures and processes of public sector organisations to make them better (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004, p. 8). Advocates of NPM argue that it focuses on change, decentralisation, responsiveness to the consumers and performance (Maor, 1999). This shows that NPM is highly concerned with bringing structural and organisational change to the public sector by introducing values and norms, which are closer to the ethos of business management (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Meek, 2002; Miller, 1998; Reed, 2002). As Teelken (2012, p. 272) puts it, “it seems as if a new language, in terms of practices, values and norms, is of increased importance in the public sector”.

2.1.2 BMTs as part of NPM and the nature of HEIs

In the context of HEIs, NPM or managerialism would thus mean the transfer of business management values and systems to universities (Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). The most typical BMTs that have been introduced to the higher education sector, which in one way or another take the form of NPM, are Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Balanced Score Card (BSC), Total Quality Management (TQM), Management by Objectives (MBO), and Performance Management (PM) (Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). Despite their variations in focus, these BMTs are solely guided by the notions of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency. The quest for efficiency and effectiveness, which are the hallmarks of NPM, has thus triggered new changes in the governance system of universities (Braun & Merrien, 1999; de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). Emphasising these developments, Amaral (2009, p. 3) notes that “the increasing economic globalisation process created new challenges for higher education institutions, which are facing diversified pressures that [have an] impact on their relationship with society and their management and governance systems”. Similar to other public organisations, it seems

that due to severe socio-economic and political conditions, such as budget constraints, accountability, massification and decentralisation (Bryson, 2004), HEIs in many countries of the world in general and in Europe in particular have adopted organisational strategies, structures, technologies, management instruments and values that are more commonly used in the business sector (Aucoin, 1990; Deem, 1998). In short, the purposes of HEIs are thus being equated with 'market imperatives' operationalised under the tent of managerialism and NPM (Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011, p. 290).

These governance reforms, which are initiated by the influence of ideological, political and pragmatic factors (Kickert, 1997; Pierre & Peters, 2000; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000), have, therefore, compelled HEIs "to voluntarily or on mandate" (Birnbaum, 2001, p. 3) adopt management systems and structures that aimed at enhancing their efficiency, accountability and transparency (Birnbaum, 2001; Stensaker, 2006; Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). The increased governmental focus on efficiency, effectiveness and accountability (Stensaker, 2006) has been characterised by two major circumstances. On one hand, business management tools have been given a central place in HEIs as a response to pressures to improve efficiency, accountability and transparency (Birnbaum, 2001; Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011; de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008; Schubert, 2009); on the other hand, the need to put more responsibility and power into the hands of management has forced governments to make continuous organisational reforms characterised by strengthened internal hierarchies and new organisational structures within universities (Billing, 2004; de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Dill, 1996; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008).

NPM is characterised by diverse interpretations, and its implementation in HEIs has also generated mixed feelings among policy makers, managers, practitioners, and researchers. Some researchers argue that if the instruments of NPM are implemented carefully and in the right proportion, it can be a useful experience and practice that positively affects the quality of job performances in universities (Chan, 2001). Increases in accountability and transparency, as the main elements of business management tools, would help universities to improve the quality of their teaching and research (Chan, 2001). Others also indicate that NPM reforms have the tendency to reduce the decision-making competency of the government (Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011) by creating a more decentralised decision-making processes. This means universities enjoy more institutional autonomy and organisational flexibility in their activities. As a result, the more fragmented nature of universities changes to a more integrated organisational makeup (de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007). In addition to this, issues related to having strong institutional management have become one of the central themes of university governance (Braun & Merrien, 1999; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002).

Despite the fact that some positive contributions of NPM are observed in the higher education sector, some scholars in the field of higher education have challenged the adoption of business management practices into knowledge-producing institutions (Adcroft & Willis, 2005; Birnbaum, 2000; Bleiklie, Høstaker, & Vabø, 2000; Koch, 2003). They argue

that despite the occurrence of stronger institutional management and leadership, most of the endeavours to implant business management instruments into HEIs have remained less than convincing (Adcroft & Willis, 2005; Birnbaum, 2000; Koch, 2003; Temple, 2005). One of the commonly-provided reasons for the failure to adopt business management tools in universities is the fact that business values are regarded as foreign to the organisational culture of HEIs (Birnbaum, 2000). This means the academic values of universities are assumed to diverge from those of NPM (Bleiklie, Høstaker, & Vabø, 2000). Furthermore, organisational contexts such as structure, tasks, measurement styles and incentives have significant consequences for the applicability of business management tools (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Other factors related to the difficulties of applying NPM practices in universities are associated with the binary structures of universities (Teferra, 2014). The internal configuration of universities, unlike business organisations, is characterised by two parallel management structures, the academic and the administrative wings (Teferra, 2014). In relation to this, it is also indicated “business concepts seem to work either only in the academic or only in the administrative departments of universities” (Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011, p. 290). This means it is unlikely that implementation of BMTs could be successful across the entire university.

Moreover, some studies show that the over-emphasis on adopting business management practices brings enormous threats to the “academic freedom and the diversity within the profession” (Harvey & Lee, 1997, p. 2) upon which HEIs rely. Some fierce criticisms have been made by scholars indicating the fact that in HEIs the shift to NPM and its related business management values usually contradicts with its own objectives of efficient and effective quality improvement (Bryson, 2004; Davies & Thomas, 2002; Trow, 1994). Similarly, increasingly business-oriented practices have influenced academia to spend more time on supplementary activities which are not important to their core values and norms (Bryson, 2004; Chan, 2001), and academics have easily shifted their attention to simplifying the quantification of outputs (Trow, 1991) instead of the qualitative parts that represent much of their work, and which are designated as the heart of all activities which organisations of higher education were established for. Underlying the implications of the increasing pursuit for BMTs in universities, Teferra (2014, p. 3) warns:

The hot pursuit of managerialism akin to the corporate world, and more so mechanically without regard to autonomy or academic freedom or understanding complex culture, has serious implications for the efficiency, productivity, engagement, enthusiasm and morale of the central pillar of HEIs-academic staff.

Generally, it is indicated that in the context of NPM reforms, many BMTs have been implanted in or transferred to HEIs, but a great deal of research reveals that the outcomes of the implementation of such tools are practically more ambiguous and contradictory than advocates generally claim (Reed & Deem, 2002); as a result, most BMTs have failed to live up to expectations (Birnbaum, 2001; Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). This situation automatically raises the question of *why* this occurs; and how HEIs respond to such reforms

is another interesting area of study. Such questions lead us to investigate the organisational make-up and nature of HEIs as one critical dimension that directly or indirectly influences the response of universities to such 'alien' values and practices.

As discussed in Chapter 2, educational institutions are unique organisations, especially universities (Birnbaum, 2001; Clark, 1983). In relation to this, Gornitzka (1999, p. 11) notes “...there are some fundamental characteristics of higher education organisations that affect their ability and capacity for change”. Studies show that the advent of BMTs contrasts with traditional governance practices, such as collegial organisations (Clark, 1983; Goodman, 1962); professional organisations (Mintzberg, 1983); the loosely-coupled system (Weick, 1976); and organised anarchy (Cohen & March, 1986). It is believed that these features of HEIs play major roles in providing clear perspectives on universities and their particular organisational set-ups (de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier 2011). HEIs are professional organisations wherein the primary source of authority is professional expertise (Gornitzka, 1999). They are good examples of organisations that feature by professional autonomy (Mintzberg, 1983), in which “both individually and collectively placed in the scholarly community” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 12). As a result, such organisations are frequently characterised by problems of coordination and misuse of professional discretion (Mintzberg, 1989).

Higher education organisations are also loosely-coupled systems (Weick, 1976). This refers to the connections between organisational subsystems that are responsive but allow “each [subunit can preserve] its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness” (Weick, 1976, p. 3). In other words, the interaction between units can be infrequent, circumscribed, weak in their mutual effects, unimportant, and/or slow to respond (Weick, 1976). Similarly, loosely-coupled organisations are highly characterised by non-transparent decision-making processes and create difficulties in aligning all the different sub-organisations towards the goals of the entire organisation (Lutz, 1982). Finally yet importantly, the view of universities as organised anarchies (Cohen & March, 1986) shows that universities are characterised by problematic goals, unclear technologies, and fluid participation. This means the university’s goals are difficult to define, operationalise and measure, the process of converting input into output is not linear, and the decision-making process is sporadic (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Similarly, Teferra (2014, p. 1-3) identified six contrasting aspects between academic institutions and business organisations that should be taken as cautionary measures before adopting BMTs in universities. First *profit factor* is a guiding light for business organisations, unlike HEIs. Second, the issue of *intangible output* in HEIs is a special factor that differ universities from business organisations. This means the process of knowledge production and dissemination are not linear activities and thus do not readily lend themselves to meaningful and sensible measurements”. Third, the *binary structure* of HEIs shows that unlike the business world, universities have two parallel management structures for the administrative and academic wings of the university. Fourth, the issue of *academic freedom*

is a core value of universities, whereas in business organisations conformity with leaders' decisions is valued. Fifth, the role of *external factors* in universities is different from that of business organisations. This means that academic promotion in HEIs is not only influenced by the university but also by external peers and professional organisations or associations. Sixth is the *allegiance of academia*. This means the academic communities are not necessarily loyal to their own universities, but to their disciplines, which are woven by interest in academic pursuits and intellectual curiosity.

This dissertation thus argues that the response of HEIs to BMTs is mainly determined by both the organisational makeup and culture of a given university, and the nature of the BMTs being introduced. In other words, if the BMTs are to be successfully adopted, then they should at least address the critical contrasting aspects of universities. Therefore, by incorporating these particular features of universities, this study focuses on exploring the perceptions of the implementers, the university and its academic units, to BMTs. Many studies in higher education, however, have focused on studying the implementation process of different governance reforms by emphasising the challenges and opportunities, and evaluating the successfulness or failure of the reform programmes. However, little attention has been given to the perceptions of the basic academic units and the likely responses of individual members of the organisation as a major factor in such endeavours. This study, therefore, tries to examine the perceptions and responses of the university as an organisational entity and its BAUs towards the implementation of BMTs at their university.

2.2 Organisational responses to governmental reforms

This section provides the theoretical base for analysing organisational responses to government-initiated reforms. The focus of attention is to understand the way organisations perceived and respond to new institutional environment requirements, demands, expectations and pressures at the university and BAU levels. As elaborated above, Ethiopian public HEIs have been forced to adopt BMTs to improve their efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency over the past few years. The increasing quests for efficiency and effectiveness have resulted in new institutional environments for the universities and their academic units. In other words, the adoption of BMTs is taken as a new development in the university setting, which is believed to be followed by new rules, norms, values and a changed audience that affects the core activities of universities and their BAUs. As a result, universities and academic units are forced to balance the pressures that come from the external environment and the needs of the internal environment, the university's context. Analysing the potential effects of changes in the institutional environment⁷ is, therefore, very important, since it has significant value for understanding the organisational responses.

⁷ Institutional environment refers to rules, norms, understandings, beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitute appropriate or acceptable organisational forms and behaviours. Whereas

As discussed in the introductory part of this chapter, in this study organisations of higher education are commonly understood as both technical systems where exchange of resources, inputs, and outputs are essential for survival; and as social systems, characterised by incorporating actors and relationships where they are constructed and shaped by cultural systems embodying symbolically-mediated meanings (Scott & Christensen, 1995a; Scott & Davis, 2007). This implies that “every organization exists in a specific physical, technological, cultural, and social environment to which it must adapt” (Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 19). Hence, the organisational response of universities and their BAUs to institutional pressures is here explored through the combination of resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), which advocate the use of resources and social norms as tools of organisational survival respectively. Several studies show that these theories provide distinct but complementary explanations for why and how organisations respond to institutional pressures (Gornitzka, 1999; Greening & Gray, 1994; Oliver, 1991). Both theories are based on the common assumption that the survival of an organisation largely depends on its responsiveness to external pressures, demands, and requirements (Hrebeniak & Joyce, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). However, these theories also exhibit important differences. For example, for resource dependence theory the foci are the ability to make strategic choices and the adaptive capability to guarantee a constant flow of resources that are important for the survival of the organisation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). However, neo-institutional theory places more emphasis on the role of intuitional pressures, such as myths, beliefs, norms, values, rules, and procedures that influence the behaviour of an organisation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Moreover, as the focus of attention for these theories is the environment and organisational relationships, it seems that the internal processes of an organisation are somewhat underplayed in both theories (see Csizmadia, 2006; Gornitzka, 1999; Leisyte, 2007; Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999). Underlining the importance of analysing the internal processes of an organisation, Gornitzka (1999, p. 11) notes, “understanding the internal processes can be of vital importance for understanding why and how universities and colleges change, and how and why policies fail or are implemented successfully”. Therefore, some of the particular characteristics of HEIs that are believed to have an effect on the responsive capacity of universities are also discussed in this dissertation.

2.2.1 Resource dependence theory

Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Pfeffer, 1982) is based on an open system theory, and it is mainly “manifested itself in organisations that see the possibility of effective actions vis-à-vis the external environment” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 148). It is

technical environment refers to organisations, which produce a product or service that is exchanged in a market such that they are rewarded for effective and efficient performance (Scott, 1992, p. 132).

a popular theory in the social science disciplines that is specifically aimed at explaining organisation-environment relations and depends on a particular view of inter- and intra-organisational interactions (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Resource dependence theory is constructed to explain how organisations respond strategically and make active choices to manage their dependency on those parts of their task environment that possess important resources. This approach further suggests that the proper way to understand organisations is to realise how they relate to other actors in the environment. This implies that this theory “denies the validity of viewing organisations as essentially self-directed and autonomously pursuing their own ends undisturbed by their social context” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 7). It relies heavily on a political view of inter- and intra-organisational factors to understand how organisations react and interact with their environments (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 8) providing the fact that both organisations and their environment are interdependent. Explaining this situation Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, p. 222) note, “rather than taking the environment as a given to which the organization then adapts, it is considerably more realistic to consider the environment as an outcome of a process that involves both adaptation to the environment and attempts to change that environment”.

Resource dependence theory starts from the very basic assumption that every organisational action is primarily guided by securing its survival. This means no matter how big or small organisations are, or efficient or inefficient; no matter whether or not they have well-defined missions and vision; and no matter how they have set clear goals and objectives; they cannot achieve their goals if they do not exist. To meet their core objective, survival, they therefore need resources, such as operating funds, endowments, research funding, raw materials, personnel, services, or production operations that the organisation cannot or does not perform itself (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Tolbert, 1985). However, the resources an organisation needs are always scarce, or at least not always continually available (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Under this theory, all organisations work towards securing enough resources, and they also try to make sure the flow of resources is sustainable. This shows the fact that that no organisation is able to generate all of the resources necessary for its survival, nor can they easily secure required resources at will from the environment. Therefore, organisations are influenced by their environments, and are dependent on them (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), which demonstrates that a relatively smooth match between organisation-environment is mandatory for their survival to accomplish their objectives (Patterson, 2004).

Furthermore, the external environment or entities can influence a given organisation via two sources of power (Frooman, 1999). First, these external entities can have the power to determine whether the organisation receives the resources it needs, and second, they can also determine on how the organisation consumes the resources. This indicates some resources could come with pre-conditions attached to them. This dependency situation clearly implies that to guarantee the continuous flow of important resources, and to gain power and autonomy and reduce uncertainty, an organisation is obliged to interact

with other organisations that control vital resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and to respond accordingly to external pressures. Resource dependency theory also predicts that organisations are always in a position to provide what other powerful organisations ask for (Oliver, 1991). As a result, organisational response to external pressures can be predicted from the situation of resource dependencies confronting it (Gornitzka, 1999).

This leads us to investigate the second assumption of resource dependence theory. The more organisations are dependent on resources of a particular supplier, the more vulnerable they will be on following the rules and regulations of that resource provider. On the other hand, when the dependency is low, it is normal to expect an organisation to resist any pressures that come from the environment. Similarly, it can be argued that if there are several providers of critical resources, the organisation has choices and consequently is less dependent on any one provider in the environment. If there is only one provider, the organisation has little power to bargain and its dependency on such an organisation is supposed to be very high. Thus, this shows that the level of an organisation's dependence on external entities is partly, but significantly, determined based on the availability of alternative sources of resources. Furthermore, the level of an organisation's dependency also might be determined by, and varies based on, how important and relevant the resources are to the organisation in question (Bess & Dee, 2008). The more external entities have the power to control critical resources, the more dependent the organisations will be. Generally, when the required resources are both scarce and critical, the organisations at the receiving end are highly dependent on the suppliers of those resources (Bess & Dee, 2008). This shows that some resource-providing organisations are more important to an organisation than others are.

This dependency on environmental factors, however, does not necessarily mean that organisations are always passively vulnerable to the environment; rather, organisations can respond to and manipulate their environment to fit their capabilities (Patterson, 2004). In other words, an organisation's dependency does not necessarily show passive adaptation, but rather a strategic choice regarding how to manage external environmental pressures (Rhoades, 1992), by protecting, safeguarding, or increasing the resources that they need to improve their performance, decrease uncertainty and to survive at large (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Organisations always prefer to ensure a predictable and stable existence by reducing their dependency at any cost possible since dependency naturally creates uncertainty which the organisations cannot easily control (Oliver, 1991). At times organisations are conscious and 'rational' entities that systematically pursue their goals and missions, and have the tendency of "altering the system of constraints and dependencies confronting the organisation" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 267). As a result, they constantly modify their core strategies, at times by significantly altering their activities in response to these environmental factors (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This manipulative nature and strategy of organisations, which is of course largely embedded in the social and economic context, is partly determined by the motivations and preferences of organisational members, the

nature and structure of the interactions and the existing network (Csizmadia, Enders, & Westerheijden, 2008).

Organisations normally use different strategies to minimise their dependencies on the external environments that provide vital resources. Some studies also show that there are several strategic responses to be expected from organisations with inter-organisational dependencies (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). One of the most-mentioned strategic responses is *co-optation*, in which organisations manage their environment by incorporating ‘powerful’ groups or entities into their decision-making or advisory structures (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Besides co-optation, *associations* and *alliances* are also some of the strategies organisations often used to respond to inter-organisational dependencies through forms of collective action, such as the formation of trade associations, councils, and coalitions that seek to influence the environment through joint action (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Similarly, Scott and Davis (2007, p. 234) also share the above ideas that “organizations should choose the least constraining approach to coordinate relations with other organizations and to reduce the dependence that their exchanges create”. The common approaches are to grow big (maybe through merger) which is typically associated with increased power; to keep one’s options open by finding and maintaining alternatives; and by identifying major strategies that involve some kind of bridging mechanisms to control or coordinate one’s action with those of formally independent entities, such as co-option, alliances, or mergers and acquisitions (Scott & Davis, 2007). More often than not, it is true that making other organisations dependent on their resources should also be considered as an alternative way of influencing those organisations that control vital resources. The simplest way to understand this strategy is to observe when organisations attempt to influence others by producing efficient services and goods that can create huge demands from the environment (Leisyte, 2007).

In summary, it can safely be deduced that in a situation where environmental change is inevitable, organisations constantly modify their strategies concerning core activities in response to these environmental factors (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). It should, therefore, be taken into account that this perspective also acknowledges the fact that organisations are usually in a position of interdependencies, because they may also possess the resources that other organisations need⁸ (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Therefore, organisations are more active than passive⁹ and are not necessarily powerless entities totally malleable to external pressures. Instead, they anticipate, respond, and (re)act strategically to changes in their environment to protect and increase their access to the resources they need to survive and decrease uncertainty.

8 “The potential for one organization influencing another derives from its discretionary control over resources needed by the other, and the other’s dependence on the resources and lack of countervailing resources and access to alternative sources” (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 53).

9 “Organisations principally were perceived as *reactive*: if a change in the environment threatens critical resource relationships, an organisation will adapt its prevailing ‘repertoire’ of exchange relationships in order to arrive at an equilibrium that guarantees a continuous flow of the critical resources” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 7).

2.2.2 Resource dependency and higher education studies

Despite the fact that major organisational theories, namely resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974; 1978), the garbage can model (Cohen & March, 1986), the loose coupling concept (Weick, 1976) and many insights about institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Thornton, 2004) are built upon educational organisations in general and HEIs in particular (Cai & Mehari, 2015), the use of resource dependence theory in higher education research mainly came to fore only in the 1990s (e.g., Goedegebuure, 1992; Huisman, 1995; Gornitzka, 1999). These studies try to show how public HEIs in Europe in the 1990s were highly dependent on government funds. They also clearly depicted what the nature of the relationship between the state and universities could be like in state-dominated contexts. According to Huisman (1995) governments decided on the overall activities of universities in general and on their budgets and the expectations of the government in particular. Therefore, the level of dependency of HEIs on governments is determined by the importance of the needed governmental resources (Huisman, 1995) and the availability of potential alternative resources (Csizmadia, Enders, & Westerheijden, 2008), and this in turn affects their responses to institutional changes.

It seems that since the 1990s the use of resource dependence theory in higher education research has increased to examine several issues regarding HEIs with this single theory or in combination with other organisational theories. Some examples of this trend include studies on the following topics: rankings as an inter-organisational dependency (Bastedo & Bowman, 2011); understanding the behaviour of donors and HEIs (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008); alternative universities (Huisman et al., 2002); possible characteristics of name-changing universities (Morphew, 2002); strategies for internationalisation in research and HEIs (Frølich, 2006); harmony through diversity in HEIs (Patterson, 2004); the influence of fundraising in higher education (Proper, 2009); organisational response to institutional pressures (Reale & Seeber, 2010); universities responding to policies (Kirby-Harris, 2003); organisational response to diversity pressures in HEIs (Siegel, 2006); responses of HEIs to government policies (Csizmadia, Enders, & Westerheijden, 2008); and inter-organisational cooperation in HEIs (Beerkens & Derwende, 2007), among others. The common assumption in all of these studies is that organisations seek additional resources to avoid dependency on a single resource provider. Additionally, they all seem to share the view that intra-organisational factors are crucial for understanding how organisations react and interact with their environments. Therefore, the technical environment is an important dimension to study in relation to various dynamics in HEIs.

As resource dependence theory postulates an organisation's need to do more than adapt internally in order to be competitive (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 149), HEIs should thus be in position to establish strategic relationships with various other organisations that control vital resources. For instance, there are some strategies or techniques that organisations including HEIs normally use to address dependencies (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and that ultimately enable the organisations to develop the power to resist direct influences from

the environment (Bess & Dee, 2008). These techniques, which are visible in HEIs, are *dependency reduction*, *external linkages*, and *enactment of a new environment* (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 149).

In countries where the law permits, HEIs can reduce their dependence on a single provider of resources to minimise their vulnerability to extreme dependency. For instance, in the USA where the higher education system is more market driven, it is common to see a public college that desires to reduce its dependence on state appropriations work on building its endowment, which makes the college less vulnerable to fluctuations in government support (Bess & Dee, 2008). In a similar context, in an effort to reduce dependence, a particular college can expand its marketing approach to states outside its traditional market (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 149).

External linkage is another common strategy used by HEIs, where they manage their dependence by increasing the dependence of other organisations on them. This means the organisation may make itself more important to the external environment than it otherwise would be. A good example of this strategy is seen when HEIs start to form university-industry partnerships (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) to guarantee reliable and a sustainable funding source for the core activities of the university (Bess & Dee, 2008). This implies that HEIs can ensure their stability in their resource environment by creating various strategic partnerships that make them more significant than, or equally as significant as, other organisations in the external environment, and this in turn makes other organisations more dependent on them (Bess & Dee, 2008).

The third approach to managing resource dependence, which is frequently used by HEIs, is enacting a new environment for the organisation. This approach magnifies the role of organisational leaders who work to make external conditions more suitable instead of viewing the environment as a static force. According to Bess and Dee (2008, p. 151), “marketing, lobbying, and coalition formation are just a few of the strategies that leaders can use to change the way the environment views the organisation”. Such techniques are common in HEIs, so that university leaders sometimes appoint prominent public figures to several positions at the university to create more influential lobbying positions. In addition to this, as shown in Table 1, mergers and consortia are some good examples of universities creating new environments that are popular in HEIs. These techniques focus on making the environment part of the HEIs (cf. Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 151).

Table 1. Managing resource dependence

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Dependency-Reduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of suppliers • Diversification of consumers |
| External Linkages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and joint programs with other organizations • Formal policies that link multiple organizations (e.g., articulation of agreements) |
| Enactment of a New Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing, lobbying, coalition formation, merger, and consortium |

Source: Bess and Dee, 2008, p. 152.

Taking the Ethiopian context, where government interference is high, this study expected that the government largely dictates the extent of the relationship between itself and HEIs. As public universities are dependent on government funding, the possibility of the government influencing HEIs to change in accordance with government priorities is high. This is mainly premised on the assumption that HEIs implement government-lead change initiatives in order to appear legitimate in the eyes of government agencies, which control vital resources (Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999). As the central purpose of this study was to understand the extent to which public HEIs respond to governmental change initiatives, the resource dependence theory is, therefore, a vital approach.

2.2.3 Neo-institutional theory

Institutional theory has become a popular explanatory tool in organisational studies since the seminal work of Meyer and Rowan (1977). Its development has broadly been categorised into three stages (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008a), known as old institutionalism (originating between the late 1940s and beginning of 1950s), new institutionalism (originating between the late 1970s and beginning of 1980s), and the new strands of institutional theory (evolving since the 1990s). Institutional theory “is not usually regarded as a theory of organizational change, but as usually an explanation of the similarity (“isomorphism”) and stability of organizational arrangements in a given population or field of organizations” (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, p. 1023). However, it incorporates important elements that provide a clear model of change aimed at linking organisational context and intra-organisational dynamics (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Generally, institutional theory, which has been evolving in organisational studies, is known for its complicatedness and multidimensionality (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008) in explaining various aspects of organisations. Emphasising the complexity of institutional theory, Scott (1987, p. 493) notes, “the beginning of wisdom in approaching institutional theory is to recognize that there is not one but several variants”.

As there are various interpretations of institutional theory depending on which discipline one is working within (e.g., economics, political science, sociology), this study focuses on the sociological strand of neo-institutional theory in organisational studies that is supposed to have a direct linkage with the purpose of this study. Neo-institutional theory takes institutions at its central focus as ‘rationalized myths’, and suggest that organisation through time and in a socialisation process, are changed into institutions. This means gradually they develop their own distinct features when they are infused with values and myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) and emphasises the survival value of conformity to institutional environments (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Despite the fact that institutional theory has taken on a variety of forms (DiMaggio, 1988; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987), its central concern remains showing how organisations exist and function in an environment dominated by rules, taken-for-granted

assumptions, myths, and norms that are considered to be appropriate and acceptable organisational practices and behaviours (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Oliver, 1991; Scott, 1987). It addresses the homogeneity of the structure, culture and output of “organisations that in the aggregate constitute a recognised area of institutional life” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). It also focuses on inter-organisational processes, and it specifically emphasises the influences of the external environment in shaping an organisation and its behaviour (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Pedersen & Dobbin, 1997). It also asserts that organisations function under rules and requirements to which they must conform in order to perform effectively (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott & Meyer, 1983).

Moreover, neo-institutional theory views institutions as entities that are “composed of cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2001, p. 48). According to Scott (2001), these three pillars in aggregate make up the organisational environment in which organisations and their actors or employees function. This means the activities or future behaviours of organisations can be influenced by the force of the external environment such as the regulative pillar which focuses in establishing rules, manipulating sanctions, rewards and punishments; the normative pillar that is characterised by inducing values and norms with the intention of introducing a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension; and by the cultural-cognitive pillar which emphasises the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made (Scott, 2001). In this perspective, it is commonly assumed that institutional environment restrains the organisation and determines its internal structure and the behaviour of the actors in the organisation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

A plethora of studies within neo-institutional theory emphasise the survival value of organisational conformity to institutional environments (e.g. see DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). For organisations to be socially accepted and to survive, they have to conform ceremonially in an institutionalised environment to rationalised myths composed of accepted cultural rules. In other words, failure to respond in accordance with norms and expectation may lead to conflict and illegitimacy (Diogo, Carvalho, & Amaral, 2015). This implies that an organisation’s implementation and adoption of reforms or programmes which are supposed to bring organisational change is significantly determined by the extent to which the measure to be adopted is institutionalised, be it by law or by gradual legitimation (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). This situation shows the fact that the environment is the main source of legitimacy, while legitimacy is the main instrument which secures organisational survival.

The seminal paper by Meyer and Rowan (1977) offers insightful ideas about the role legitimacy can play as a dominant factor in securing organisational stability and survival. The line of argument is that for organisations to survive they have to gain legitimacy, and to gain legitimacy they must show “confidence of good faith” (Meyer & Rowan, 1991, p. 58).

Any deviation from the expectations of the institutional environment, therefore, threatens the legitimacy and the chance for survival of the organisation. Similarly, Scott (1983, p. 160) indicates that it is only by “appearing to be rational” that organisations would be able to have positive social interactions, simplify demands for external accountability, increase their chances of securing necessary resources and their probability of survival (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008). Therefore, according to this perspective, organisational change occurs in a context of taken-for-granted norms and beliefs not resources as resource dependence theory would otherwise predict (Gornitzka, 1999; Oliver, 1991).

However, it is also indicated that the efforts made by organisations to legitimise their activities by ceremonially conforming to institutional pressures might somehow contradict or conflict with the requirements of technical efficiency (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987). On one hand, this implies that organisations have clear goals, technologies and well-defined products, so that measuring their efficiency and effectiveness are not difficult tasks. Therefore, in such organisations, efficiency and effectiveness can be used as criteria for legitimacy to ensure the necessary support for their survival. On the other hand, some organisations due to their very nature (i.e., having unclear goals, technologies and less-well-defined products) cannot use efficiency and effectiveness as a base for legitimacy. Instead, they conform to institutional pressures to ensure their legitimacy (Birnbaum, 2001; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and the successes of such organisations largely depend on whether they are judged “by important constituencies... [more for] adhering to organizational myths than on their actual efficiency and effectiveness” (Birnbaum, 2001, p. 154). This means conformity and organisational stability to tackle environmental expectations have thus become the routines of organisations.

Furthermore, from a neo-institutional perspective organisational conformity is also characterised by its ritualistic nature where organisations construct symbols of compliance¹⁰ to environmental change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Edelman, 1992; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The pluralistic and inconsistent nature of institutional contexts often also force organisations to conform ceremonially to institutional pressures (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008). Organisations, however, are not just simply passive, to be easily manipulated by their environment; they rather act strategically to avoid any insecurity that threatens their survival (Oliver, 1991). Consequently, organisations sometimes seal off their core activities from the institutional environment in order to meet the inconsistent pressures for legitimacy and efficiency (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Oliver, 1991). In other words, organisations will adopt designs that mask or distract attention from controversial core activities that may contradict some key constituents’ interests. The process is literally called ‘decoupling’ (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 365), which occurs when the implementation of a prescribed institutional context is contradictory to the exigencies

10 In this context symbolic compliance refers to “the pretension of enthusiasm, while remaining vague creates scope for autonomy or performing in your own way. [organisations and their sub units] will only react or adapt to changes as a superficial or cosmetic level, especially when traditional values are deeply embedded” (Telkeen, 2012, p. 278).

of the technical context. Decoupling deliberately hides the symbolic practices from the organisations' technical core (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008).

In general, organisations may use various strategies to cope with multiple pressures from the institutional environment. Oliver (1991) has provided an important typology of possible strategic responses organisations can make when confronted with institutional environment pressures, expectations and requirements. According to Oliver, organisations may exercise a variety of response strategies when confronted with institutional pressures including *acquiescence*, *compromise*, *avoidance*, *defiance*, and *manipulation*, which are arranged from the most passive to the most active types of responses.

As shown in Table 2, *acquiescence* consists of three tactics, namely habit, imitation, and compliance. This refers to compliance with institutional pressures and expectations, and is largely characterised by unconscious adherence to taken-for-granted rules or values, and conscious adherence to values, norms, pressures, expectations, and requirements in a bid to ensure legitimacy and social support. However, according to Oliver (1991, p. 154), "institutional compliance is only partial and organizations are more active in promoting their own interests". Thus, when organisations are confronted with a multitude of conflicting pressures and demands, they tend to use a *compromise* strategy. This strategy involves balancing and pacifying the pressures of the institutional environment or bargaining with the constituents on the nature of the pressures and demands.

The third response strategy to institutional pressures is *avoidance*, where organisations attempt to buffer some of their core activities from external pressures and regulations while admitting the necessity of conforming to these pressures. The avoidance response strategy includes three tactics: concealing, buffering, and escaping. Unlike acquiescence, it seems that organisations that try to use both avoidance and compromise response strategies show a partial or selective recognition of institutional pressures.

As shown in Table 2, the next response strategy is *defiance*, which is largely considered a more active form of resistance to institutional pressures, requirements and demands. Organisations employing a defiance strategy use dismissing, challenging, and attacking tactics to contest institutional pressures and requirements. Last but not least is *manipulation*, which is the most active form of response to environmental pressures. This strategy takes co-option, influence and control as its central tactics. These tactics range from importing influential constituents in a bid to enhance their negotiation power, to shaping the values and criteria of the institutional pressures and dominating institutional constituents and processes.

Table 2. Strategic responses to institutional processes

| Strategies | Tactics | Examples |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| <i>Acquiesce</i> | Habit | Following invisible, taken-for-granted norms |
| | Imitate | Mimicking institutional models |
| | Comply | Obedying rules and accepting norms |
| <i>Compromise</i> | Balance | Balancing the expectations of multiple constituents |
| | Pacify | Placating and accommodating institutional elements |
| | Bargain | Negotiating with institutional stakeholders |
| <i>Avoid</i> | Conceal | Disguising nonconformity |
| | Buffer | Loosening institutional attachments |
| | Escape | Changing goals, activities, or domains |
| <i>Defy</i> | Dismiss | Ignoring explicit norms and values |
| | Challenge | Contesting rules and requirements |
| | Attack | Assaulting the source of institutional pressure |
| <i>Manipulate</i> | Co-opt | Importing influential constituents |
| | Influence | Shaping values and criteria |
| | Control | Dominating institutional constituents and processes |

Source: Oliver, 1991, p. 152.

2.2.4 Neo-institutional theory and higher education studies

Even though the emergence of institutional theory dates to the 1940s and it has gained popularity since the 1980s, it only got the attention of higher education researchers in the 1990s. Since then it has shown steady growth in its application to institutional analysis in higher education research (Cai & Mehari, 2015). The use of neo-institutional theory in higher education research has largely focused on understanding policy and management issues with a special focus on environment and organisation relationships, isomorphism, and institutionalisation (Cai & Mehari, 2015). As a result, the reform processes in HEIs, which are often perceived as strategic and managerial responses to environmental pressures, have been at the forefront of the discussion (see Arnold, 2004; Bernasconi, 2006; Gornitzka, 1999; Jenniskens & Morphew, 1999; Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999; Youn & Price, 2009). A common argument amongst these researchers is that organisations are embedded in highly institutionalised environments dominated by social rules, common understandings and taken-for-granted assumptions (Scott, 1987). This assertion might

imply that universities are organisations which constantly seek to conform to regulations and requirements mandated by external constituents (Webber, 2012).

In the past couple of decades, scholars have shown the usefulness of neo-institutional theory in understanding HEIs' responses to external demands and pressures (Gornitzka, 1999; Jenniskens & Morphew, 1999; Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999). These scholars argue that change in HEIs occurs in the context of taken-for-granted values, norms and beliefs. For instance, Siegel (2006) studies organisational responses to diversity-related pressures and expectations in some selected professional schools in an American university, and found evidence that the responses of the professional schools were largely guided by various external pressures, expectations, requirements, and rules. In addition to this, the work of Larsen and Gornitzka (1995) studying the introduction of a new management system in Norwegian universities found that the overall reform process was characterised by a 'window dressing' approach where universities symbolically complied with these external pressures. Similarly, Stensaker (2004) also showed the role symbolic compliance and adaptations can play in gaining legitimacy and ensuring survival in HEIs. Additionally, Cai (2010) examined the role of global isomorphism on Chinese government policy-making processes with respect to transforming the governance model in higher education, and found that the Chinese government is affected by global reform ideas and practices that have been legitimised through international organisations' rhetoric and other countries' successful experiences.

Generally, higher education researchers use the sociological strand of neo-institutional theory to understand and examine major issues in higher education. For example, many issues—curriculum reform (Arnold, 2004); policies for non-tenure-track faculty (Kezar & Sam, 2013); institutional diversity (Morphew, 2009); faculty tenure and promotion rules (Youn & Price, 2009); managerialism in higher education (Teelken, 2012); institutional diversity or academic drift (Morphew, 2000); steering approaches (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000); diversity and marketisation (Meek, 2000); university governance (Engwall, 2007); organisational response (Hordern, 2012); learner-centred assessment (Webber, 2012); massification, competition and organisational diversity (Rossi, 2010); academic entrepreneurship (Mars & Rios-Aguilar, 2010); the relationship between academic and proprietary approaches or commercialization of research (Owen-smith, 2005); interdisciplinary research (Sá, 2008); organisational culture and values (Zilwa, 2007); perception and adaptation of management reform (Stensaker, 1998); rankings (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012); the changing role of governing board (Bastedo, 2005); and faculty sense-making and mission creep (Gonzales, 2012)—are among some of the major higher education issues that have been studied effectively over the past few years by employing various strands of institutional theory. One of the central themes in this research is the role of the external environment in shaping the behaviours and response of universities. In general, the aforementioned studies show the usefulness of neo-institutional theory in higher education researches.

To sum up, as this study focuses on understanding the organisational response of universities to government-initiated reforms, the core themes of neo-institutionalism like legitimacy, conformity and symbolic compliance may provide important perspectives to scientifically examine the role of the external environment and the institutional context of the university in determining the perceptions and responses of the case university and its BAUs.

2.3 The special characteristics of HEIs

This study adheres to the understanding that the adoption of externally-initiated reforms, policies or programmes in universities cannot be successfully accomplished without due attention to the specific organisational nature of HEIs. It is thus essential to have a basic understanding of the ‘micro-foundations’ of organisations (Gornitzka, 1999). This is particularly significant for this research, because it is believed that the new waves of reform—BMTs basically challenge the traditional concept of the university (Birnbaum, 1988). As a result, analysing the content of the reform tools in relation to the traditional concept of what a university is (i.e., the special features of HEIs) is considered important.

A careful look at the aforementioned theories, however, shows that the micro-foundation, or particular characteristics of HEIs, fails to get the due attention (Gornitzka, 1999; Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999). To fill this gap, this dissertation, therefore, focuses on incorporating the particular characteristics of HEIs; emphasis is especially given to the structure and nature of HEIs. This is done on the assumption that some fundamental characteristics of HEIs have the potential to affect their ability to and capacity for change (Clark, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999). Moreover, it is believed that having a deep understanding of these features of HEIs can be of vital importance for understanding why and how universities and colleges respond to environmental pressures, and why and how policies fail or are implemented successfully (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 11). Following the work of Gornitzka (1999), the particular characteristics of HEIs make the organisation of universities different from others are organisational complexity, disciplinary differences, and organisational culture, among others.

There is a widely accepted understanding within higher education researchers that “the nature and evolution of higher education systems and individual institutions are unique in relation to other policy and government agencies” (Fairweather & Blalock, 2015, p. 7). The peculiarity of HEIs to other public or private organisations is evident in terms of the purpose (Duderstadt, 2007; Kerr, 1982), complexity (Clark, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999), and culture (Maassen, 1996) of higher education. HEIs regardless of their type and location of governance (i.e., whether governed by ministries, state and local government or private), have multiple purposes: the production of knowledge (education), the attentiveness of community (service) and the advancement of research (Duderstadt, 2007; Kerr, 1982). This implies “all institutions of higher education (as well as the systems in which they

operate) share the same challenges: providing quality instruction and (for many) quality research, maintaining or increasing access and managing budgets while controlling cost and price” (Fairweather & Blalock, 2015, p. 7). In other words, HEIs have multifaceted missions, which create serious questions for the governing bodies on how to manage such multipurpose institutions while balancing their interrelated missions and the interest of their constituents.

Some studies underline the high degree of structural differentiation and complexity that affect the capacity and capability for collective action within universities (see Clark, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999). To begin with, researchers in the field of higher education suggest that some structural features make higher education ‘hard to move’ (Birnbaum, 2001; Clark, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999). The governance structure and the distribution of authority are the prime concern here. It is evidently true that authority in HEIs is characterised by professional expertise where professional autonomy is emphasised (Mintzberg, 1983) and loosely-coupled (Weick, 1976), and in which the relationships among internal units and their respective activities are weak. Every academic unit in a university functions independently, with a low degree of dependence between them. This implies that “the distribution of decision making responsibilities and the degree of institutional fragmentation are important factors conditioning the extent to which coordinated change in as well as to higher education organisations is possible or likely” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 12). In connection with this, HEIs are considered to be ‘bottom heavy’ (Clark, 1983) which means that the concentration of authority is at the lowest levels of the university, and thus the ability to enact collective action is low and resistance to change is high. In this context, “what appears to be ‘special’ about universities [...] is that they function through less rationalised, looser connections, they use unclear technologies and are characterised by weak authority” (Reale & Primeri, 2015, p. 23).

Organisational complexity is also believed to have a strong effect on many aspects of HEIs, especially in their efforts to bring about organisational changes. Its effect is multifaceted; complexity specifically has a major effect on structural conditions, on processes within the organisation, and on relationships between the organisation and its environment (Hall & Tolbert, 2005). It seems that organisational complexity is also highly related to implementation. This means in complex organisations the implementation of policies and programs are not easy tasks, and can be used as an instrument to examine the how and the why of organisational processes, changes and implementation (Hall & Tolbert, 2005). Organisational complexity is also believed to determine the speed and nature of the implementation of reforms (Pollitt, Birchall, & Putman, 1998).

Another important factor that should be taken into account in studying a particular institutional change in universities is to equally and carefully study the organisational cultures of HEIs which are supposed have a significant effect on the ability of universities to adapt to particular changes or new management models. Studies in the higher education field show that the cultural features in higher education should be regarded as playing

decisive role in the context of organisational change and adaptation (Maassen, 1996; Sporn, 1996). In this dissertation, higher education culture is defined as “a set of values, beliefs, principles, rules, and materials that shape human behaviour” (Hackett, 1990, p. 242-243). Higher education researchers underline that HEIs are characterised by strong culture, which might affect their responses to changes. This is mainly because universities are one of the most complex social organisations, and have a highly distinctive culture (Sporn, 1996). Culture differences in HEIs are mainly exhibited in disciplines. Disciplinary difference, which is a specific characteristic of higher education, has a major impact on introducing and implementing a particular change (Gornitzka, 1999). HEIs are organised in faculties of schools that encompass one or more similar disciplines. Each discipline has significant features, such as varying culture, teaching and research functions, which are challenging to work with in implementing changes. Studies show that disciplines have different cultures, ranging from the sciences to the humanities (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Csizmadia, 2006). Disciplines are also characterised by well-developed and relatively clear structures of knowledge (Becher & Trowler, 2001). However, there also exist less integrated and more ambiguous activities inside each discipline. Thus, an analysis of how features of diverse disciplinary culture affect the applicability of BMTs in HEIs is an important aspect of this study.

The nature and complexities of organisations, which are inherent to universities as a particular organisational form and as social institutions, with direct implications for the ways in which universities respond to external pressures and accomplish their missions, are summarised below. Pinheiro (2012) and Pinheiro, Benneworth and Jones (2012) provide important major ambiguities that make universities complex and unique organisations, and which have direct implications for accomplishing their missions. The first of these is *ambiguity of history*, which is related to the “historical trajectory of universities as organisational entities embedded in a given regional, national, and international context” (Pinheiro, 2012, p. 38). This shows that universities are rooted in distinct national systems (Clark, 1995), characterised by remarkable stability or inertia (Frank & Gabler, 2006), unique internal structures, practices and identities-path dependent (Clark, 1972; Krucken, 2003), and where change is largely considered an incremental, disjointed, and contradictory process (Birnbaum, 1988; Clark, 1983).

The second organisational complexity is related to *ambiguity of intention* and shows the complexity associated with the social role or mission of universities. This indicates that universities are forced to accomplish multiple functions or missions (Trow, 1970) exerted by diverse external constituents (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008) that have contradictory vested interests (Clark, 1983; de Boer, & Stensaker, 2007). This in turn might have consequences for the organisational response of universities.

The third ambiguity that marks universities as complex organisations is the *ambiguity of understanding* that shows the relationship between the input, throughput and output of universities. Universities are considered ‘black-box organisations’ (Birnbaum, 1988;

Maassen & Stensaker, 2005) where the process of converting inputs into outputs is difficult to measure. Universities use complex technologies (e.g., teaching and research) (Musselin, 2007) to produce and distribute knowledge to the environment, and thus their outcomes are unpredictable (Taylor, 2006). In addition, universities are known to function in very dynamic and volatile external environments (Kehm & Stensaker, 2009).

As briefly mentioned above, the fourth organisational complexity factor is the *ambiguity of structure* that is related to how academic activities are organised and co-ordinated. Scholars in higher education research argue that universities are characterised by loosely-coupled structures (Birnbaum, 1988; Weick, 1976) that make the interaction between different academic units very weak. In addition to this, universities are bottom-heavy organisations (meaning that much of the authority is concentrated at the lowest levels of the organisation) (Clark, 1983), professional bureaucracies (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Mintzberg, 1994), and organised anarchies (Cohen & March, 1986) which is characterised by fluid participation, unclear technologies and problematic preferences, all of which affect the organisational responsiveness to external pressures. In this context, fluid participation refers to the “participants and decision makers’ involvement in higher education decisions vary over time both for the amount of time and effort they devote to them” (Reale & Primeri, 2015, p. 23). The issue of unclear technologies is related to the lack of comprehensive knowledge of higher education participants about the processes of HEIs, which usually lead them to make decisions based on trial-and-error procedures (Reale & Primeri, 2015). Similarly, problematic preference shows the fact that higher education decision makers and its members usually make decisions and choices in universities merely on a loose collection of preferences not on consistent and shared goals (March & Olsen, 1984).

Last but not least is the *ambiguity of meaning* that is “associated with the informal structures (values, norms, identities, etc.) and the role they play in internal dynamics and, consequently, in processes of adaptation and change” (Pinheiro, 2012, p. 40). Higher education scholars have shown that universities are value-rational organisations grounded in strong cultures, beliefs & ideologies (Clark, 1992; Dill, 1982), with various sub-cultures (Clark, 1983) or tribes (Becher & Trowler, 2001) fighting for territorial dominance, and which possess organisational sagas (Clark, 1972) and identities (Huisman et al., 2002). This study, therefore, tries to examine the organisational response of MU and its BAUs to external pressures, requirements and demands while taking into account the particular characterise of HEIs.

2.4 Conceptualising MU and its BAUs’ responses to BMT reforms

As discussed earlier in this chapter, one of the central features of the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories is the impact of the interaction or relationship between the external environment and the organisation in shaping organisational responses to the

technical and institutional environments' pressures. Two types of environments are worth considering here, namely the technical and institutional environments that are embedded in resource dependence and neo-institutional theories respectively (see Figure 2). In this context, the technical environment refers to the quest for efficiency and competition as critical factors for the survival of the university. This means the need for sustainable financial resources, materials and markets partly dictates the responses of MU and its BAUs to BMT reforms.

However, it is equally important to consider the role of the institutional environment in shaping change or stability in organisations, especially in educational organisations (Scott, 1992). Institutional environment is thus conceptualised in this study as the constellation of BMT-related rules, regulations, pressures, demands, requirements and expectations that mainly emanate from the external environment, in this case the government and other major stakeholders. Taken together, this study assumes that the responsiveness of MU and its BAUs to their institutional environments determines their chances of acquiring both resources and legitimacy. As a result, the technical environment, which is emphasised by resource dependency theory, is subsumed under the institutional environment. In light of this, the adoption of BMT reforms by MU and its BAUs, and their perceptions of and responses to BMTs, are conceptualised in terms of this environment-organisation relationship, which is accentuated in both perspectives.

As the reform processes of public HEIs in Ethiopia are dictated by the government, it is natural to expect the government to have a strong role in both the technical and institutional environments. The role of the government in the technical environment is as the major, if not the sole, entity in funding MU on one hand, and as the main consumer of the university's products and services on the other hand. In the institutional environment, the government and its subsidiary bodies are formally and informally involved in setting the rules of the game, which includes stipulating laws, rules, structures and management processes and organisational cultures inside the university. Therefore, the use of resource dependence and neo-institutional theories in examining the adoption of BMTs by MU and its BAUs is premised on the assumption that the effects of the reform tools are conditioned by the perceptions of external pressures by the university and its BAUs, the extent to which the university is subjected to external pressures, the capability of the university and its BAUs to respond to the perceived pressures, the levels of structural integration of the introduced BMTs with the core values, norms, practices and policies of the university and its BAUs, and the extent of institutionalising the new programmes and intervention activities.

Similarly, this study also addresses how the BMTs are institutionalised in the university and its BAUs. In this context, institutionalisation is defined as the process by which the new interventions, programmes and activities introduced by the BMTs are incorporated into a system of existing structures (Scott, 1995). The institutionalisation process of BMTs in MU and its BAUs are conceptualised by focusing on the *regulative*, *normative*, or *cognitive* approaches (Scott, 1995) chosen to adopt the reform tools. *Regulative processes*

refers to the extent of setting the formal rule, monitoring, and sanction activities to adopt the BMTs in the university. In this sense, institutionalisation occurs when the university and its BAUs find it expedient to comply with the new rules and activities. The *normative process*, however, emphasises the extent to which the response of the university and its BAUs are grounded in a collective sense of what is appropriate for them. In this regard, the university and its BAUs follow the normative rules when they think or perceive the rules are morally and legally correct. Therefore, institutionalisation of BMTs likely to occur as the university and its academic community deem it socially responsible to accept the informal obligations. Cognitive processes, however, targets an organisational wide acceptance of the values of activities, interventions, and programmes. In this context, the institutionalisation of BMTs in MU and its BAUs is to occur as they take the new rules, values and practices for granted in the belief that a particular way of doing activities are the best way.

The level of the government's involvement in the Ethiopian higher education system is very strong. The government has a make-or-break influence on all aspects of universities' endeavours. It is also important to note that universities have multiple other important constituents that have strategic interests in the services the university and its BAUs provide to their customers. Therefore, the level of dependency of MU and its BAUs on government can be determined by the importance of governmental resources and the availability of other possible resource providers. The new Higher Education Proclamation (HEP), No. 650/2009, grants universities substantial autonomy to administer and govern their core activities. According to this new higher education law, universities are free to set up their organisational structures, and to introduce reforms, programmes and activities that aim to achieve academic and research excellence. Therefore, conceptualising MU and its BAUs' responses to BMT-related pressures demands a clear assessment of the role of the government in setting the rules of the game vis-à-vis the institutional autonomy of the university that is granted by the new HEP, the influence of other stakeholders, and the position and the nature of the university and its BAUs in the adoption processes of BMTs.

In general, this study presumes two major factors, namely the institutional environment and the organisational context, shape the organisational response of the university to BMT reforms. As elaborated above, institutional environments are conceptualised in terms of the exertion of BMT-related pressures, and the requirements and expectations of the external environment, and thus the responses of MU and its BAUs are largely shaped by resource and normative pressures. According to Oliver (1991) the institutional environment pressures, with which the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories correspond, and the organisational responses can be analysed in light of their cause, content, constituents, control and context. Therefore, this study expects the organisational response of MU and its BAUs to BMT reforms to depend on their perceptions of external factors: why MU and its BAUs are being pressured (cause), who is exerting the pressures (constituents), what the pressures consist of or what MU and its BAUs are expected to perform (content), how and by what means the pressures are exerted (control), and the environmental condition

of MU and its BAUs where the pressures are exerted (context). The combination of both theories might thus shade light on how organisational responses to external pressures are conditioned by the existing objective resource dependency and the way HEIs perceive their institutional environments and how they act to control and avoid dependencies to ensure institutional autonomy (Gornitzka, 1999; Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999).

As shown in Figure 2, at the core of the organisational response of MU and its BAUs to BMT pressures is the organisational context of the university. It has been argued that any change initiative that is not compatible with basic organisational values and culture are likely to be resisted or avoided (e.g., Brunsson & Olsen, 1997; March & Olsen, 1996). This implies that if the government-initiated BMTs are to be adopted effectively within MU and its academic units, there should be at least a normative match between the values and beliefs associated with the reform tools and the basic characteristics of the university. This is premised on the assumption that the interaction between the institutional environment and the particular characteristics of the university and its academic units determine the organisational response to externally-imposed reforms (Gornitzka, 1999), in this case the BMTs' pressures. In other words, the internal processes (i.e., certain structural features and cultural identities) are important to explain why and how universities and academic units change and why reforms fail or succeed (Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999). Therefore, in this study certain particular characteristics of HEIs that make universities complex institutions are used as tools for interpreting the organisational response of MU and its BAUs.

As elaborated in Section 2.3, the particularities of universities fall broadly into three categories, namely organisational complexity, disciplinary differences and organisational culture (Clark, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999). Moreover, there are a number of important elements that are in one way or another related to these broad categories. These are multiplicity of functions or missions (Trow, 1970), coalition of vested interests (de Boer & Stensaker, 2007; Clark, 1983), diverse external constituents and stakeholders (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008), universities' activities as black-box processes (Birnbaum, 1988; Maassen & Stensaker, 2005) complex technologies in teaching and research (Musselin, 2007) and unpredictable outcomes (Taylor, 2006), volatile and dynamic external environments (Kehm & Stensaker, 2009), incremental and disjointed changes (Clark, 1983; Birnbaum, 1988), loosely-coupled structures (Birnbaum, 1988; Weick, 1976); bottom-heavy authority structures (Clark, 1983; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010); professional bureaucracies (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Mintzberg, 1983; 1994); organisational anarchies (Cohen & March, 1986); value-rational organisations grounded in strong cultures with their own beliefs and ideologies (Clark, 1992; Dill, 1982); the existence of sub-cultures (Clark, 1983) and tribes fighting for territorial dominance (Becher & Trowler, 2001) among others.

As shown in Figure 2, the next key elements in the organisational responses of MU and its BAUs are the nature of the responses (MU, 2008), the response strategies (Oliver, 1991), the levels of structural integration with the values, norms, beliefs and practices (Dass & Parker, 1996 in Siegel, 2006) of MU and its BAUs, and the institutionalisation process. In

this context, the nature of the organisational response refers to the activities, programmes, interventions, or programmes carried out by MU and its academic units when confronted with BMT pressures. Both BPR and BSC reforms advocate for effectiveness and efficiency in the work processes of an organisation. BPR questions the status quo of an organisation by “disregarding all existing structures and procedures and inventing completely new ways of accomplishing work” (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p. 33). In the realm of higher education, BPR targets transforming the core-processes, structures and cultures of an organisation, placing institutional mission before disciplinary priorities, avoiding unnecessary programmes, re-examining and redefining long-held assumptions, finding new ways of measuring performance, and reorganising the internal reward structure of universities (Birnbaum, 2001; Penrod & Dolence, 1992). Moreover, despite the fact that BSC is not a radical organisational tool, it shares the basic aspects of BPR, such as effectiveness and efficiency of performance, by focusing on the strategic alignment of organisational goals with the national goals of the country. This means academic units, irrespective of their disciplinary differences and foci, are supposed to align their goals with the goals of both the university and the country.

Taking these basic principles of both reform tools, the organisational responses of MU and its BAUs are interpreted based on the efforts they have made to restructure their core processes (i.e., teaching and research and community service), reorganise the structure of the university and its academic units, introduce decentralised management systems, establish quality assurance units, implement modular curriculum approaches, and introduce new planning and performance management tools among others. The central question, however, remains whether these interventions or programmes have been properly adopted or not based on the requirements and the overall objectives of the reform tools.

As elaborated in the above discussion, Oliver (1991) combines resource dependence and neo-institutional theories to better understand organisational response to institutional environment pressures. The basic assumption is that organisations choices and actions are determined by various external pressures and demands, and that organisations must respond to survive. However, this assertion does not necessarily mean that organisations simply take for granted all of the institutional environment pressures, but rather that they may make strategic choices and evaluate the extent to which their actions enhance or constrain their likelihood of getting the resources (Goodstein, 1994) and social support or legitimacy they need (Meyer & Rowan, 1991). As a result, it is likely that organisations employ multiple strategies ranging from passive conformity to active resistances to respond to institutional environment pressures. This study takes Oliver’s (1991, p. 152-159) typology of organisations’ strategic responses to external environmental pressures to analyse and interpret the response strategies MU and its BAUs used to the pressures to adopt BMTs.

As discussed later in Chapter 4, the Ethiopian higher education system operates under the strong control of the government and it is thus reasonable to expect that universities conform to the demands, requirements and pressures of the government. Studies also show that HEIs adopt government-initiated reforms to look legitimate in the eyes of the

government that controls vital resources (Maassen & Gornitzka, 1999). It is also equally important to note how important the government resources are to the university and the availability of alternative resources. However, reports in the case university show that both BPR and BSC were sent to universities by giving them relative autonomy to decide how to adopt them based on their internal organisational assessments (MU, 2008). Of course, however, it is still difficult to expect MU and its BAUs to use active defiance strategies to respond to all BMT pressures. This study thus expects to find various response strategies based on the institutional and national contexts of the university and the country respectively.

Moreover, the analysis and interpretation of the organisational response of MU and its BAUs in this study is also made based on the level of structural integration of BMT pressures with the values, norms, beliefs, practices and policies of the university and its academic units. For example, Siegel (2006) following the work of Dass and Parker (1996) in his study of diversity-related pressures in universities, argues that the responses of universities to diversity pressures can be characterised by their level of structural integration with the prevailing organisational practices, activities, and values. Therefore, according to Dass and Parker (1996 in Siegel, 2006), the organisational response for diversity related pressures may be either episodic, programmatic, or process directed (Dass & Parker, 1996 in Siegel, 2006). Episodic responses show that universities may respond to institutional pressures, requirements and expectations in an ad hoc fashion. It focuses on addressing immediate problems with immediate solutions, and generally the responses may be detached from the organisation's normal operating procedures, structures, and activities (Dass & Parker, in Siegel, 2006). Programmatic responses refer to when the new interventions or programmes created in response to the pressures of the institution are designed to function superficially as separate and independent initiatives without having a strong relationship with the core missions of the organisation. Unlike the episodic and programmatic responses, the process approach, however, shows the interconnectedness of the response with the core values, practices and structures of the organisation. For Dass and Parker (1996), the process-directed response is the highest level of structural integration response to institutional pressures as these types of responses are well integrated with the organisation's values, beliefs and practices.

Therefore, in line with this explanation, the adoption of BPR and BSC at MU and its academic units is also analysed and interpreted with regard to whether the responses of MU and its BAUs to BMT pressures are well-incorporated and interconnected with the regular practices, values and norms of the university. In this study, it is argued that the level of structural integration of the responses of MU and its academic units to BMT-related pressures is associated with the response strategies, the particular characteristics of universities, and the nature of the reform tools. As discussed elsewhere in this study, the reform tools are government-initiated and obligatory reform tools, and MU and its academic units are expected to use various strategies to respond to their pressures and requirements. This study thus expected that the response strategies MU and its BAUs

chose in one way or another influenced the level of structural integration of the reform pressures with the university's values and practices.

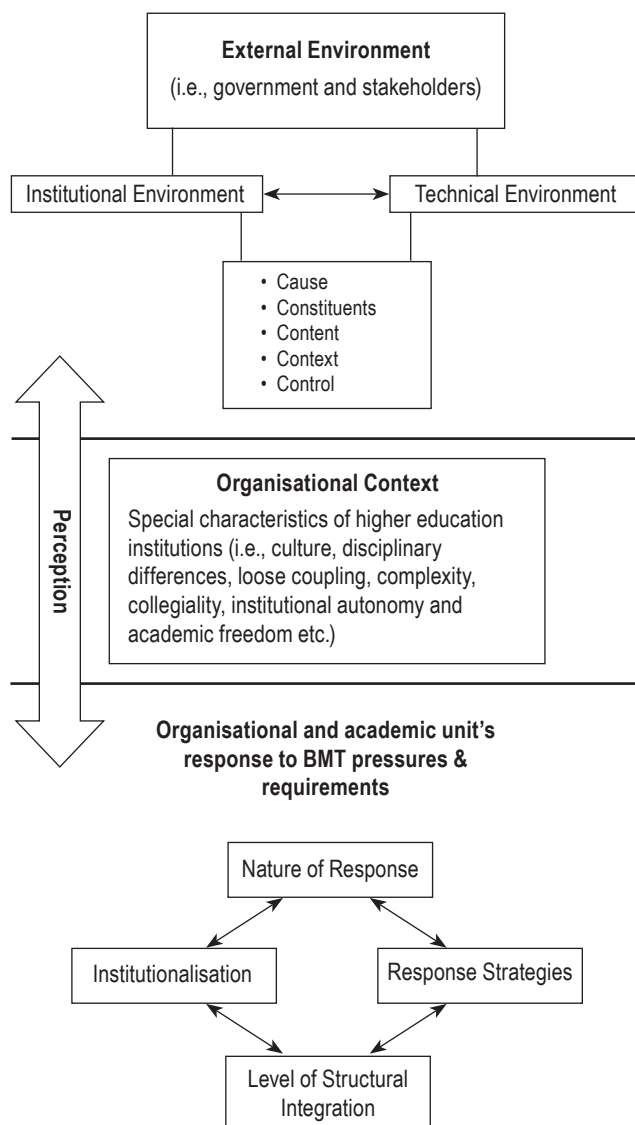


Figure 2. Theoretical framework
Source: Adapted from Sigel, 2006, p. 468.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the methodological considerations and research design of the study. First, it presents the research paradigm that guides the methodological choice of the study. Then it provides the research design employed in the study with respect to case selection, data collection, analysis and trustworthiness.

3.1 Methodological choice

The study employed a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methodologies are a well-known research approach in the social sciences, and they mainly focus on understanding, describing and discovering meaning in its context (Merriam, 1998). They particularly seek to understand a given research problem, topic, people, event or institution from the perspectives of the informants in particular settings (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). In other words, qualitative research provides the opportunity for researchers to thoroughly understand the views of informants, such as the contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and views of people towards a social phenomenon in its context (Punch, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 2000; Yin, 2009). In this respect, the strength of qualitative research is its potential to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given phenomenon or issue in real-life contexts (Yin, 2009). Therefore, the choice of this approach was guided by the purpose of the research and the research questions that follow it. The central purpose of the study was to interpret and understand the perceptions and responses of MU and its BAUs towards the adoption of BMTs from informants' points of view.

3.2 Research strategy

Since this study is located in the field of higher education, which falls under the umbrella of social science research, it was deemed important to begin by briefly deliberating on the founding paradigms of social research, "from which the operative procedures emerged, and which subsequently guided the development of empirical research" (Corbetta, 2003, p. 12). In this sense, a paradigm is a fundamental set of beliefs and views about the world and how it should be studied and understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In social science, it is common to see qualitative researchers approach their studies with a particular paradigm

or world view (Creswell, 1998). Accordingly, in much social science research there are two 'organic' and 'opposing' views of social reality. These can mainly be categorised as positivism and interpretivism (Corbetta, 2003; Kezar, 2006). According to Corbetta (2003, p. 12), these two paradigms "have generated two coherent and highly differentiated blocks of research techniques". Most importantly, their differences can be vividly seen in their philosophical origins, or how they respond to "fundamental interrogative[s] facing social research and scientific research in general" (Corbetta, 2003, p. 12). Scholars share the view that the contrasts between these two paradigms are located in their *ontological base*, which focuses on the nature and existence of a phenomenon or the objective world; *epistemological base*, which is also characterised by the constituents of knowledge and the form this knowledge would take; and *methodological base*, referring to the preferable means of generating that knowledge (Corbetta, 2003; Della Porta & Kneating, 2008). However, as this study was only interested in studying and understanding the perceptions and responses of MU and its academic units to the pressures, demands and requirements of the reform tools, an interpretive paradigm was found to be relevant. Therefore, the choice of interpretive paradigm in this study was made on three basic assumptions, namely ontological, epistemological and methodological.

Unlike positivism, which stresses objective realities, the ontological assumption of interpretivism is that there are multiple realities. The knowable world is that of meanings attributed by individuals and organisations (Corbetta, 2003; Kezar, 2006). These constructed realities vary in form and content among the individuals, groups or institutions that hold them. In other words, "there is not a single knowable reality that we can access since all understanding is filtered through human beings, but that people construct and interpret knowledge and therefore knowledge is relative and specific" (Kezar, 2006, p. 343). In this context, this study treated the views of informants as equally important to show the realities on the ground from different perspectives.

Interpretivist and positivist outlooks also differ on two major epistemological issues. These are the relationship between the researcher and his/her object, and the forms of knowledge it takes (Corbetta, 2003; Kezar, 2006). The first epistemological assumption of interpretivism, unlike positivism, emphasises non-dualism or non-objectivity, whereby the researcher and the object of the study are not separate but interdependent. In other words, it aims at understanding subjective knowledge. The second assumption is based on the forms of knowledge these two paradigms take. Qualitative researchers, who conduct their studies rooted in an interpretive paradigm, commonly "aim at understanding events by discovering the meanings human beings attribute to their behaviour and external world" (Della Porta & Kneating, 2008, p. 26). Consequently, the focus is on the search for meanings (i.e., contextual knowledge) not the search for laws about causal relationships between variables as in positivist research (Kezar, 2006).

Last but not least, an interpretive paradigm differs from positivism with regard to the methodological roots it advocates (Schwandt, 1998). In an interpretive paradigm the concern

is on empathetic interaction between the researchers and the people or objects under study. The realities on the ground are interpreted based on the interaction between the observer and the observed (Corbetta, 2003; Kezar, 2006). The researcher thus has the opportunity to see things from the perspective of the participants. Most importantly, knowledge is drawn from the realities studied on the ground, and is developed qualitatively based on analysis of cases not variables (Corbetta, 2003; Della Porta & Kneating, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, interpretive researchers do not predefine dependent and independent variables; instead they focus on the entire complexity of human interpretation as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). In general, interpretivism promotes the value of qualitative data in producing knowledge (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994), because it focuses on “how meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified within a specific context of human action” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 225).

Therefore, as the purpose of this study was to interpret and understand the organisational response of the case university and its academic units to the pressures and demands of BMTs, and thus the use of an interpretive paradigm was found to be methodologically relevant. The research questions of the study were set out in such a manner that individual perceptions and interpretations could determine the outcome of the research. This implies that BAUs and the university as organisational entities may exhibit different perceptions and understandings of the same reform process. The study presumed that respondents’ understandings, perceptions and knowledge are socially constructed and dependent upon the context they are situated in. This means the constructed realities vary in form and content among the individuals, groups, and cultures that they belong to. As discussed above, the use of an interpretive paradigm in a particular research project also determines the approach of the researcher. Interpretive researchers have the liberty to employ various nonlinear strategies to achieve their purposes (Kezar, 2006; Willis, 1995). As the purpose of an interpretive researcher is to understand how meanings are created, negotiated and sustained, the researcher largely focuses collecting relevant data that ensure he or she will find the uniqueness of a particular situation; this contributes to the underlying pursuit of contextual depth (Myers, 1997). One of the main advantages of using an interpretive paradigm is that data collection and analysis can be carried out simultaneously (Kezar, 2006). This helps the researcher to identify and generate relevant themes during the entire collection stage.

3.3 Research design

This study employed a case study design where the focus was to understand both the organisational and the basic academic units’ perceptions and responses to their increasingly changing environments. A case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a programs event, institution or social group, in a real-life context (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009). Several researchers have defined case study research design in different ways based on their

philosophical and disciplinary backgrounds (Merriam, 1988). However, it seems that most of them agree on the fact that case studies are used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political, and related contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2003). The benefits of using case studies for researchers are multifaceted. They give researchers the opportunity to gain a holistic and meaningful understanding of the characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2003, p. 4), the real-life events or contemporary phenomena explored using a case study design can be “individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and maturation of industries”. More importantly, the unique feature of case study design is its non-dependability on any particular method for data collection or analysis. In other words, a case study design is suited to all data sources (Merriam, 1988), including documents, archival records, interviews, field observations, etc. (Gray, 2004; Yin, 1994).

The choice of a case study approach in this study was premised mainly on the forms of the research questions the study was designed to answer; the role of the researcher on the actual events or phenomena being studied, and the extent of focus on contemporary events (Yin, 1994). As discussed in the introductory chapter, the main research questions of the study are basically “how” and “what”. These types of questions are important for the study, because they were used to understand the adoption process of BMTs at MU, and how MU as an organisational entity and its BAUs perceived and responded to these governance reforms. As elaborated above, the views, opinions and thinking of informants were important for interpreting the organisational responses at the university and academic unit levels. Therefore, the role of the researcher of this study was limited only to listening, understanding and interpreting informants’ narrations about the adoption of the reform processes. Moreover, the study focuses on contemporary events—the adoption of BMTs and organisational responses of the university—that cannot be affected by the researcher. Taking into account the aforementioned three factors, the choice of a case study approach seems to be an appropriate choice.

There are also some important decisions to be made when a researcher is thinking of using a case study design in his or her study. The first decision is commonly related to the definition of the unit(s) of analysis, and making sure the chosen unit(s) of analysis fits with the purpose of the study (Gray, 2004; Yin, 1994). The second important decision is the kind of case study that is going to be used. This decision is associated with whether to use a single- or a multiple-case design.

Table 3. Basic types of designs for case studies and underlying rationales

| | Single-case design | Multiple-case designs |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Holistic (single unit of analysis) | Type 1 | Type 3 |
| Embedded (multiple units of analysis) | Type 2 | Type 4 |

Source: Yin, 1994, p. 39.

As shown in Table 3, both single and multiple-case designs are variants within the same methodological framework (Yin, 1994; 2003). Within these two types there are also two classifications, namely unitary and multiple units of analysis. Practically speaking, this means that there are four main types of case study design: single-holistic, single-embedded, multiple-holistic, and multiple-embedded. Single-holistic and single-embedded case designs look somewhat similar, but they differ markedly in the number of units of analysis they address. A single-holistic case design, as the name indicates, is a holistic design in which the whole entity is considered as a single unit of analysis. A single-embedded case design, however, has both the unit of analysis as the single entity and as the subunits that comprise it. As a result, as this study focused on both the perceptions and responses of MU as an organisational entity and its BAUs as individual entities to BMT-related pressures and requirements, this study adopted a single-embedded case study design, because of the leverage it provides to examine more than one sub-unit of analysis. This approach helped the study to analyse MU as a single entity as well as consider the subunits that comprise it. In this case, the study treated MU as an organisational entity with a special focus on its top-level managers, such as the president, vice-president, board members, and head reform officers who are responsible for making decisions that have make-or-break effects for the university. The sub-units in this context refer to the BAUs of MU, namely colleges, departments and teams (MU, 2008) and the members that work inside them.

3.4 Case selection

Selecting a case is a crucial component of case study research design (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2003; Yin, 1994), as it provides the opportunity to thoroughly study a particular phenomenon (Stake, 2003), and determines the outcome of the research (Gray, 2004; Yin, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 25), the case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context ... in effect, your unit of analysis”. This means researchers must clearly identify the places, the events, activities, and documents that should be visited, observed, and examined respectively (Merriam, 1998) to best serve the purpose of the study. From this perspective, the organisational perceptions and responses of MU and its academic units to BMTs’ pressures and requirements is the case of the study. Once the case was defined and selected, the next important step was to decide what the case of the study would not be. This was premised on the common understanding that “there is a tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad or a topic that has too many objectives for one study” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 546). This problem, however, can be solved by placing boundaries on the selected case (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). Some of the strategies to bind a case, which ensure that the study remains within a reasonable scope, include time and place (Creswell, 2003); time and activity (Stake, 1995); and definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this study, clear boundaries were established in terms of providing concise definitions of organisational perceptions and responses to BMTs' pressures and requirements (see Chapter 2), and the time and place of the study. Despite the fact that the public HEIs of Ethiopia are known to be less diversified in terms of their organisation, structure, governance, orientation, curriculum and missions (Ashcroft, 2010; Saint, 2004), each public university might have interesting and unique stories about the processes of BMT adoption that were initiated by the government. However, due to the vastness of the higher education system¹¹ of the country, only MU was chosen as the case for the study. Apart from MUs' reputation as the 'best'-performing institution in terms of expanding its size (e.g., type and number of programmes, student enrolment capacity, etc.) and implementing several reform initiatives of the government over the past few years (MU, 2010), it was awarded the "quality of excellence" award by the national quality awarding institution in 2012. The choice of MU as a case study institution was also determined by three important criteria for case selection, namely convenience, access and geographic proximity (Yin, 1994). I previously worked in this university as a graduate assistant lecturer and therefore had the opportunity to observe first-hand some of the recent changes that occurred there and have good knowledge about the history of the university. My prior experience as member of the academy and the connection still I have with various members of the university community helped me to access the case and its related important information and documents easily.

3.5 Selection of academic units

The selection of BAUs was done based on Biglan's (1973b) typology and classification of disciplines (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Biglan (1973b) provides a popular classification of disciplines on the assumption that disciplinary differences can be categorised into three dimensions: hard—soft, pure—applied and life—nonlife (see Table 4). In addition to this, following the works of Biglan and other scholars, Becher and Trowler (2001) divide disciplines based on their cultural differences. They categorise disciplines by identifying the cognitive dimension¹² representing the epistemological aspects (the 'intellectual territory') of the discipline, and the social aspect of the discipline (social features of academic 'tribes') (Csizmadia, 2006). As a result, the use of Biglan (1973b) and Becher and Trowler (2001), typology and classification of discipline in the selection of BAUs was done with the desire to include a good representation of the views and opinions of all academic units located in the various disciplines of the university. Therefore, following Biglan's typology, all the seven colleges that were located on the five campuses of MU were divided into four categories, namely hard—pure, hard—applied, soft—pure and soft—applied (see Table

11 At the time of the data collection there were 31 public universities in Ethiopia, and 10 additional public universities were under construction (MoE, 2014), not to mention the more than 50 private universities and hundreds of technical and vocational colleges in the country.

12 The cognitive dimension incorporates both a continuum from hard to soft sciences and a continuum from the pure to the applied sciences (see Becher & Trowler, 2001).

4) based on their shared attributes and characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). After categorising the colleges, four colleges were selected purposively (one from each category, that means one from the hard—pure, one from the hard—applied, one from the soft—pure and one from the soft—applied) to ensure that at least each category was represented. However, it should be noted that such classification of disciplines are increasing becoming blurred (Ronald, 2010). For instance, during the data collection the researcher observed that the formation of colleges, schools and institutes in MU was not done taking into account the above classification of disciplines. It was learnt that some colleges in MU had the elements of both hard—pure and hard—applied. Therefore, to avoid such overlaps, colleges were selected purposively that were believed to be represent the identified category.

Table 4. Biglan's classification of academic disciplines

| | Hard | | Soft | |
|----------------|--|--|---|--|
| | Non-Life | Life | Non-life | Life |
| Pure | Astronomy Chemistry Geology Mathematics Physics | Botany Entomology Microbiology Physiology Zoology | English German History Philosophy Russian Communications | Anthropology Political science Psychology Sociology |
| Applied | Ceramic engineering Computer science Mechanical Engineering Civil Engineering Nuclear Engineering | Agronomy Dairy science Horticulture Agricultural economics | Accounting Finance Economics | Educational administration Secondary education Special education Vocational education |

Source: Biglan, 1973b, p. 207.

As the views and opinions of the academics were part and parcel of the empirical evidence, departments that were located inside the selected colleges were also included in the study. However, during the data collection, it was learnt that some of departments were formed or merged recently (or at least after some of the major reforms had been accomplished), therefore, they were left out from the selection process because they were in no position to provide important data for the study. To fill this gap, purposive sampling was utilised within the identified four colleges to select four well-established departments (i.e., one department from each selected colleges) that had the potential to provide ample information (Patton, 2002) about the reform processes in general and the adoption of BMTs in particular (see Table 4). As a result, four deans of colleges, four department heads and four members of the academic staff, in total 12 informants were selected during the interview.

3.6 Data collection

One of the main characteristics of case study research design is its non-dependence on any particular method for data collection or data analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). It is a method characterised by the use of multiple sources of evidence (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003), which in turn serve as the basis for data triangulation (Yin, 2003) that also leads to data credibility and trustworthiness (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Major data sources in qualitative case study normally include, but are not limited to: documents, archival records, minutes, interviews, field and participant observations (Creswell, 2009b, Gray, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). The collected multiple data sources in a case study, instead of being handled individually, are converged in the analysis processes (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This means, “each data source is one piece of the ‘puzzle’, with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). This combination strengthens the findings, as the multiple types of data are interwoven together to produce an in-depth understanding of the case. As result, this study employed multiple sources of evidence to understand the organisational perceptions and response of the university and the selected academic units.

Interviews are the most common data source for qualitative case studies (Bryman, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to informants’ perceptions and experiences, and viewpoints on a particular topic (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007). There are various forms of interview strategies that can be utilised to obtain important and abundant data through a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2007). Based on how much control the interviewer wishes to have over the interview processes, interviews range from highly structured styles, in which questions are determined and designed before the interview, to unstructured, where the researcher has a clear plan, but minimum control over how the informant answers. In between these two ends of the continuum, there is the semi-structured interview, in which the interviewer uses a guide with questions and topics that should be covered. In this case, the interviewer prepares standardised questions, but has some discretion about the order in which questions are asked. In other words, the interviewer may ask the same questions for all informants, but the order of the questions, the wording of the questions, and the type of follow-up questions may vary accordingly (Merriam, 1998). It is indicated that a semi-structured interview style is useful when the researcher aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic and the answers provided (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

In this study, semi-structured interviewing was used as the primary source of data collection. This would allow the researcher “to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided” (Harrell & Bradley, 2009, p. 27). In addition to this, it provides the opportunity for the researcher to add probes based on informants’ responses to ensure interviewees covered all of the topics under consideration in the study (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Gray, 2004) and to incorporate important issues or themes likely to emerge during the interviews that the researcher would not have expected otherwise.

As per the purpose of the study, analysis of the organisational perceptions and responses were treated at two levels: the university as a single organisational entity, and the selected BAUs as individual entities. Therefore, the interviews targeted two groups of informants who were located both at the university level, such as vice presidents, university reform experts and persons who were active participants during the implementation processes of BMTs; and at the BAU level, such as deans, department heads, and lecturers. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the separation of informants at university and academic units' levels was done to have broader understanding of the response of the university both from the perspective of governance, management and leadership at the university and BAU levels, and to grasp the disciplinary dimension or the particular characteristics of universities from the views of the academics. In total, 18 informants participated in the study, six from the top university management and 12 from the BAUs.

Interview protocols were developed based on important elements of the conceptual framework of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to collect detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational and flexible (Harrell & Bradley, 2009) (see Appendix I for examples of the interview protocols). Despite the fact that the interview guides shared similar questions for all informants, they were somewhat different for university leaders, deans, department heads, and lecturers based on the positions they held and the information they had. The main questions for university leaders were related to the role the university played during the implementation processes of BMTs both at the university's and academic units' levels, the relationships with the government, their understanding about the extent of problems in the university, the readiness of the university to adopt the reform tools, their perceptions of BMTs, and their response as organisational entities met the requirements of the reform tools set by the government.

Moreover, the study also focused on obtaining the views and opinions of BAUs and their members. As operationalised in Section 3.5 above, BAUs refer to colleges, departments and course teams that are active in the teaching and research and community service (RCS) activities of the university. For these participants, the interview guides covered issues related to their perceptions about BMTs; changes in their institutional context, such as teaching, RCS, institutional autonomy, academic freedom, planning and measurement systems; new structures and curricula; how they responded to such initiatives; and how their responses were structurally integrated with the values and norms of the university. In addition to this, the interview guide also addressed their perceptions about the nature of the academic organisation vis-à-vis the pressures of BMTs and how this affected their responses.

After the interview guides were carefully developed and rechecked by colleagues, and before the formal interview process began, key informants were contacted via email and phone to request appointments for interviewing them. Even though most of the key informants accepted the researcher's request, it was also important to have a supporting letter from Tampere University that showed the legality of the research endeavour¹³. The

13 It is a common procedure in Ethiopia for researchers to produce supporting letters from their institutions to carry out any research activities.

supporting letter was given to the research director of MU, and the responsible person sent letters to all units or informants (identified by the researcher) selected to participate in the interviews and to provide important documents related to the reform tools. However, before the actual interviews began, the interview guides were tested on two members of the university, and based on that some adjustments and modifications were made to some of the questions after identifying some minor problems.

The interviews were carried out in August-October 2014 at Mekelle University in Ethiopia. Most of the interviews were conducted in two Ethiopian languages, namely Tigrigna and Amharic, and in English as well based on the preferences of the informants. The researcher approached all interviewees by explaining the purpose of the research and the research ethics that were stated in the research protocol, such as keeping the anonymity of the interviewees. As a result, with the approval of the interviewees, all the conversations were audio taped and transcribed accordingly. Most of the transcriptions were done soon after the interviews were carried out in order to keep the whole sense and impressions of the informants and the settings. This was also supported by taking field notes. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 2.15 hours depending on the knowledge of the informants and their experiences with the reform processes, the availability of time the informants had, and the saturation of the data obtained prior to their interview. After the transcriptions and interpretations were made, they were sent to four key informants for comments, which were then incorporated into the original documents.

However, examining the perceptions and responses of the university and its BAUs through interviews alone cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the BMTs' adoption processes. Therefore, it was necessary to complement the interviews with a thorough document analysis. As discussed in the introductory paragraph of this section, the study also relied on important official documents as a secondary source of data directly or indirectly relating to the reform processes. These documents contain vital information about the reform process that were adopted in the past few years, the governance system of the university, and the strategies and justifications given for the reform tools. These documents include the policy documents and directions sent from the government to adopt the reform tools, the study results of various taskforces established to implement BPR and BSC, the strategic plan of the university, legislation, training manuals and guidelines produced during and after the implementation of BMTs, the cascading process of BSC, the quarterly and annual reports of the university to the MoE, reports of colleges to the university and the budgeting procedures of the university among others. The use of documents in this study had two benefits; it provided a way to cross check the results of the interviews with the official documents of the university, and it helped the researcher to formulate the interview guides during the interview processes based on the information found in the documents.

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative researchers have argued that research design, data collection and analysis are simultaneous and continuous processes (Burgess, 1984a; Habenstein, 1970). This means data analysis in qualitative research is part and parcel of the research design (Stake, 1995). Studies on qualitative research share the view that data analysis is all about going through data, breaking the data into manageable units, organising and categorising data to create patterns and meanings, and reporting them in understandable ways to readers (see Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Gibbs, 2007; Merriam, 1998). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999, p. 111), qualitative data analysis is “a search for general statements among categories of data”. Despite the fact that qualitative researchers have worked hard to resolve issues of why, when and how to employ qualitative methods, little is known about how to analyse qualitative data that are generated by various data collection methods (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Feldman, 1995; Silverman, 1993).

Studies show that qualitative analysis can be broadly categorised into two groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On one hand, there are those that emanate from particular theoretical and epistemological positions, such as conversation analysis (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998); phenomenological analysis (e.g., Smith & Osborn, 2003); grounded theory (e.g., Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 2000); discourse analysis (e.g., Burman & Parker, 1993) and narrative analysis (e.g., Murray, 2003). On the other hand, there are different data analysis approaches that are not theory- or epistemology-specific and that “can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6), such as thematic analysis (see Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). Qualitative researchers always face the daunting task of choosing between relevant analysis approaches. However, studies show that the type of data analysis technique(s) selected for a particular study mainly depends on the purpose, questions and methodological approach of the research (Schmidt, 2004).

Taking the above explanations into account, the data in this study were analysed employing a thematic analysis approach (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998). Apart from being criticised as a poorly demarcated and rarely-acknowledged (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001), and as being labelled as if there were no clear agreements about what it is and how you go about doing it (Boyatzis, 1998), thematic analysis is arguably the most commonly used approach to analysis of data in the social sciences or qualitative studies (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Tuckett, 2005). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. It mainly focuses in organising and describing data sets in rich detail (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Most of the time, it is also associated with repetitive occurrences of specific themes (Tuckett, 2005). Generally, even though thematic data analysis involves six steps, such as familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006,

p. 87), there is no linear way of data collection and analysis (Stake, 1995). This means researchers have the liberty to go back-and-forth with in the data analysis. In this study, the data analysis followed almost similar steps as mentioned above. However, before the actual data analysis began, preliminary data analysis was done by incorporating some emerging issues from the informants into the interview guides, and this helped to refine and reshape them. After the data collection was done, the data analysis was done through the following six steps, such as transcribing, translating, generating codes, searching for themes, defining and naming themes, and producing themes.

The first step was to transcribe the audio-taped data according to the types of language used during the interviews. The next step was to translate some of the transcribed data from interviews, which were done in Tigrigna and Amharic into English. In this step, some data that were considered irrelevant to the purpose of the study were removed. The transcribed and translated data were organised according to the unit of analysis identified in the study. Third, as thematic analysis deals with repetitive occurrences of a specific theme and looks for general statements among categories of data, codes were generated to classify words or sentences that were related to the research questions and conceptual framework used. The purpose of using these codes was mainly to describe and interpret the themes that were identified in the data. Fourth, however, as the generated codes were many in number, they were re-categorised to search for specific themes that held important variables about the data collected related to the research questions. The major criteria for identifying themes were recurrence and the level of patterned responses or meanings within the data set that captured the core message of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fifth step was to define and name the themes in accordance the purpose of the research. Finally, the refined themes were produced for analysis. Moreover, as documents were important sources of data for the study, relevant documents were selected, reviewed and coded accordingly to complement the data collected from the informants.

Even though the overall process of coding and analysis in qualitative research is largely dictated by an inductive approach that focuses on themes that emerge from the data, it cannot be free from deductive analysis totally. This means that it is also likely that patterns, themes, and categories commonly driven by the objective of the research, the theoretical frameworks used, the ontological and epistemological positions held, and the intuitive field of understanding of the researcher (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77) can influence the analysis of the data. In this context, on one hand, the interview questions were designed on the basis of the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study, which in turn affects the processes of code generation and identification of themes. On the other hand, the data set equally produced important codes and themes that contribute immensely to the analysis. This shows that coding is a continuous process that can be done before, during and after data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1984). As a result, the researcher tried to balance both inductive and deductive approaches of coding and analysis.

3.8 Trustworthiness

The prime purpose of every research study is to contribute knowledge that is believable, acceptable and trustworthy (Merriam, 1988). As a result, several studies have been done to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative data (see Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, it seems that the issue of trustworthiness in qualitative research is still being contested (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gibbs, 2007). Positivist researchers especially have questioned the use of concepts like validity and reliability in qualitative research in the same way as the quantitative researchers address the issues (Shenton, 2004). Despite these controversies, some scholars have incorporated the issues of validity and reliability in their qualitative work (e.g., see Silverman, 2001; Pitts, 1994). Others have also developed arguments that trustworthiness is all about convincing readers “that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Therefore, some scholars, by distancing themselves from the validity and reliability controversies, develop other indicators of trustworthiness. For example, Guba (1981), proposes four major criteria that can be used by qualitative researchers in addressing trustworthiness, such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Even though qualitative inquiry was still progressing (Lincoln, 1995), Guba’s classifications have been supported and followed by many qualitative researchers (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility, which is somewhat related to internal validity in quantitative research (Shenton, 2004), is at the core of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility particularly deals with the congruence of the findings with reality (Merriam, 1998) that can be supported by evidence. In other words, it addresses the relationship between the findings and the data. As shown in Table 3, the credibility of a particular study can be ensured by employing various provisions or strategies depending on the type and purpose of the research (Shenton, 2004). Hence, this study adopted some of the most commonly used credibility measures to ensure the credibility of the findings, such as adoption of appropriate and well-recognised research methods and triangulations.

Table 5. Four criteria of trustworthiness

| Quality criterion | Possible provisions made by researchers |
|------------------------|--|
| Credibility | Adoption of appropriate, well-recognised research methods Development of early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations Random sampling of individuals serving as informants Triangulation via use of different methods, different types of informants, and different sites Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues Negative case analysis Debriefing sessions between researchers and superiors Peer scrutiny of project Use of reflective commentary Descriptions of background, qualifications and experience of the researcher Member checks of data collected and interpretations/theories formed Thick descriptions of phenomenon under scrutiny Examination of previous research frame findings |
| Transferability | Provisions of background data to establish contexts of study and detailed descriptions of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made |
| Dependability | Employment of overlapping methods, In-depth methodological descriptions to allow study to be repeated |
| Confirmability | Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias Admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions Recognition of shortcomings in study's methods and their potential effects |

Source: Shenton, 2004, p. 73.

First, the adoption of well-established research methods refers to the use of correct operational measures for the concepts under study. This can be done by following and utilising well-established research methods that have been applied in previous similar research projects (Shenton, 2004). In this context, this means the line of questioning, the data collection methods, and the analysis techniques other comparable /studies have used. Considering this issue, this study did in-depth reviews of several similar studies and analysed them for possible academic and empirical gaps and the research methodology they employed. This observation helped the researcher to formulate the research questions, to use an appropriate conceptual framework, and to guide the data collection and analysis of the study. As a result, the discussion and conclusions were made and possible implications of the study were also suggested.

The second technique for ensuring credibility was triangulation. Qualitative researchers prefer to use the triangulation to ensure that a particular study is rich, robust, comprehensive and well-developed rather than as a tool for a method validation or verification as it is for quantitative researchers (Patton, 1990). The most common triangulation techniques are

methodological triangulation, which refers to checking the consistency of findings using different data collection methods; *investigator triangulation*, which is a technique whereby multiple experts are involved in reviewing the findings; *data triangulation*, which entails the use of multiple data sources with the same method; and *theory triangulation*, which can be accomplished when various conceptual frameworks or theories are used to interpret the data (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1990). Therefore, to ensure the credibility of this study method, data and theoretical triangulations were used. This was achieved by collecting multiple data through interviews (i.e. with individuals from the university's management body and those from the basic academic units) and by comparing documents from the case university and the MoE to enhance the interpretations of the findings. Similarly, the two theoretical perspectives (see Chapter 2) were also used to interpret the data set. Moreover, after the preliminary findings were produced, two experts in higher education research were involved in giving critical comments.

3.8.2 Transferability

As much as quantitative researchers worry about the external validity of their research findings, qualitative researchers have tried to address the applicability of their findings to other contexts by introducing the concept of transferability (Guba, 1981). The point of departure is that qualitative studies are specific to a limited context, so it is difficult to demonstrate that the findings are applicable to other contexts (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, it seems that qualitative researchers are obliged to look for other strategies to fill this gap. Transferability in the context of qualitative research refers to “the extent to which the case study facilitates the drawing of inferences by the reader that may have applicability in his or her own context or situation” (Lincoln & Guba, 1988, p. 18). This means the search for transferability is depended upon the reader not the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). In other words, “if practitioners [readers] believe their situations to be similar to that described in the study, they may relate the findings to their own positions” (Bassey, 1981 in Shenton, 2004, p. 69). The responsibility of the researcher is, therefore, only limited to ensuring that sufficient background information about the research project is provided to help the reader to make such a transfer (Firestone, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1988).

In addition to this, qualitative researchers underline the importance of providing sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under study to allow readers to have an ample understanding of the issue and provide them the opportunity to compare the results of the study with their situations or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, by following the above principle, this study addressed the issue of transferability by providing sufficient contextual information about the case institution, the research processes, and a detailed account of the field experiences to enable readers to compare the results of this study with their own contexts.

3.8.3 Dependability

Positivists focus on the reliability of the findings by testing whether the findings and conclusions of a particular study can be repeated by another researcher who works in similar contexts and conditions (Gray, 2004), or whether the measurement of a particular research procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 19). However, for qualitative researchers the changing nature of the phenomena being studied deters the applicability of the full concept of reliability in qualitative research as it is used in quantitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative researchers, however, introduced the concept of dependability to address this problem. As shown in Table 5, dependability, which is closely related with credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1988), is the third element for judging qualitative studies' trustworthiness and refers to the stability or consistency of the research processes used over time. Qualitative researchers have identified some important elements for checking the dependability of the findings and conclusion of a particular study, such the use of overlapping methods, in-depth methodological descriptions to allow the study to be repeated, and the conceptualising process of the study among others (see Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Shenton, 2004). This implies that the more consistent the researcher has been in the research process, the more dependable the results are (Webb et al., 2000). Accordingly, this study begins by providing a clear conceptualisation of the issues and the research processes followed in the study to help potential readers observe the research practices of the study.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is about whether the quality or objectivity of the results produced by the researchers are supported by the informants and by an independent inquirer. However, ensuring real objectivity in any research endeavour is a difficult process as researcher biases are inevitable (Patton, 1990). Therefore, to mitigate the problem of objectivity in qualitative studies, "steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preference of the researcher" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). In this study, in addition to the possible provisions stated in Table 5 (such as triangulation to reduce the effect of investigation bias, an admission of the researcher's beliefs and assumptions, and the inclusion of in-depth methodological descriptions to allow the integrity of research results to be scrutinised), the study used various references to literature and findings by other authors to confirm the researcher's interpretations. Moreover, the overall research processes and the findings of the study were reviewed by two researchers who have ample experience in qualitative data analysis.

4 THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

This chapter presents the context of the Ethiopian higher education landscape and its development since the establishment of the country's first university. It briefly introduces the historical background of the system, the structure and the nature of the governance reforms that have been implemented over the past few decades.

4.1 History of the Ethiopian higher education

Ethiopia is known to be one of the oldest civilisations in the world and possesses nearly two millennia of elite education linked to its Orthodox Church (Pankhurst, 1986; Saint, 2004). Ethiopia has a total population of more than 90 million (CSA, 2014), which makes the second-most-populous country in Africa next to Nigeria. Even though Ethiopia is endowed with abundant natural resources, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. It is characterised by an inefficient agrarian economy, which is vulnerable to frequent climate changes. In order to move from subsistence farming agriculture to a modern economy, Ethiopia has focused attention on the establishment and expansion of modern education since the turn of the 20th century.

The development of the Ethiopian higher education system has taken various forms over the past six decades. In this regard, Negash (2010) tries to broadly classify the political governance of Ethiopia based on the education policies of the three governments that have held power over the past 65 years. The first system of governance was the imperial system that emerged after the WWII and lasted until 1974. The second was the military regime that lasted until 1991. The third and the current is the federal system of governance that has come to power since 1991 (Negash, 2010). Studies show that these three periods of governance have brought varied impacts and shaped the educational development of Ethiopia differently (Negash, 2010; Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2005). It seems that their differences largely evidenced “[their] ambition to expand educational opportunities to all and [their] actual limitation in delivering an education outcome that contributes to the social and economic development of the country” (Negash, 2010, p. 7). Reviewing the three-governance landscape in terms of their educational policies and focuses provides a basis for understanding the development of the higher education sector, in terms of its size, governance and focus, in these three political landscapes. Therefore, this study tries to review some of the main developments and some special scenarios of these three periods: imperial (1950-1974), socialist/military (1974-1991), and federal (1991 to present).

4.1.1 The imperial system (1950-1974)

This was the first phase of the Ethiopian higher education system that witnessed the establishment of the first modern higher education system in the history of the country. Despite the long years of traditional, indigenous and church education, modern higher education in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon, which started in the 1950's with the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) (Saint, 2004; Teferra, 2003; Yizengaw, 2003). In 1961, UCAA had a total of 950 students, of whom 39 were female (Negash, 2010). The establishment of the UCAA was considered a breakthrough to the modernisation of the country's higher education system (see Saint, 2004; Wagaw, 1990; Yizengaw, 2003). Documents show that since the foundation of UCAA, other colleges were established around major urban areas, even though the system remained elite with very limited access to the majority of the population (Negash, 2010; Yizengaw, 2003). In the early stages of the foundation of UCAA, which was later changed to form Haileselassie I University in 1961, and following the opening of some other colleges, considerable successes were registered in meeting educational international standards (Saint, 2004; World Bank, 2004).

At the early stage of this period, the academic organisation of the new university and other colleges "were somewhat more American and less British than higher education systems in the former British colonies of East Africa" (Saint, 2004, p. 84). The size of the higher education system was very small; in 1970, the tertiary enrolment totalled only 4,500 out of a total population of 34 million (Saint, 2004). This means that even by sub-Saharan Africa standards enrolment was quite low (Yizengaw, 2003), and "the resulting tertiary enrolment ratio of 0.2 per cent was among the lowest in the world" (Saint, 2004, p. 84). Despite its small size and limited access to the majority of the population, this was largely considered an era of quality education compared with the subsequent two periods (Amare, 2007; Negash, 2010; Yizengaw, 1990). Studies show that the quality of the system was not only achieved by virtue of the elitist nature of the higher education system, but also by the governance approach instilled during that period (Amare, 2007 in Kahsay, 2012; Yizengaw, 1990). For example, this period was characterised by mutual cooperation between the state and universities and colleges whereby the role of the government was limited to providing assistance, rather than interfering in the internal affairs of the HEIs (Kahsay, 2012). In addition to this, the internal governance system was collegial which enabled academics to participate freely in the decision-making of activities of the university and colleges, and the university had a strong and committed governing board that was typified by smooth relationships between the academic staff and the leadership of the university (Amare, 2007 in Kahsay, 2012).

However, the so-called 'golden age' of the Ethiopian education system in general and the higher education system in particular came to an end in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Negash, 2010). It seems that the expansions observed in the primary and secondary schools were not equally followed by equivalent HEIs. In addition to this, the public

sector could no longer absorb graduates from both the secondary and tertiary schools. This situation resulted in massive public uprisings, especially among the youth, on the streets of Addis Ababa and other major towns (Negash, 2010). The imperial government, however, belatedly recognised the crisis in the educational sector, and was forced to conduct the first Ethiopian education sector review in 1971-2, supported by World Bank and UNESCO experts. Despite all these efforts, the protests intensified all across the country and the imperial system was abolished in 1974 by the military before it had made any significant reforms in the education sector.

4.1.2 The socialist/military system (1974-1991)

In 1974, the Ethiopian political governance system saw a change. The popular public uprisings of the late 1960s and early 1970s were brought to an end by a socialist military coup, which overthrew the imperial system and replaced it with a more oppressive regime known as the 'Derg' (i.e., committee) (Saint, 2004; Wagaw, 1990). This period is considered to be the complete antithesis of the imperial era (Negash, 2010) in terms of the political, economic and social ideologies it displayed. In other words, the Ethiopian political and economic landscapes made a paradigm shift from a feudal or capitalist orientation to a socialist camp. The economy was socialised by abolishing individual land ownership and shifting it to state control. In this period, the education system was mainly guided by socialist ideology and Marxism. Because of the change in the political ideology, unlike under the imperial system, which had a strong connection with the West (especially with the United States of America) in this period, the country shifted its attention to the Eastern bloc, especially to the former Soviet Union and East Germany (Negash, 2010).

The military government, driven by its political ideology, began to pursue the education for development. As a result, new curricula were produced with particular emphasis on technical and vocational education, including agriculture, production technology, home economics and political education among other areas (see Negash, 2010; Yizengaw, 2005). Instead of establishing additional universities, the focus was more on the opening of several junior colleges, which gave training at the Diploma level, to fulfil the need for middle-level manpower in the production and service-providing sectors. However, surprisingly enough, from 1974-1991, Ethiopia's higher education system managed to grow from one university to two universities with the promotion of the former Alemaya Agriculture College to the university level and few more technical and vocational and teachers' colleges. In 1990-1, the total enrolment of tertiary education students was 18,000, which was still very low even by sub-Saharan standards (Negash, 2010).

Studies show that the drastic changes in the political, economic and social environment of the country, however, proved counterproductive in many sectors in general and the higher education system in particular. The pervasive economic crisis, political instability and war in the northern part of the country forced the Derg regime to shift more than

50 percent of the public budget to defence activities (Negash, 2010; Yizengaw, 2005). The government then lacked the capacity and the motivation to support the provision and development of higher education (Yizengaw, 2005). In addition to this, unlike to the expectations of many Ethiopians, this period witnessed strong government involvement in every affair of society; this typified the central-control model of leadership. The glimpses of institutional autonomy and academic freedom of HEIs that had started to flourish during the imperial regime did not last long and were quickly replaced by a top-down mode of governance. In other words, the collegial governance model of the higher education system was soon replaced by a strong state-control mode of governance. During the Derg regime, “government intervention in university affairs expanded, including security surveillance, repression of dissent, mandated courses on Marxism, prohibition of student organisations, appointment of senior university officers and control of academic promotions” (Saint, 2004, p. 84), and the early successes diminished considerably (Wagaw, 1990). The extreme level of intervention of the military government in the internal affairs of the HEIs meant that “intellectual life atrophied on campuses, academic brain drain soared and the country’s education system became largely isolated from the western world” (Saint, 2004, p. 84).

In general, during the military regime the higher education sector lacked proper attention, was unable to address the need for mass higher education participation, and was largely characterised by low quality, wide gender disparity, irrelevance and inefficiency (Kahsay, 2012). Documents show that efforts were made to solve the problems of the higher education system by establishing the Commission for Higher Education of Ethiopia in 1977. However, the new commission did not live up to expectations. The commission was ill-equipped and failed to develop a clear and comprehensive strategy for transforming the higher education system of the country and achieving participatory and quality education in the country (Yizengaw, 2007). Documents show that there were some efforts to evaluate the general education system of the country including higher education in the mid-1980s, which were financed by UNICEF, the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Authority. However, none of the recommendations made by the evaluation committees was incorporated by the socialist regime to reform the education sector (Negash, 2010). As Saint (2004, p. 84) notes:

As the 20th century drew to a close, Ethiopia found itself with a higher education system that was regimented in its management, conservative in its intellectual orientation, limited in its autonomy, short of experienced doctorates among academic staff, concerned about declining educational quality, weak in its research output and poorly connected with the intellectual currents of the international higher education community.

The Derg regime, which failed to transform the country’s political, economic, and social system in general and the higher education sector in particular, was ousted from power by Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)¹⁴ forces in 1991.

¹⁴ The EPRDF is the current ruling political party.

4.1.3 The federal government (1991-present)

Arguably, this period can be considered as an era of radical transformation to the political, economic and social environments of Ethiopia. The EPRDF government produced a new constitution and reconfigured Ethiopia as a federal state in 1994. The government officially introduced free market economic policies that provided suitable environment for private investment in every area of the country. The new federal system of governance led to a new Education and Training Policy (ETP) that became operational in 1994. Taking into account the key role of education to human and socio-economic development, the ETP thus becomes the third major educational policy in the history of Ethiopia since 1945 (Negash, 2010). The ETP incorporates the issues of quality and relevance in educational programmes; quality of teaching staff and facilities; improvement of learning processes towards a student-centred approach; improvement of management and leadership; the values of financial diversification; improvement in the system of evaluation, monitoring, autonomy and accountability (Yizengaw, 2007); and particularly the linkage of higher education and the country's development (MoE, 2010).

The ratification of the ETP has had profound effects on the structure and content of the education system in general and higher education in particular, and has served as a base for subsequent major higher education reforms since its implementation in 1994 (MoE, 2010). Unlike the Derg regime's education structure that pursued a 6-2-4-4 system (i.e., six years' primary education, two years' junior secondary, four years' upper secondary school, and four to five years' university education), the current structure has been changed to an 8-2-2-3 pattern, in which there is a full eight years' primary education, two years' general secondary education, two years' preparatory secondary education (grades 11 and 12), and three to five years' university education (FDRE, 1994). The new system emphasises Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for students who complete the general secondary education. This means at the end of the general secondary education, students are expected to take part in the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination, and then students are placed in either academic or preparatory secondary education (i.e., a pre-university level) or TVET programmes based on their merits and preferences. Students who are enrolled in the preparatory programme are also required to take National Entrance Examination as prior to university entrance at the end of grade 12. The new ETP has also structured the length and curricula of the degree programmes and the language of instructions. For example, the duration of the study for undergraduate degree programs has been reduced from four to three years, and thus major revisions were made in the content and structure of the curricula (Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003). In addition, mother tongue¹⁵ has become the language of instruction in primary schools, and English for secondary school and university levels (FDRE, 1994). As a result, since the

¹⁵ The ETP document in its Article 3.5.1 clearly notes that "cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages"

adoption of new curricula, over 20 languages have been used as mediums of instruction for primary schools in accordance the demand of each regional states (FDRE, 1994).

In addition to this, the new ETP has led to the development of a twenty-year Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP)¹⁶ with five-year phases that mainly focus on improving the quality, relevance, access and equity at all levels of the Ethiopian education system. Documents show that in ESDP I the issue of higher education was not included; it only became part of the programme in ESDP II (2000/1-2004/5) and was more fully incorporated in ESDP III (2005/6-2009/10) and ESDP IV (2010/11-2014/5), especially after the ratification of HEP No. 351/2003 and the revised HEP No. 650/2009 (MoE, 2010). For instance, the overall goals of the ESDP II & III were to develop responsible and competent citizens, who meet the quantitative and qualitative demand for a high-level trained labour force based on the socio-economic development needs of the country, to ensure democratic management and governance in the higher education system, and to set up a cost-effective, efficient and results-oriented system in order to develop an appropriate range of modern and effective human resources management procedures and practices (MoE, 2005). Moreover, ESDP IV primarily focused on ensuring a balanced distribution of higher education opportunities throughout the country through the widening of access to higher education, in particular science and technology, and strengthening good governance, management and leadership capacities at the systems and individual levels for enhanced performance and accountability (MoE, 2010).

A glimpse of reforms started to flourish in the 1960s, only to be suppressed by the Derg in the 1970s and 1980s; this returned to the fore with the newly-elected government in 1994 (Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003). With a mission to realise a comprehensive 'state transformation' and 'total system overhaul' and in line with recommendations forwarded by the World Bank, as in the case of African countries in general, the Ethiopian government has embarked on multiple of public governance reforms since the early 1990s (Ashcroft, 2010; Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003). According to Saint (2004, p. 85), "This time higher education reform was embraced as a critical national need by the government of the day". Ethiopia is currently engaged in a highly ambitious effort to re-align its higher education system to more directly support its national strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction (Ashcroft, 2010; Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003).

Over the past two decades, the Ethiopian higher education sector underwent radical and unprecedented changes by implementing these reforms. They not only modified internal governance arrangements of HEIs, but also restructured the entire higher education system. The higher education sector has expanded from a two-university system in 1991 to 32 public universities, more than 50 accredited private universities and colleges, and many more technical and teachers' colleges today (MoE, 2014). In the Ethiopian context, higher education includes institutions that are providing three-, four- or more-years-long

¹⁶ The MoE introduced a program approach in its educational planning since 1997. The ESDP has been implemented with support of donors, including USAID, since 1997. The ESDP programme has so far four phases, such as ESDPI, II, III and IV with various focuses on each phases (MoE, 2011).

undergraduate programmes, as well as those offering postgraduate programmes at the Master's and Ph.D. levels (MoE, 2011). The higher education system has shown steady growth, expanding from an enrolment of 18,000 in 1991 to 39,000 by the late 1990s. In the 2013/4 academic year, the total undergraduate enrolment (public and private) of all regular, evening, summer and distance programmes at Ethiopian HEIs was 553,848, of which 166,141 are female and 474,198 of all students are enrolled in public universities (MoE, 2014), representing a nearly 30 per cent increase undergraduate enrolment in twenty-four years. However, scholars argue that this radical expansion has brought serious implications for the governance, management and quality of the higher education system (Ashcroft, 2010; Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003).

As briefly discussed above, the ETP has served as a springboard for the adoption of subsequent multiple reforms in the higher education sector. After almost ten years since the issuance of the ETP, the higher education sector was again reshaped by the ratification of a new Higher Education Proclamation (HEP) (No. 351/2003) that serves as a comprehensive legal framework for the establishment and development of HEIs. Studies show that the new HEP is the first in its kind in the history of Ethiopian higher education system and serves as a milestone that drastically changes the structural and functional components of the higher education system in the country. It grants universities substantial institutional autonomy, academic freedom, accountability and legal personality (MoE, 2010; Kahsay, 2012; Yizengaw, 2003).

At the institutional level, the proclamation provides substantial autonomy for universities to manage their financial, human, physical and academic matters without the direct intervention of the government or its subsidiary agencies (MoE, 2005). The original HEP has been further revised by the new one, No. 650/2009, which is now serving as legal document for the transformation of higher education. A closer look at the new proclamation shows that it incorporates almost all the provisions of the previous proclamation. However, it also broadens the academic freedom and institutional autonomy of universities; recommends the necessity of establishing an internal quality assurance system in universities; demands universities carry out consultancy services and establish strong university-industry relationships as a basis for financial diversification; and restructures the governance and management of universities by providing clear job descriptions and instructions for the formation of academic units. Scholars in the field, however, now argue that the problem in Ethiopian higher education system is not about the proclamations per se, but rather how these proclamations have been implemented (see Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003; 2005).

However, it seems that both proclamations recognise the establishment and expansion of private HEIs as strong alternatives to public HEIs for ensuring access to higher education opportunities for the masses. Moreover, they underline the necessity of establishing autonomous agencies, such as the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency

(HERQA) and the Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC)¹⁷. HERQA is established as an autonomous government agency with a mandate to ensure the relevance and quality of higher education. HESC is a new autonomous government organ that is responsible for formulating the vision and strategy for the entire Ethiopian higher education system (FDRE, 2003).

The waves of reforms, which are typified by proclamations and various ESDP strategies, have brought a rapidly changing policy environment to the country's HEIs (Kahsay, 2012). Cognizant of the leading role of HEIs in developing the national economy and alleviating extreme poverty, the Ethiopian higher education system has been subjected to multiple governance reforms. Under the umbrella of ensuring effective management and governance, and a cost-effective, efficient and results-oriented system of management (MoE, 2005), Ethiopian public HEIs have been engaged in the development and adaptation of BMTs as radical organisational change reform tools since 2008.

BPR and BSC as tools of radical organisational change

BPR is one of the management innovation techniques that is adopted from the business sector. It is "the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed" (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p. 32). BPR is known for its distinctive approach that calls for "disregarding all existing structures and procedures and inventing completely new ways of accomplishing work [when] a need exists for heavy blasting" (Hammer & Champy, p. 33). It uses Information Technology to dismantle the well-embedded existing activities and practices in an organisation (Bryant, 1998). BSC is not, however, a radical organisational reform tool; rather, it is a strategic planning and management system that is commonly used in business and industry to strategically align business activities to the vision and mission of the organisation, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organisational performance against strategic goals (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). It suggests how an organisation can be viewed from four perspectives, namely: (a) the customer perspective—how do customers see us? (b) the internal perspective—what must we excel at? (c) the learning and growth perspective—how can we continue to improve and create values? And (d), the financial perspective—how should we appear to our stakeholders? (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

Irrespective of the relevance of BPR and BSC to the higher education sector, the government of Ethiopia has carried out aggressive and comprehensive civil service reforms across all public sectors including HEIs since 1991. Studies have identified two major factors as possible reasons behind the Ethiopian government's decision to implement BMTs as radical organisational change reform tools in all public sectors. On one hand, after the

¹⁷ HESC was restructured again in the 2009 Higher Education Proclamation to form a new centre called Education Strategy Centre.

fall of the military government in 1991, the next two decades and plus saw comprehensive political, economic and social changes in Ethiopia. In this period, which is characterised by massive waves of reforms and a new breed of civil servants, the need for public sector efficiency, institutional capacity and wider democratisation became the prime issues of the incumbent government (Mengesha & Common, 2007). On the other hand, the decisions of the government to have such a comprehensive state transformation and system overhaul have been also heavily influenced by strong pressures from international organisations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as was the case in many developing countries (Mengesha & Common, 2007). Accordingly, since the early 1990s the government has embarked on a series of reform programmes. These reform initiatives are part of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)¹⁸, which aspired to transform the command economy of the military regime into a market economy (Weldegebriel, 2013). The SAP included the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) as one of its main components (Nigussa, 2013), which was later supported by the establishment of the National Capacity Building Programme (NCBP) (Mengesha & Common, 2007).

Studies show that three phases of public sector reforms have been implemented in Ethiopia over the past two decades (Mengesha & Common, 2007; Nigussa, 2013). These can be categorised as phase one from 1992-1994; phase two from 1996-2000, and phase three from 2001 to the present. The first phase focused on restructuring government institutions and retrenchment programmes (Nigussa, 2013). As this phase was during the early days of the incumbent government, it contained more politically motivated reforms aiming to weed out or neutralise any entrenched sympathisers of the military regime (Clapham, 1995) and to strengthen the power of the government and bring stability to the country.

The second phase, which directly came after the new government had fully consolidated its power, is characterised by a recognition of the deep institutional constraints of the performance of the public sector and efforts to boost the national economy of the country. In this period, issues related to traditional and control-oriented management styles; widespread corruption; the disorganised and parasitic nature of the civil service; outdated civil service laws; the absence of a mid-term planning and budgeting framework; ineffective financial and personnel management controls; inadequate civil service wages and inappropriate grading; poor capacities for strategic and cabinet-level decision-making; and insufficient focus on modern managerial approaches to service delivery became the focus of government attention (MoCB, 2004; Mengesha & Common, 2007).

It thus seems that as a response to these constraints and weaknesses in the administrative system, the challenges encountered in the public service delivery, and with the objective of revitalising the overall development of the country, the government launched a comprehensive Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) in 1997 (MoCB, 2004). It is

18 Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) are economic policies for developing countries that have been promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the early 1980s by the provision of loans conditional on the adoption of such policies.

indicated that the CSRP had a grand objective of transforming the civil service through addressing the key challenges that were hindering its performance and enhancing its capacity. In general, the CSRP sought to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector located at the federal and regional levels¹⁹ through radical transformational measures. This second wave of reform targeted five sub-programmes, the top management system, expenditure management and control, human resource management, service delivery and ethics (MoCB, 2004). Each sub-programme has been accompanied by a number of projects. For example, under the service delivery sub-programme, which is responsible for reforming the management style of the public sector by adopting management tools like Management by Objective (MBO), BPR, and BSC, there have been six projects. These are the development of service delivery policy, grievance-handling directives, an award system in the civil service, methods of integration of related public services, preparation of technical directives for improving civil service delivery and service delivery standard directives. However, the CSRP is not only influenced by the internal conditions of the country, but also by the international NPM trend and reform in New Zealand in particular (Peterson, 2001 in Mengesha & Common, 2007, p. 369).

However, the second phase of reform failed to keep its momentum due to both internal and external problems (Nigussa, 2011). Despite some positive changes in issuing new proclamations, such as financial management, civil service laws and a code of ethics, compliant-handling procedures and service delivery, the grand objectives were not achieved due to the consistent resistance and poor working culture of the civil service, and the unexpected border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000) (Nigussa, 2011). Moreover, the government tried to evaluate the implementation process in 2001 and thus the failures were attributed to over-emphasis on technical aspects, rather than changing the attitude of the work force, spontaneous implementation approaches, and lack of committed political leadership (Nigussa, 2011).

In the third phase of reforms, it seems that, cognisant of the limitations observed in the second phase of the reform process, the government decided to launch a new programme called the Public Sector Capacity Building Support Programme (PSCAP) in 2001 in addition to the formerly established CSRP. In 2004, PSCAP had become fully functional, comprising six programmes: the civil service reform, tax system reform, justice system reform, district level decentralisation, and urban management capacity building and information communication technology development. It specifically aims at improving the scale, efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery at the federal, regional and local levels; empowering citizens to participate meaningfully in shaping their own development, and promoting good governance and accountability (MoCB, 2004). As was observed in the former two phases of reforms, this phase is also influenced by the “consortium of donors, coordinated by the WB [and IMF, that] has extended loans to finance the PSCAP” (Mengesha & Common, 2007, p. 369).

¹⁹ Ethiopia follows a federal governance arrangement composed of nine regional states.

Following these trajectories, since 2004 under the direction of the MoCB, all federal and regional civil service organisations have directed their efforts and resources towards implementing BMTs, such as BPR and BSC. As part of the public sector, HEIs in Ethiopia, therefore, have faced a rapidly changing policy environment. The quest for effectiveness and efficiency, which is seen in other public sectors, has also affected higher education, and public universities have been pressured to engage in various waves of reforms. The government has been exerting mounting pressures on universities, to become more innovative, dynamic, responsive, results-oriented, effective and efficient to play an important role in transforming the country (Tilaye, 2010). The MoE, together with MoCB, has ordered all public HEIs to implement BPR, BSC and other BMTs as part of the nationwide reform process since 2008. Despite the strong resistance of academia, almost all public universities have been engaged in the development and implementation of BPR since 2008 (Kahsay, 2012). Moreover, as establishing an integrated planning and performance management system is one of the basic requirements of BPR, BSC is found to be complementary tool for the kind of radical organisational changes BPR envisaged (Tilaye, 2010). As discussed above, unlike the traditional higher education performance management and planning system, which is based on common indicators such as enrolment ratio, teacher-student ratio, numbers of teaching staff, credit and contact hours, and number of graduates, etc., BSC has been chosen with a special focus on ensuring the strategic alignment of the university's and academic units' goals with the national goals.

In general, the reform tools have focused on restructuring the traditional core missions of universities, namely teaching, research, and community service. Despite the fact that universities have been given the freedom to carry out in-depth environmental analyses and to adapt the reform tools accordingly, the general implementation approach for both BPR and BSC have been top-down. This means universities have not been consulted about the appropriateness of the reform tools to the universities' contexts, including their cultures, values and norms, before the government made the decision to implement BMTs as important reform tools in the universities. As a result, since 2008 all public HEIs of Ethiopia have adopted several BMTs.

5 PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES OF MEKELLE UNIVERSITY

This chapter presents and analyses the empirical data obtained from interviews and documents related to the perceptions, practices and responses of Mekelle University as an organisational entity to the BMTs it has been required to adopt. First, the perceptions of MU as an entity are assessed and analysed with respect to the ever-changing institutional and technical environments (see Chapter 3) which the university interacts with. It seems that most respondents acknowledged the changes in the institutional environment though they had divergent views on the sustainability of the changes. In this study, therefore, particular attention is given to the extent of stability and change in the university as perceived by its management. Some themes thus emerged and were identified from the interviews and documents, and analysed based on their importance and relevance for the study. These themes comprise the rationale behind reforming the university and the relevance of the reform tools, the approach of the BMTs' adoption and the role of the university, the identification of new work processes and organisational structures, the decentralisation of the management system, the new planning and measurement tools, the establishment of quality assurance units (QAUs), the diversification of funding sources? and the perceived challenges during the institutionalisation processes. In so doing, issues related to the cause, constituents, content, control and context of the reform tools are given particular attention.

Second, a thorough elaboration is given with regard to the response of MU to its new institutional environments' pressures and demands. In this regard, particular attention is given to discerning the nature of the responses, the response strategies MU used to institutionalise these reform tools, and how the responses are structurally integrated with the core values, beliefs and practices of the university. As discussed in Chapter 2, the nature of the response refers to the activities, programs, interventions and initiatives undertaken by the university when confronted with BMTs pressures. This section also tries to show how the university has responded to the new reform tools by adopting Oliver's five strategies of responses for institutional environment. Last but not least, it also focuses on revealing the levels of structural integration of the responses with the existing organisational practices, activities, and values of the university. The long and short quotations used in this chapter are the views and opinions of the participating top university administrators' labelled from UM1 to UM6.

5.1 Perceptions of the University of the new institutional environment

5.1.1 The rationale and forces behind BMTs

In this section, emphasis was given to revealing why the pressures were exerted, who exerted them, and how they were exerted. All informants underscored that the need for reforming MU was one of the prime issues of the university's management and the university community over the past few years. However, to the surprise of many, the major reform initiatives including BMTs were all taken by the government not by the university. In this regard, two divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged. On one hand, some informants argued that prior to the government-initiated reform tools, the university management had its own agenda to reform the university, but due to both internal (e.g., lack of resources and competent and committed leadership, the resistance of academics) and external factors (i.e., government interference and lack of support from the government) it failed to introduce any meaningful reforms. Therefore, "the government took the initiatives knowing the fact that public HEIs were not up to introduce any substantial reforms by themselves" (UM1). These informants, however, argued that no matter who took the reform initiatives, the new reform tools should be seen as opportunities to be taken not as threats to be rejected or resisted. For instance, one of the Taskforces, which was established by the university management to make extensive studies on how to implement the BMTs, analysed the internal situations of MU and underlined the need for radical and fundamental reform tools rather than continuous improvements.

The fact that [Mekelle] university is in a serious trouble that needs timely and fundamental changes can be evidenced by looking at some of the judgment criteria. The university bureaucratic machinery is characterised to be inefficient, inflexible and unresponsive. Besides, the absence of customer focus, an obsession with activities rather than results and bureaucratic paralysis are also the root signs that the university is infected with fatal disease. The management of the university also lacks the requisite vigour and innovation to lead the institution; they are rather focusing on blame shifting and risk avoidance. What is more, the university also lacks system transparency, performance measurement standards and performance accounting. From the analysis of the abovementioned problems characterising our university, one can safely conclude that we are in deep trouble and "have hit the wall and lay down in the ground" (RCSPT, 2009, p. 23).

Moreover, some informants also attributed the need and rationale for reforming MU to the "organisational complexities of the university and the associated missions attached to it" (UM1). They realised that universities are complex organisations with interrelated missions and work processes. Informant UM3 commented:

Despite the interrelatedness of the work processes of the university, MU has solely focused on one of its missions, which is teaching at the expense of research and community services. It is, therefore, under such understanding MU found it reasonable to adopt business management tools to radically restructure its three core processes.

In general, their argument revolved around the idea that whoever took the initiative, the existing realities of the university played a major role in facilitating the reform tools.

On the other hand, some informants argued that despite the agenda to reform MU being on the table of the university management for so long, the emergence of BMTs should not be taken as a direct response to the needs of the university. They rather claimed that the national and international agendas and commitments of the government to reform the whole public sector played decisive roles in introducing BMTs to public HEIs. In this regard, they argued that MU as part of the public sector cannot be an exception. These informants, however, underscored that such externally-driven reform initiatives proved counterproductive. According to informants, the agendas and commitments of the government were related to the changing economic and political foci of the country. In this regard, an informant commented:

When we talk about... BMTs introduced to us [MU], we should first see its political and economic background. As far as I know public sector reforms have been the top policy agendas of the incumbent government since it came to power in 1991. I could say these reforms are the reflections of the ideological underpinnings of the government, which is characterised by an abrupt shift from a centralised command economy to a free market economy. The economic interpretation behind reforming the public sectors thus is related to in response to a growing awareness that public sectors have been highly incapacitated to play decisive roles in the fight against poverty, which has been considered by the government as prime 'enemy' of the country. The political rationale can be attributed to the weak performances public sectors played in the democratisation process of the country. I remember catchy words including efficient service delivery, transparency, accountability and good governance were the ethos behind such interpretations. Therefore, if someone clearly followed these lines of developments [in Ethiopia], he would not be surprised when the government comes with such BMTs to the university sector (UM6).

Moreover, as an important factor in the government's commitment to transform the political and economic situation of the country, informants mentioned the heavy-handed influence of international organisations²⁰ like the World Bank and IMF, especially the infamous Structural Adjustment Programs in the early 1990s, as possible factors that pushed the government to choose BMTs to reform all public sectors including HEIs.

I remember in the early 1990s, the government introduced Structural Adjustment Program, which takes Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) as one of its basic components. The new government had no confidence in the performance of public organisations to transform the political, economic and social problems of the country.

20 Reform agendas have attracted the attention of various donors and development partners followed by a sizable amount of foreign assistance. The then-small-scale reform agenda did not take too long to become a country-wide (or larger) scale reform recommended and supported by these international organisations. This marked the beginning of the biggest public sector reform program in Ethiopia—the Public Sector Capacity Building Program (PSCAP)—which was projected to cost US\$397 million over its course. International Development Assistance (IDA) of the World Bank Group was the largest donor, providing close to US\$150 million in loans for the project. Moreover, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and others like the UK's DFID, Irish Aid, Italy's IDC and the EU also participated in financing the reform initiative (Asrat, 2014).

Since then several programs and sub-programs have been introduced including the restructuring of public organisations, the top management system, expenditure management and control, human resource management service delivery and ethics sub programs among others. It was obvious that these reform programs came to Ethiopia as direct recommendations of the WB and other international organisations. I know that the WB sponsored many of the programs and sub-programs under the capacity development initiatives (UM5).

Even though the processes of reforming the public sector started in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, documents showed that the public HEIs of the country joined the reform programs rather late, only around the late 2000s. Informants indicated that there were some efforts to introduce MBO at MU in the early 2000s, but it did not go further due to various internal and external factors. In 2008, however, all public HEIs were forced to implement BPR, soon followed by BSC. However, the decisions of the government to introduce BMTs in universities as radical organisation change tools were met with fierce resistances from academia.

I don't believe that people up there [in the government] clearly realise how universities are special organisations that need different approaches than other public organisations.... All the reform initiatives that we have been involved over the past few years were all initiated by the government, and without any exaggerations most of them failed to serve their purposes. Nevertheless no one from the government seems to take attention on why these reforms failed. This tells you many things. First, the reform tools might not be relevant to the university's values, beliefs and practices. Second, as the reform tools were pushed from outside, the university and its community did not own the reforms, and then they failed. Third, the reform tools and the university's problems may fail to go hand in hand. Fourth, maybe we [the university and its members] were change resistance and fifth, maybe we did not have the capacity to introduce and implement any major reform tools. I think the answer lied somewhere in between of these assumptions. Still, the fact is that all reform initiatives pushed from the government failed to be meaningfully materialised in our university (UM4).

Most informants on the whole demonstrated that both BPR and BSC as part of the CSRP were pushed to all public sector institutions irrespective of their nature, needs and the levels of problems they had been having for years. They further argued that "the overambitious plan of the government to transform the economic, social and political situations of the country" (UM2), "the influence of international organisations" (UM5), and "the arrogance and ignorance of the political leaders to notice the difference between organisations" (UM6) were some of the major factors that forced the government to follow a one-size-fits-all approach to the reform initiatives that were implemented at MU.

The ways the pressures to adopt BMTs were exerted on the university was one of the central themes that attracted the attention of informants. All informants agreed on the means by which the pressures were conveyed. Informants on the whole demonstrated that public HEIs worked under the direct budget support of the government; the roles of other funding entities were almost insignificant. As a result, informants identified two important but interrelated means of exerting pressures that dictated the response strategies

of the university. These were the financial and legal instruments used by the government to force the university to quickly adopt BMTs.

Most informants shared the view that the decision of MU's management body to swiftly implement BMTs was part of the efforts the university made to adjust itself to the new block-grant budgeting system requirements. It was revealed that public HEIs are funded by the government through block-grant systems based on strategic plan agreements or negotiations (HEP, 2009). In these strategic plan agreements universities are expected to present their past performances and plans for negotiations with the government. Even though the new HEP does not explicitly mention the improvement of universities' performance as a base for funding, informants mentioned some practical evidence that showed otherwise. For example, informants commented:

I had participated in some of the strategic plan agreements with the government representing my university. Universities normally get their proposed budget based on negotiations with the government. The negotiations were made based on some explicit and implicit criteria. Explicit criteria are like the number of students, teachers, academic programs etc. universities have. The implicit criteria, however, are normally related to the good image of the university on the eye of the government. These include the improvement in performance such as the improved teaching and research, and capability and responsiveness of the university to engage with various reforms that are supposed to bring changes. What I have learnt from those negotiations was that the 'best' performer universities easily convinced the government and managed to get what they want easier than the other counterparts. Therefore, I feel that the quick decision of MU to engage in these reform tools might have something to do with the efforts to secure the planned budget (UM3).

This [the use of financial instruments to influence the university] is a very tricky thing. You don't normally see it in the policy documents of the government. However, practically our university's performances in accomplishing government initiated reforms has economic implications. As I said before, these reforms, in the eye of the government, have more political meaning and importance than any technical values. That means they are the major agendas of the government. You implement them as per the prescriptions suggested by the government, you can get what you want very easily, and otherwise true. I think this is one of the ways we influence the budget negotiation processes, at least implicitly (UM6).

Moreover, some informants alluded to the notion of legitimacy in which the university adopts the reform tools, irrespective of their relevance, to gain recognition from the government and social support from other external stakeholders.

On the paper, we are supposed to be autonomous institution, but in practice we are totally accountable to the government. The government has the upper hand in every affair of the university. We are not in a position to question the values and integrities of any of these reform tools. If we did, it would have both economic and political consequences. Either our negotiation capacity to get funding would be affected or our loyalty to the government would be put in question mark (UM4).

Without any questions, they [BMTs] are government initiated tools and there are no ways [for MU] to reject them, but rather to adopt them as per prescribed by the

government. For me, irrespective of the positive contributions they might bring to the university, the reaction of our university was more of a legitimate move to address the needs and requirements of the government, and to send the signals to other stakeholders that the university is committed for continuous improvements (UM5).

Overall, these results showed that external factors played a more dominant role in initiating the reform tools than the internal conditions of the university. In other words, regardless of the nature and needs of the university, the government, which was agitated by national and international dynamics, forced MU to adopt BMTs as radical organisational change tools. This implied that MU was an outsider to the reform tools and failed to own them meaningfully. Cognisant of the strong pressures of the government, MU thus complied with the reform tools as other responses might jeopardise its financial strength and legitimacy.

5.1.2 The relevance of BMTs

Informants were very critical and outspoken about the relevance of BMTs to the university's values, beliefs, practices and policies. The issue of the relevance of BMTs were important for all respondents because they believed that the effectiveness of the adoption of the reform tools largely relied on the perceived relations between the contents of the reform tools and the context in which they were implemented. As one informant said, "the majority of the discussions during the adoption processes of the reform tools were about the relevance and contributions they [BMTs] would have in the university context" (UM1). In this context, two important themes were raised during the discussions with informants. These were the contents of the reform tools that showed what the pressures consisted of and or what the university was expected to do, and the context or the environmental condition of the university where the pressures were exerted. In other words, it focused on the compatibility between the new institutional pressures and requirements, and the values, norms, beliefs and practices of the university.

All informants agreed that the successful adoption of BMTs was highly dependent on the nature of the reform tools and their appropriateness to the context of the university. Informants, however, showed divergent views regarding the appropriateness of the BMTs to the context of the university and its academic values. On one hand, some informants argued that BPR and BSC were scientific management tools which were applied and somewhat proved to be effective in various organisations, and thus they could not see any reason why these tools should not be applied to universities. This group, however, demanded a proper and participatory implementation approach to make BPR and BSC relevant and appropriate for the university. On the other hand, some informants argued against the appropriateness of BMTs to the university context. They explained that universities are special organisations that mainly focus on knowledge production and dissemination, and any efforts to change such kinds of organisations by adopting BMTs would certainly

contradict with their academic values, beliefs and work processes. These informants thus suggested other relevant reform tools be adopted instead of BMTs to help MU achieve its vision and missions.

Before and during the implementation stages, there were frequent discussions between the university's management and the academic community on issues related to the nature of the reform tools and their relevance to the context of the university. Documents from the university showed that both BPR and BSC generally focused on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the university to achieve its vision and missions. BPR was used as an organisational change tool with a special focus "to fundamentally change the current business process, jobs and structures, management and measurement system, and values and beliefs aiming at radically increasing quality and productivity by focusing on customer satisfaction, increased competitiveness, and coping up with the dynamically changing global environment" (APRT, 2008, p. 4). Whereas BSC was more of a planning and measurement tool that MU used as one of the powerful models for strategic management and was considered as an important tool for aligning organisational objectives of different levels with national objectives. BSC was also taken as an essential tool in creating a shared vision and implementing strategic plans (ITQAD, 2014, p. 3).

All informants on the whole demonstrated that MU was expected to reorganise its core and sub-work process, revamp its organisational structure, introduce a decentralised management system, establish quality assurance units (QAUs), introduce planning and performance measurement systems, and provide effective and efficient services in general for its customers at all levels of the university. However, as it was mentioned above, informants had divergent views on the relevance of BMTs to the university context. Those who had positive views underscored that if there were thoughtful and systematic approaches, there would not be significant problems in adopting BMTs as radical organisational change tools. They further attributed the problems observed during the implementation stages to the fear of change in academia rather than the nature of the reform tools per se.

I think we [at MU] are overshadowed by the unreasonable fear of business values dominating academic values. However, if someone clearly sees what we [In MU] have been doing for the last six or seven years, he or she would not get substantial evidences that suggest BMTs significantly go against the core academic values and beliefs. For instance, we were teaching focused university, then we tried to give more focus to research and community service by reorganising the core missions of the university; we had more centralised organisational structure, now we try to implement decentralised management to empower the BAUs; the goals and objectives of BAUs were not strongly related with the core missions of the university, we are now working to create strategic alignment between the BAUs' goals and missions of the university; and we had problems on the quality of education, and now we are trying to institutionalise QAUs at all levels etc. Therefore, I do not see why these requirements are alien to our values and cultures (UM1).

If I am really to talk about the appropriateness of the pressures that we [MU] have been facing from the government, I think I have to clearly start by analysing where we [our university] are now as a university. In all standards, we have been very low. Our

research products and its relevance to solve societal problems have been below the standard. Our management style has been too traditional and unresponsive to the ever increasing demands of both internal and external stakeholders. Our focus has been entirely on teaching not on research. Even our teaching approaches have been totally teacher centred. Our BAUs have not had meaningful autonomy to carry our missions. Moreover, we have not had any systematic quality assurance mechanisms to support our core activities. However, the reform tools have been here to solve these critical problems. Therefore, it is difficult for me to view these reform tools as totally irrelevant for our university context (UM2).

Moreover, documents produced by all Task Forces, which are official documents of MU, clearly and boldly argued for the appropriateness of BMTs to the university context. For example, the Research and Community Service Process Reengineering Team (RCSPT), which was responsible for making extensive studies on how to implement BPR and BSC at MU, argued for the appropriateness and timeliness of implementing BMTs at MU. After thoroughly discussing the ‘deep-rooted’ problems of MU and the relevance of adopting BMTs, the RCSPT (2008, p. 29) thus came to agree that “radical change not incremental change was the right way to get MU out of its quagmire”. Interestingly enough the team started by summarising the discussions they had in the university when BMTs were about to be introduced at MU.

One of the alternatives discussed is... incremental change. The other alternative is [radical change] BPR. In this part, emphasis shall be given whether BPR is an appropriate management antidote to extricate the existing melanoma of the University. Why is it that we are undertaking BPR? Is it because BPR is the fashion of the day? [...] Are we really convinced that BPR approach is appropriate to solve the multifarious problems of our University and would transform it in to a leading research University? (RCSPT, 2008, p. 29).

It seems that the decisions of the university management to view BMTs as relevant reform tools were guided by the following study results of the taskforces:

[Mekelle] University is in a serious trouble that needs timely and fundamental changes can be evidenced by looking at some of the judgment criteria. The university bureaucratic machinery is characterized to be inefficient, inflexible and unresponsive. Besides, the absence of customer focus, an obsession with activities rather than results and bureaucratic paralysis are also the root signs that the university is infected with fatal disease. The management of the University also lacks the requisite vigour and innovation to lead the institution; they are rather focusing on blame shifting and risk avoidance. What is more, the University also lacks system transparency, performance measurement standards and performance accounting. From the analysis of the abovementioned problems characterizing our University, one can safely conclude that we are in deep trouble and “have hit the wall and lay down in the ground” (RCSPT, 2008, p. 30).

All reengineering teams argued that the context of the university, which was described as a ‘sinking-ship’, needed urgent and comprehensive reform. After deliberating incremental vs. radical reforms, the RCSPT came to suggest that incremental change could not be the appropriate approach to address the existing myriad of problems, but rather radical

and fundamental changes that would transform MU to the desired level were required. Furthermore, the team unequivocally described the former reforms as a 'total fiasco' and 'superficial' efforts which were obsessed at fixing the existing structure and its problems rather than getting to the roots of the problems.

The problems...are so serious..., unless given appropriate and timely remed[ies], they may ultimately have suicidal effect. The most important issue that is worth discussing here is: what is an appropriate model that would get the university out of the deep-rooted problems....? Whatever the case may be, the solution that we propose must be something that is radical, not [incremental] reform. This is precisely because the reform process that is made in place after reaching at, more or less, similar analysis of the problems mentioned above has ended-up-with fiasco. The model that we choose must be so radical that it will fundamentally change the existing practice and transform the University in to a leading research university... Thus, the best antidote to cure the myriad problems of our University is nothing less than BPR.... BPR model is so radical in a sense that it goes to the extent of challenging the status-quo. Getting to the roots of things would help identify erroneous assumptions underlying the prevailing bad practices and non-value-adding structures. ... It is, therefore, BPR model that ensures fundamental transformation to our University (RCSPT, 2008, p. 30).

Moreover, similar to the reengineering teams, some informants applaud MU's decision to comply with the government-initiated BMTs, and labelled BMTs not only as relevant but also as strategic tools of survival.

Radically and fundamentally reforming MU by adopting BMTs like BPR and BSC has not been a matter of choice for our university [MU], rather it was a matter of survival. It was like to be or not to be. In other words, to continue or not to continue as university to accomplish the basic missions upon which this university is established for (UM1).

Drawing upon his experiences during the adoption processes of BMTs at MU, and by partially accepting the arguments against adopting BMTs in universities, one informant showed his support for the appropriateness of BMTs at MU.

...Of course, there are grains of truth on those who argue against the relevance of BMTs in HEIs. They argue that the management styles of business and industries are different from that of public organisations. Of course, it is somewhat different. However, we cannot totally say they are against the practices of HEIs. For instance, practically, we [at MU] have benefited from the implementation of BPR in terms of reducing the work processes, which formerly used to take us unnecessary long time. Most of our routine activities that used to waste our time and resources, and those that did not add any value to our activities are now solved. It [BPR] helped us to identify the core processes and sub processes of our university which we hadn't clearly understood before. Third, it also strengthened our systems. It helped us to introduce decentralised management system in our university whereby every departments and colleges are empowered to carry out its activities, and it also empowered the members of the academia to perform their activities effectively and efficiently (UM2).

However, UM2 did not hide the difficulties associated in adopting BMTs at MU. He did, however, underscore that the anomalies were not directly related to any mismatches of the

BMTs to the university's values and beliefs per se, but rather to the lack of awareness within academia of such kinds of reform tools.

Of course, however, I cannot deny the challenges of implementing BMTs in HEIs, which are widely considered as special organisations that need special treatments. To make things worse those who work inside the university have taken this understanding for granted and unnecessarily used them to stand against any reform initiatives that came from the government. I think we have to break such kinds of over exaggerated understanding of BMTs. The fact is that we [universities] do not live in an isolated island. Of course we may have differences with those [business] organisations, but more importantly we have similarities than differences that enable us to learn something from them. I think changing this attitude was more difficult than implementing the reform tools in MU. I don't think we [university management] were successful on this regard. This makes it very challenging, but still the end result is very significant in changing the university in the right direction. If the necessary awareness is created and employees believe that these tools would help them to transform their research and teaching activities, then I do not see the inappropriateness of these reform tools in our university. Despite all the challenges, we have managed to witness a fair share of success stories in our university (UM2).

On the other hand, some informants were very critical of the relevance of BMTs to the university's cultures and practices. They argued that the pressures and requirements which MU was expected to comply with, brought anti-academic values and cultures, and were irrelevant tools to the context of the university. From the outset, some argued against the concepts of radical change and measurement in HEIs, because they believed change in knowledge producing institutions are incremental and the major activities are hard to measure unlike in business organisations. For example, one informant commented:

The Ministry of Education (MoE) wants us [university management] to transform the university as radically and fundamentally as possible, and continuously send us several directions and guidelines. However, in reality it is very difficult if not impossible to bring change to universities as per the objectives of BMTs. I do not think the knowledge production process can be fundamentally changed in a very short period of time without affecting the core values of the academia. In addition to this, when you look at the new planning and measurement system, the academia is expected to plan that can be measured. At a face value, it seems logical, but in practice most of our core activities cannot be easily measured. These core activities need more time to see its results. As a result, I believe that the academia is forced to plan for those activities that can be easily seen and measured by leaving the core and the most important activities of the academic units that you cannot easily measure them (UM5).

This view was echoed by other informants who were very critical of the idea of radically changing academic values and the motto of 'what gets measured gets done', and their consequences for the core activities of the university. Besides, they argued that when the adoption of the reform tools became obligatory, the university management had to choose cautious approaches rather than haphazard reactions that would disrupt the change processes.

I am not comfortable with the idea of radically changing the core values and beliefs of universities nor do I appreciate the fashion of measuring every activity without even having enough base line data. Because I do not believe that the problem we have here [at MU] is about academic values and beliefs, but rather on our focus and strategies. Therefore, I do not see any reason changing these core values of the university. Moreover, despite I have full support for the efforts being made to strategically align the goals of the BAUs with the missions and vision of the university, it does not make sense to give much emphasis on minor measureable activities leaving aside the core values, which are difficult to measure. Therefore, these approaches [BMTs] are like failing to prescribe the right medicine for the right disease (UM4).

In general, the central arguments against adopting BMTs at MU emphasised that universities are special institutions that work on knowledge as a substantive element, and the processes of knowledge production are complicated in their very nature and are hard to quantify and measure. The following views of two informants clearly demonstrated the opinions of informants who had negative views about adopting BMTs at MU as radical reform tools.

It seems to me that the government [of Ethiopia] follows one-size fits all approaches. BPR and BSC might effectively work in other public sector organisations. I know BPR worked very well in some service giving organisations and Banks [in Ethiopia], but this does not necessarily mean that such business tools would work in universities effectively. The difference [the university has with other organisations] is that we [in university] process knowledge which is difficult to easily measure and produce knowledgeable graduates who are human beings, but not money, which is easy to measure, like other sectors do... I can say all the reform tools [BPR and BSC] do not perfectly much with the university's work process. I suggest we need another tools that effectively addresses the working process of universities. University working processes are teaching, research and community services. Therefore, we need reform tools that adequately address these processes and bring effective and efficient organisational change. I personally noticed how BPR effectively worked at Banks, but in our case it created a lot of havocs (UM5).

I believe that universities should be left free from any interferences. In university we [academics] are supposed to carry out researches and teach students as independently as possible. This does not mean that we should not be accountable to anybody. Rather what I am saying that there should be a clear demarcation between the world of university and other organisations. Let alone the university as an organisational entity, disciplines and academic programs in the same university are different from one another. Therefore, if we have to transform our university from the debacles it has been in, we should first think keeping academic values, such as academic freedom and autonomy and diversity. Then we can use relevant reform tools that could go hand in hand with the working process and culture of the university. I believe that BMTs neither keep our academic values nor do they help the university achieve its missions (UM6).

In summary, these results show that the implementation processes of BMTs are influenced by very divergent views within the university management. MU went quickly into adopting the reform tools without having a common understanding about the importance and relevance these reform tools could have to the university.

5.1.3 The approach of implementation

In this context, the approach of implementation refers to the way the MoE approached the university to force it to adopt the reform tools, the power MU had to reject or modify the tools, and more importantly the approaches the university management chose to use in adopting the reform tools. A common view amongst informants was that the type of relationship between the government and the university, and between the university and its BAUs, determined the successfulness of BMTs at MU. Informants believed that these relationships might show the change processes in the university, such as where the changes started and where they ended, and the power relationships among the three major entities. Furthermore, informants underscored that revealing such relationships provide some clues on the role of the university in handling the reform processes and the strategies the university management used to implement the reform tools.

All informants shared the view that the adoption of BMTs at MU clearly depicted the hierarchical relationship between the government and the university, and between the university management and the BAUs. Whilst a minority mentioned that the relationship between the MoE and the university was smooth and based on mutual trust, the majority of the informants were very critical of the existing relationship between the MoE and the university. The latter group argued that MU was always on the receiving end of the power dynamics of the relationship, whereby the government dictated every aspect of the reform process and the university adopted as it was recommended by the government. In this regard, the centrality of the reform tools was a source of contention between the informants. Even though all informants agreed that the implementation of BMTs was top-down, they differed on the idea whether MU had the power to modify or reject the reform tools. For example, some of the informants indicated that unlike the previous reforms, the new BMTs gave room to the university to modify and adapt them based on the needs and nature of the university.

Until now all the reforms that have been implemented in our university were initiated by the government. For instance, reforms like BPR, BSC and Kaizen²¹ as reform tools and ideas were all pushed by the MoE Generally, the approaches have been top down where the MoE came up with these reform tools and send them to HEIs for discussions and implementation.... However, as university we had the liberty to discuss, modify and adapt accordingly. I think the power the university possessed to modify and implement the reform tools according to its study results or analysis was new development in our university that should be encouraged (UM1).

Informants identified the MoE and Ministry Civil Service (MCS) as the influential bodies behind the introduction of BMTs in all public universities. Accepting the right and duty

21 "Kaizen is a Japanese leadership philosophy which employs an alternative system from western ways of leadership as it has its own procedure and techniques. It is a system of continuous improvement in quality, technology, processes, company culture, productivity, safety and leadership. To implement this system, all that is needed is to have a change of attitude and knowledge of the system" says the Director General of the Ethiopian Kaizen Institute while discussing the underlying themes of the philosophy (Kifle, 2013).

of the government bodies to initiate any reform tools that were considered important for the public sectors of the country, and underlining the fact that MU was part of the public sector institutions that were legally supposed to follow the government's orders to these organisations, some informants could not see any problems with the centralist approach of the reform tools as long as the university was given modest power to modify and adapt the reform tools according to its organisational makeup. Informant UM2 commented:

Universities are public institutions. The MoE and MSC are legally responsible bodies to initiate reforms in the public sectors. Therefore, MU as one of the public institutions is here to implement these reform tools. I think, however, that there were some rooms to implement these reform tools according to our interests. I know that there were clear instructions given by the government that provided enough spaces or windows of opportunities for universities to implement these reform tools according to the very nature of their organisational contexts. For that matter, the government did not specify what to do and not to do in the reform processes. We were only instructed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we provide to our customers (UM2).

UM1 went even further in disregarding the necessity of arguing between the top-down vs. bottom-up approaches of implementing BMTs at MU. UM1 rather underscored the contributions the reform tools would make to the university and the power the university management had for adapting the reform tools according to the context of the university.

It was not a matter of bottom-up or top-down approach [of implementation]. If our university [MU] had any alternatives other than the (reform) tools given by the MoE, MU would be free to use or produce any reform tools that can achieve the delivery of quality services. The government simply does not interfere, just only needs quality services from its public HEIs... We [MU management body] believed the reform tools identified by the government were relevant and important for us. Therefore, we decided to implement them in our university regardless of who brought these tools. I think it (the decision to adopt the reform tools) was a wise decision to make for us (UM1).

Some informants, however, argued that the direct role of the government and its top-down approach of implementing the reform tools had detrimental effects on the successful adoption process of BMTs. They further pointed out that as the reform tools were pushed by the government without the consent and knowledge of the university and the academic community, they negatively affected the sense of ownership of the academy, which was considered as the most important factor in the effective implementation process of any reform initiatives (UM4, UM5). It was also indicated that "the top-down approach was seen by some academics as politically motivated move of the government" (UM4). Therefore, to avoid such sentiments among academics, "universities should at least be free to come up with workable and relevant solutions for their own problems" (UM3). In other words, informants believed that "the role of the government should be only limited to following up the change initiatives carried out by the universities and provide timely support be it human, physical or financial" (UM4). The comment below illustrated the implications of the top-down approach to the implementation of the reform tools at MU.

Regardless of the nature of the reform tools, the usual trend in our country is that they [reform tools] all came to us from outside [government] as obligatory tools to be implemented at any cost. These reform tools did not give us any spaces to modify or reject them. I think this is one of the major obstacles in the institutionalisation processes. I strongly believe that we should own any reform initiatives in this university. Unless we do that we won't get the acceptance and support of the university community. If you go and ask the members of the academic community [about the top-down approach of the reform tools], you would automatically see their discontents on the way the government handled all the reform tools that were implemented in our university. We [university management body] have identified this [the discontent of the academia] during the training sessions. I believe that without the acceptance of the member of the academic community any reform initiatives that were pushed from the government would not bring any substantial results. I personally believe that most of the reforms failed to be effective because we did not win the trust of the majority of the academia. This trend should be changed (UM4).

Generally, it was indicated that the source of the reform tools was the government, and the approach to implementation was totally top-down, where MU adopted the reform tools as per the requirements of the government. This shows that the relationship between the government and MU was hierarchical in the sense that MoE designed and set the rules and regulations, and MU is there to comply or conform with the pressures and requirements. However, to the surprise of the majority of the informants, MU's management body chose the top-down approach for implementation in both its BAUs and the administrative parts of the university. Informants gave two main explanations, which were not mutually exclusive, for the main reasons MU preferred to use a top-down approach for implementing the reform tools in its BAUs. Some informants indicated nature of the reform tools as major reason that forced MU's management body to follow a top-down approach (UM1, UM2, UM,3) while others considered the internal situation of the university as a possible cause for such an approach to be chosen (UM4, UM5, UM6).

First of all, we simply cannot say that top-down approach is bad and bottom-up approach is good without analysing the nature of the reform tools and the goals associated with them. I think both approaches could be good on their own ways. However, if you see BPR and BSC, they are tools of radical organisational change, which have been used in the businesses and industries. If you have to use them in universities like us, you have to be careful and they demand strong leadership commitments. You cannot let them to the BAUs for the sake of participation or bottom-up approach. Rather they need the strong involvement of the leadership of the university at every stage of implementation. This does not mean that we let the academia out of the equations, but to say that the role of the university management is decisive when you think of implementing new reform tools (UM2).

I am always in favour of a bottom-up approach in every change oriented reforms or activities. I believe that such approach allows the majority to participate fully and to own the change initiatives meaningfully. Besides, it both helps you to develop the awareness of the participants in the change process and it also creates a sense of ownership in the change activity you are intended to bring about. In my view, that is what we lack in our university. We started from the top with few and 'handpicked' individuals involved in the study process, but we let the academia only to be involved when everything was

about to be finished. I think that this created a sense of discontent in the academia, because we did not let them be part of it (UM5).

The views of informants and university documents show how the government played a dominant role in introducing the reform tools. Even though the perceptions of the informants vary on the perceived roles of the government in handling the reform tools, they all agree on the fact that the implementation of BMTs at MU followed a top-down approach. This shows that the role of the university is limited only to complying with the government's requirements and pressures. However, contrary to the expectations of many MU's management body prefer to follow top-down approaches of implementation in the BAUs, an approach they view as being forced on them by both the nature of the reform tools and the university's internal environment.

5.1.4 The relationship between BMTs

Another important theme that was identified by the informants and in one way or another appeared in most of the interviews was associated with the relationship between the reform tools adopted by MU over the past few years. In this context, the concept relationship referred whether the reform tools were complementary or not. In other words, whether each reform tool supported the existence of the other. It seems that informants, as much as they worried about the appropriateness of BMTs to the context of the university and the approaches of implementation, felt that the perceived relationship of BMTs took the attention of the university management and academic community of the university (see Chapter 6). Informants specifically focused on discussing whether BPR and BSC were interrelated, and if the existence of one reform tool was supported by the other or whether they were just totally different reform tools that had no relationship, or whether they were actually competing with each other, where the emergence of one contradicted the existence of the other.

Documents showed that MU has implemented various BMT-related reforms, and many other curriculum-related reforms, over the past few years (RCSPT, 2008). Some informants questioned the relationship between the reform tools that were implemented in the past few years. The central point of the argument was that "the more reform tools are related with the others, the better the results would be" (UM3). However, the relationship between the reform tools was one of the themes where informants showed divergent views. While some informants argued that both BPR and BSC were compatible where one reform tool was used as a complementary tool to the other, others believed that the compatibility of BMTs was only seen in theory not in practice. Supporting the strong relations between BPR and BSC, but recognising the compatibility issue as one of the major factors that created misunderstanding in the academia, an informant commented:

I think at this point [the compatibility of BPR & BSC] huge misunderstanding was noticed in our university in most of the discussions and training we had during the implementation stages. First of all these tools are complementary or one tool is supposed to support the other. We can think of BPR as a process of opening a short motorway; and in this motorway you want to decide on what speed you can drive, therefore we can think of BSC; and you want also to make sure to what extent you are organised when you drive in this motorway, then we can think of Kaizen. Therefore, these tools are supportive. Nevertheless some people say BPR came and went away when BSC came, and BSC went when Kaizen came. I think that is not true. It is not like one come and go, but BPR is still there to continuously restructure our university, and BSC is still here to measure our activity and Kaizen is working to have efficient management style (UM1).

Similarly, some informants argued that BPR and BSC were interrelated where one reform tool was introduced for filling the perceived gaps created by the other not to replace it. The assumption was that BPR was introduced to radically restructure the organisational structure of the university and to identify effective and efficient work processes. Therefore, to achieve this, several new structures and work processes were created and implemented (RCSPT, 2008). “The university management, however, lately realised that BPR did not have any planning and performance measurement tools, therefore, BSC was found convenient to serve as planning and measurement tools to fill the gap observed in BPR” (UM3). Augmenting this idea, UM2 commented:

BPR is not a planning and measurement tool; rather it is a tool for structural organisational change. As you might probably know our academic units were organised based on geographic and functional departmentation. These types of departmentation, however, had created enormous academic programs, who had similar work processes, to be placed in different departments. This was seen as ineffective and inefficient ways of organising departments. Therefore, BPR came to free to structurally change and reorganise departments who have similar work processes together. When BSC came as a strategic reform tool after BPR, our intention was to support and strengthen the already set system of BPR.... Right after the implementation of BPR, several relatively efficient business processes were emerged in our university. As university, we decided to develop strong and modern planning and measurement tool for measuring and guiding the newly emerged business processes. Therefore, BSC was chosen as an appropriate tool. It [BSC] is more of a planning and measurement tool. The basic assumption was that the various measurements set by BSC would clearly show on how to measure the organisational performance at all levels of the university starting from the corporate level [University level], Business level [Colleges, Schools and institutes] and operational level [department and individual level]. I would say we have not implemented these reforms in a sense that one reform tool replaced the other, but rather they supported each other and they are complementary (UM2).

Moreover, it was also indicated that BPR and BSC were seen as complementary tools in the sense that both worked to encourage group performances (UM1). According to some informants, this was premised on the assumption that the university as an organisational entity and its BAUs are a group of people who have their own organisational and personal goals, visions and missions. Hence, to effectively achieve these goals and missions, academics should work in a group where they make their teaching and research plans together with

their colleagues in their respective colleges and departments. Therefore, the core activities like teaching and research and community services should be radically organised by BPR (UM2). Besides, to have strategically aligned plans and effective and efficient performance measurements at all levels of the university, the introduction of BSC was found appropriate and complementary by the university management body (UM3).

However, some informants criticised the way the two reform tools were introduced at MU. They believed that the approaches, methods, and timing of the implementation used by the government and the university management forced the majority of the academic community to treat the reform tools as something fashionable that had nothing in common. Therefore, taking into account the ways BMTs were adopted at MU, some informants argued that the relationship between the reform tools at MU was more theoretical than practical.

From theoretical points of view, these reforms [BPR & BSC] seem interrelated or complimentary. For instance, BPR is all about restructuring the overall processes of the university. It is about fundamentally and radically changing the organisational structure. Right after the reorganisation made, we were supposed to plan and measure your activities. Therefore, BSC was chosen to measure the newly identified processes. I could say in this aspect they are complementary and supportive. However, the problems came when we failed to implement them in the way the theories suggest. I think this is the problem we have had in this university. We neither had a clear road map that clearly shows the kinds of reforms that we are going to implement in the forthcoming years, nor did we create strong relationships between the reform tools. Still we are under new waves of reforms, but we have not developed any clear road map that show the reforming process, yet (UM4).

Moreover, informants highlighted that when the reform tools were introduced at MU, the academy failed to see the relationship between BPR and BSC. Three main reasons for this were identified by some informants. First, “the university leadership did not clearly show to its employees that BSC would follow after we implement BPR” (UM4). Second, “most members of the academic community naturally had negative attitudes to any business oriented management styles. However, the efforts the university management made to create general consensus on the significance of these BMTs inside the academia were too low” (UM5). And third, “the overflow of reforms over the past ten years and more might force the academia to treat these reform tools as something different and fashionable products” (UM3). To make things worse, “the overflow of reforms was perceived as a sign of failure by the majority of the academia, not as continual efforts to improve the overall conditions of the university” (UM6).

This shows that MU’s management body lacked the strategic thinking to effectively coordinate the reform tools. This is partly to do with the top-down approach to adopting the reform tools. As was discussed above, MU does not own the reform tools, the MoE does. Therefore, when the MoE sent these BMTs to MU, they were sent separately without trying to create any systematic relationship between the reform tools. A good example that shows the haphazard approach to these reform tools is that nowhere in any of MU’s

strategic documents are the issues of BPR and BSC mentioned. This at least shows that the sequences of reforms were not clearly introduced into the documents or the minds of the university and BAUs' staff. In other words, MU failed to develop any systematic roadmap that clearly showed the relationship between the various reform tools and the timing of the implementation of these tools. Generally, this spontaneous way of approaching these reform tools, which was noted by some informants as the common approach at MU, in one way or another might contribute to the perceived incompatibilities of the reform tools and affect the implementation processes.

5.1.5 Institutionalisation processes of BMTs

The institutionalisation process of the BMTs was one of the core topics of discussion with the informants of this study. All informants shared similar understandings about the concept of institutionalisation and its significance. They all defined institutionalisation as a process by which the new business processes, structures and activities identified by BMTs are effectively incorporated into the system of existing structures and practices of MU and its BAUs. Moreover, they all agreed that good examples of institutionalised reform tools in universities are when the majority of the university community recognizes the new tools as important and are able to use them as a main part of their job. Above all, they had the common view that the effectiveness of BMTs at MU should only be measured on the extent of its institutionalisation. However, it seems that even though they had similar views on the coercive pressures the government used to introduce the reform tools at MU, they differed significantly on their views about the strategies the university management used to institutionalise the reform tools and the extent of institutionalisation the new changes had achieved at the university.

All informants explained that MU as an organisational entity used different strategies to institutionalise BMTs as the tools of organisational change. Despite the fact that MU tried to use various strategies to institutionalise the BMTs, most informants agreed that the university management used more coercive processes than mimetic or normative pressures to institutionalise BMTs at MU and its BAUs. Some informants thus believed that the overemphasis on coercive pressures and regulations resulted in symbolic compliance of BAUs as the strong pressures of the government and the university failed to win the minds and hearts of the members of the academic staff. As one informant put it, "most of the academic staff failed to embrace the new changes as much as expected. I think this is partly related with the regulative approaches than convincing and teaching approaches the government and university management used to institutionalise the reform tools" (UM6).

The result of the changes, which were measured by their level of institutionalisation, however, were largely contested by the informants. Some informants, argued that the choice of the coercive pressures was not made in the belief that such pressures were more important than the other approaches, but rather made on the understanding that "the

resistance of academia to BMTs was high, and the university management did not have ample experience to handle such resistances and radical reform tools” (UM3). According to these informants, the efforts made by university management to provide various training and workshops should be considered as part of creating awareness and consensus inside the university. However, “taking the fact that the magnitude of the changes expected to achieve, and the huge resistances of the academic community, the trainings and workshops organised by the university failed to bring the desired results as they were not carefully organised” (UM2). It thus seems that to overcome these problems, “the needs for enforcing rules and regulations as the primary tools of institutionalisation were mandatory” (UM2).

It was also indicated that the decision to emphasise coercive pressures was largely influenced by the perceived strong pressures of the government, which presented the reform tools as the national agenda of the country, which in turn created a sense of urgency in the university management to implement the reform tools as soon as possible.

It is always difficult to create a general consensus on such kinds of situations [introducing reforms]. People have their own opinions, their own likes and dislikes. As university leaders, the only thing and may be the right way that we could do is to convince the majority not every individual. Therefore, we organised several training for the members of the academia and the administrative staff on the nature and use of these BMTs. However, I don't believe that those trainings were successful in developing the awareness of the employees. There have been resistances and still there are resistances on the significance of the reform tools. Moreover, we don't have to forget that these reforms were popular national agendas that we cannot escape. We knew that the government considered the reform tools as having the making and breaking effects on the public sectors. Therefore, since we are public university that is accountable to the government, we should strictly follow the requirements and the deadlines set by the government. Unless we did that, we might lose our legitimacy. This means introducing guidelines and rules and moving swiftly to the implementation stages were paramount important (UM2).

Despite all the internal and external problems, some informants emphasised the failure of the university management to carryout comprehensive and systematic trainings to create general consensus and understandings. They argued that the university management used more forcible approaches than educating and convincing because the former was easier than the latter.

I think we [university management] should not take these [resistances of the academia and the interference of the government] as excuses. I know there were huge pushes from the government to implement these [reform] tools, but we should have at least devised continuous training and workshop strategies at every level of the university. We basically lacked leadership on this aspect. When BPR was implemented, it was [implemented] in a rush. We did not even have full understanding of what the reform tools are really meant. We only focused in implementing [BPR] as fast as possible, not on how to implement it. Therefore, the trainings given were not effectively designed to win the support and acceptance of the academia. As a result, we have seen huge resistances from the academia. I feel the source of most of the resistances we have seen are mainly the result of poor awareness, which as university failed to tackle them. Therefore, the easier

option we had was to force the academic units to implement the reform tools as per the study result of the reengineering teams (UM5).

Despite the fact that resistance from academics were predicted and providing training and workshops were believed to be important, the adoption of the reform tools was guided more by coercive instruments than normative approaches. In other words, the training provided by the university were not enough to significantly change the perceptions of the university community nor were they participatory enough to overcome the majority of academics' feelings of disengagement and discontent (see Chapter 6). Generally, the above discussions show that the choice of coercive pressures to adopt BMTs in the BAUs was influenced by the strong pressures of the government and the lack of readiness and experience of the university management in handling such reform tools. It seems that MU rushed into implementation without effectively creating university-wide understandings and consensus. This in turn created dissatisfaction, resistance and a lack of sense of ownership among the academics, which affected the institutionalisation of BMTs at multiple levels of the university.

5.2 Responses of MU to the new institutional environment

This section deals with the responses of MU as an organisational entity to the perceived changes in its institutional environment. It particularly focuses on the nature of the responses and response strategies and their levels of structural integration with the university's and BAUs' values, norms and practices. In this context, the nature of the response refers to the activities, interventions, initiatives and programs employed by the university when confronted with the BMTs. The study thus reveals that the nature of the responses is characterised by the identification of new core and sub-processes, the formation of new organisational structures, the introduction of a decentralised management system, the emergence of planning and measuring tools, the establishment of an internal quality assurance system, and benchmarking and training activities. The response strategies address issues related to the strategies the university employed to respond to the demands, pressures and requirements associated with BMTs and their subsequent elements. As was discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, the analyses of the response strategies employed by the university are done based on Oliver's (1991) five typologies of organisational strategic responses to the changing environments. These are *acquiescence*, *compromise*, *avoidance*, *defiance* and *manipulation*. These five typologies, however, can also be divided into three categories—compliance (conformity), symbolic action (de-coupling) and manipulation (pro-active). Last but not least, the levels of structural integration focused on understanding the extent to which the responses MU made are institutionalised with the university and BAUs' values, norms, practices and policies. For this purpose, this study uses Dass and Parker's (1996) analysis of structural integration, which argues that structural integration may be episodic, programmatic or embedded in core processes (for discussion of these concepts, see Chapter 2).

5.2.1 Reengineering the university's top-structure

As it was discussed in Chapter 4, the Ethiopian government introduced BPR and BSC as major reform tools for transforming the services public HEIs provide to their customers. BPR, which was introduced in 2008, targeted radical and fundamental changes in the services, activities and processes of all public HEIs. Unlike BPR, which focuses on the radical rethinking and fundamental redesign of work processes, BSC was used as a new planning and performance management tool and adopted few years after the implementation of BPR. Therefore, it seems that MU, as part of the public higher education system of the country, conformed with the pressures and requirements of the government to introduce BMTs as major reform tools for transforming and radically changing the processes, structures, and activities of the university and its BAUs.

Informants of this study said that BPR targeted two main parts of the university, namely the university as an organisational entity and its BAUs. In the first part, the focus was on restructuring the top decision-making organs of the university, the creation of new core processes, and the establishment of new jobs, positions and offices. The second part emphasised restructuring the power of BAUs, and the identification of their core and sub-processes and their subsidiary elements. To have a clear picture of the new changes in the organisational structure of the university and the BAUs, it was, therefore, important to discuss the old organisational structure of the university and its BAUs before the BMTs were implemented.

Organisational structure of MU before BPR

As discussed previously, MU was established in 1999 by Regulation No. 61/1999 of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) as a merger of two former colleges, the Mekelle Business College and the Mekelle University College, founded in 1991 and 1993 respectively (MU, 2000). Documents showed that the overall organisational structure of MU up to the lower departmental level was guided by the Council of Ministers' Regulation No. 61/1999 and HEP No. 351/2003. As can be seen in Figure 2, MU had the board as its highest decision making body. The board of the university was comprised of eight members, mainly from the external environment, who were appointed by the MoE as the highest governing entity. Under the board of the university, the senate and the president, who were accountable to the board of the university, were regarded as the next highest decision-making entities. In addition to this, there were two vice president offices mainly responsible for the academic and administrative affairs of the university respectively. Therefore, these four bodies (the board, senate, president and vice presidents) were considered to be the institutional-level governance units of the university.

Under the structure of the vice president for academics, there were faculties and departments at the BAU-level that were led by faculty deans and department heads respectively. Therefore, it can be deduced that the governance arrangement of the university

was largely divided into two levels, institutional (the board, senate, president and vice presidents) and BAU (faculties and departments).

As shown in Figure 3, the second highest decision-making body at the institutional level of the university was the senate, which was accountable to the board. The senate, which was responsible for overseeing the major academic activities of the university, consisted of the president of the university as chairperson, the vice presidents, the college and faculty deans, the registrar, two representatives of the academic staff, and two student representatives as members. The third echelon of the hierarchy of the university was the president. The president of the university, who was appointed by the government upon the direct recommendation of the board, was accountable to the board and considered the chief executive of the university. The president, in addition to the power given to him or her to direct, administer, and supervise the activities of the university, had the responsibility to follow up on the implementation of the decisions made by the board and the senate.

The other two important offices at the institutional level of the university were the vice presidents' offices for both academics and administration respectively. In this structure, the three core missions of the university were organised under the vice president for academics

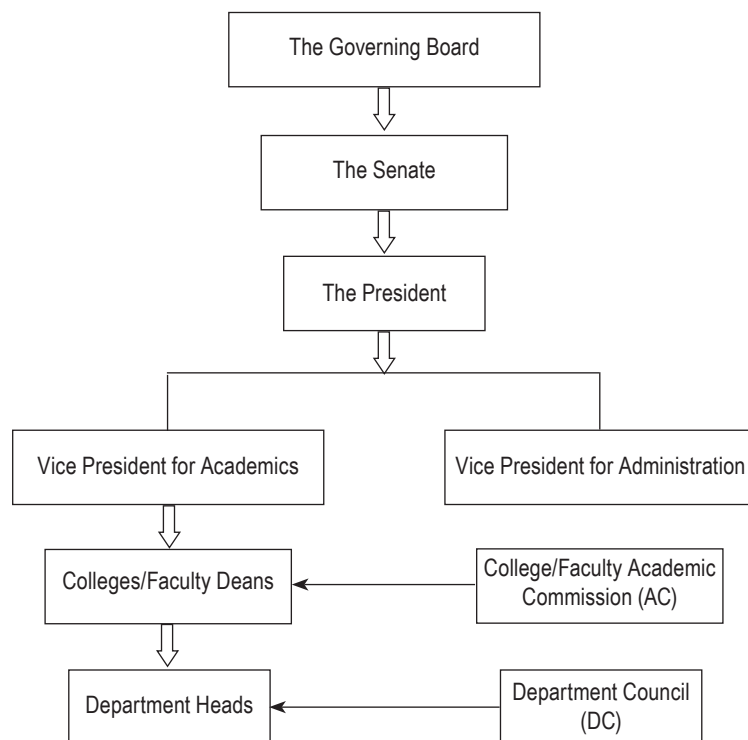


Figure 3. Institutional governance arrangement of MU before BPR reform

Source: Adopted from the Senate Legislation of MU (MU, 2007)

(VPA). In other words, the VPA was responsible for managing both the teaching and research and community service of the university, directly guided and followed up on the overall activities of the faculties and departments, and had the duty to consult and assist the president regarding various issues of the university. This means the three core processes of the university (i.e., teaching, research and community service) were managed under one office.

Down to the middle level of the university, there were faculties that used to be led by deans and vice deans who were appointed by the president of the university. The faculty deans were mainly responsible for managing and coordinating the overall activities of faculties. Equivalent to the faculty dean, there was a decision making body called Academic Commission (AC). The AC, which consisted of the dean, vice-dean, department heads, elected staff and students representatives, had the power and the duty to make decisions on issues related to academics that needed collective decisions.

As is shown in Figure 3, the lowest academic decision-making organ in the university was the department. Department heads used to be elected by the academic staff but appointed upon the approval of the faculty dean. Similar to the establishment of the AC in the faculties, each department had a Department Council (DC) with the power to make decisions on departmental academic issues, and it consisted of the department head as chairperson of the DC and all the academic staff.

In general, from the old organisational structure three important facts can be detected. These were the power of the top administration of the university, the decision-making process, and the institutional autonomy of the BAUs. All informants agreed that the previous organisational structure of MU was very hierarchical and bureaucratic in its nature. That meant all major academic decisions were made at the highest echelon of the university which left BAUs with little power to exercise in their day to day academic activities. Some informants further indicated that the prior organisational structure was largely characterised by “very sluggish decision making processes” (UM2) that “let many of the academics to feel discontent” (UM5) with the overall situation of the university. UM1 commented:

As many of the major academic and administrative decisions were made at the top [of the university management], it was hard for the faculties and departments to carry out their activities freely. For instance, issues related to the promotion of the academic staff, recruiting and hiring lecturers, students’ academic records, educational materials etc., used to be handled at the levels beyond the departments and faculties. They [BAUs] did not have substantial autonomy to make timely decisions for critical issues that they routinely faced, and to accomplish their teaching and research endeavours. This was one of the reasons that forced us to accept these reform tools introduced by the government (UM1).

A closer look at the old organisational structure of the university revealed two important issues. First, the role of the government in steering the activities of the university was high. This can be seen in the role the MoE played in the formation and appointments of

the board, senate, president, vice presidents and the leadership of the BAUs. This led the university to have a tall and bureaucratic organisational structure whereby the role of the faculty in making major academic decisions was minimal. Second, despite the fact that the availability of the senate at the institutional level and the AC and DC at the BAU levels was somewhat believed to have allowed the university to exercise collective decision-making, the major academic and administrative decision-making powers were kept under the firm grip of the highest level of the university. This resulted, however, in “slow decision-making processes, low participation of the academia and which in turn resulted on the massive feelings of discontent and disengagement in the academic community” (UM4).

Organisational structure of MU after BPR

As was discussed in Chapter 4 and in the above section, the government took the initiative to introduce BMTs with the aim of radically and fundamentally redesigning the work processes of the university (MU, 2008). Informants of this study, and the collected documents pertaining to the governance reform processes, indicated that the implementation of BMTs at MU were not options to be avoided or modified, but obligatory tools to be adopted. However, some informants indicated that the university was relatively free to restructure the whole process as per the studies made by the Taskforces²². As a result, the taskforces identified the core and sub-processes of the university, the organisational structure, the decentralised management system, the quality assurance system, and the management and measurement systems as the most important parts of the university that needed radical restructuring.

Reorganisation of the board, senate and president

One of the major themes discussed by the informants was the change in the organisational structure of the university. All informants shared the view that the former organisational structure of MU, which was characterised as a tall and traditional bureaucracy, only started to show some changes after the endorsement of the 2003 HEP, took on a relatively different shape after the implementation of BMTs and the ratification of the 2009 proclamation. However, some informants argued that “the current organisational structure of MU is not the sole result of BPR but also influenced by the new HEP of 2009” (UM3). When informants were asked about this issue, UM6 noted that “when the restructuring of the university was made in late 2008, the draft of the new HEP, 2009 had already released for discussion. I know that the Taskforces tried to adjust their study results with the new higher

22 MU management body formed four major Taskforces to study the overall situation of the university and the ways the reform tools were adopted at all levels of the university. The Taskforces were: the Academic Process Reengineering Team (APRT), Research and Community Service Process Reengineering Team (RCSPRT), Human Resource Management Process Reengineering Team (HRMPRT), and Procurement and Finance Process Reengineering Team (PFPRRT) (MU, 2008).

education law". UM2, who shared the same view, indicated that "for example, the need for establishing advisory bodies like MC and UC, the formation and the power of the board, president, senate, and the vice-presidents were clearly guided by the new proclamation". However, it was also equally true that the new changes related to the BMTs can also be clearly seen in the identification of the university's core and sub-processes, the opening of additional vice president offices, and the establishment of course and research teams under the department structure. This might show that the university management tried to balance the requirements of the government with the needs and priorities of the university.

Whilst the official documents prepared by MU, such as the APRT and RCSPT, indicated that "the growing discontent of stakeholders in the quality and quantity of teaching, research outputs and community services have triggered the ambition of the university management to undertake BMTs and influenced the implementation process" (MU, 2009), some informants argued that the programmes and activities designed by MU to respond to the requirements of the BMTs were largely influenced by the persistent pressures of the government (UM4, UM5). Moreover, for some informants, the responses of the university to conform with the pressures of the government and the requirements of the reform tools were nothing but "the intention [of the university management] to get social support from major stakeholders, namely the government and partners" (UM6). In other words, the adoption of BMTs and the subsequent reform programs were externally-imposed interventions rather than the direct response of MU to solve the chronic internal problems of the university.

As it was indicated in the previous sections, reforming the public sector including HEIs using BMTs has remained part of the national agenda of the country over the past few years. This implies that "MU as part of the HE system of the country had no option to reject the reforming processes, but rather to conform with the pressures by adopting various sub-strategies" (UM3). According to informants, "the first move of the university was...the board and the management [of the university] discussed the possible ways of implementing the reform tools" (UM1), and "...came up with the idea of establishing one management committee²³ that oversee the implementation processes" (UM2). As a result, the management committee "...identified three core-processes, such as teaching, research and community, and two sub process namely human resource management and procurement, finance and facilities management support service processes to be reengineered" (UM4).

Moreover, all informants made it clear that the management committee set up four Taskforces and later established a Reform Office with the mandate to oversee all reform processes in the university. It seems that after a few months of deliberations, "...the taskforces produced comprehensive documents that guided the institutionalisation processes of BMTs in the university" (UM3). According to informants, the study results of the taskforces addressed three levels of the university, namely the institutional level (board,

23 MU's management body established a management or steering committee that led the reform process, which was chaired by the university president. The management committee was comprised of the top decision makers of the university, including the vice presidents, reform office head, and deans (MU, 2008).

senate, president, and vice presidents), the college, institution and school level, and the department and team levels.

As is shown in Figure 4 below, the board continues to be the supreme governing body of the university. Despite the fact that both the APRT and RCSPT proposed a new board formation that consisted of 21 to 35 members from both the internal and external environments of the university with the aim of having wide representation of all important stakeholders, the current board of MU was solely guided by the HEP No. 650/2009. Unlike the recommendations of the Taskforces, the current board of the university is comprised of only seven members of whom the MoE selected and appointed the board chairperson and three additional voting members to the board (HEP, 2009, article 45 and sub-article 2). The other three voting members of the board were nominated by the president, in consultation with the UC and the senate... and submitted for appointment to the MoE (HEP, 2009 article 45 and sub-article 3). The president of the university is a non-voting member and only a secretary of the board. All informants shared the view that the formation of the board, and the power and responsibilities attached to it were guided by the 2009 HEP, not by the recommendation of BPR Taskforces.

The Taskforces proposal for establishing a more representative and dynamic board based on merit did not get the approval of the MoE as it was found to be contradictory with HEP of the country. I think this is a major setback for our university as it inhibits the most important stakeholders not to play a positive role in the university development (UM4).

As can be seen from Figure 4, the second-highest level of the hierarchy in the new organisational structure of MU is the President. According to the BPR documents of MU, the president became the chief executive officer or the “business owner”²⁴ of the university without prejudice to the responsibilities of the board (MU, 2014). The new legislation of the university, which was rewritten to fit with both the new proclamation and the BPR guidelines, gave more power to the university president than he had in the previous organisational structure. According to some informants, “the move to grant more power to the president was guided by the principles of BPR, which favour the availability of strong leadership in organisations” (UM4). UM2 further noted that “the strong power of the president can easily be seen on the relation he has with the senate”. A similar view was also echoed by UM3: “unlike the previous organisational structure that gave the senate more power than the president on academic matters, the new senate has now more advisory roles to the president of the university”. However, the power relationship between the senate and the president was not clear in the organogram of the university. In this context, UM6 noted:

²⁴ According to BPR, activities were organised based on processes. These are three core processes (teaching, research and community service) and one supportive process (procurement). The president of the university was assigned as the “business owner” to supervise all processes. The vice presidents are the core process owners, and the deans and department heads are sub-process owners (MU, 2008).

Structurally [based on the HEP and the legislation of the university] it seems that the senate is responsible for making decisions on academic matters comes under the board and above the president, but in practice the senate is accountable to the president. As the president is the chairperson of the senate, I would say practically he is in a position to guide and control the activities of the senate.

However, it was noted that “...cognisant of the ever-increasing power of the president of the university” (UM4) and “as a move to support his or her leadership qualities and decision-making abilities” (UM2), the university management established the University Council (UC) and Managing Council (MC) as new governing bodies alongside the senate and the president. Documents showed that the UC had the responsibilities of “advising the president by expressing its views on institutional proposals regarding plans, budget, organisational structures, academic programs, [the] agreements of cooperation, and [the] division, merger and closure of academic units as well as performance” (MU, 2014, p. 26). The MC, however, was responsible for “advis[ing] the president on strategic issues and on other cases that the president believes to require collective examination as well as serve as a forum for monitoring, coordination, and evaluation of institutional operations” (MU, 2014, p. 25).

Informants on the whole demonstrated that the establishments of the MC and UC alongside the president were important and new moves. Some informants thus argued that the creation of such structures “helped the university president to think and act strategically on the overall activities of the university” (UM3), and more importantly it “encouraged collegial decision making practices in the university” (UM2). Underlining the importance of having the MC and UC in the new organisational structure and based on experiences in one of the leadership groups of the university, one informant had this to say:

It is true that the president has more power than before, and he is legally delegated to make strategic decisions by himself with or without the help of others, but in practice, I personally observe that the president usually brings most of the strategic issues that need strategic decisions either to the UC or MC for broader perspectives. I believe that such practices should be encouraged as they broaden the collective leadership of our university (UM1).

It was also noted that the increased power of the president necessitated the need for having a competent and experienced leader in the university that would be elected by the academic community. According to some informants, “the taskforces proposed the idea that the university community should elect their president based on merit that would last for six years” (UM5). However, “this idea was rejected outright by the MoE as it was found to be inconsistent with the 2009 HEP” (UM2) that dictated “the president shall be appointed by the Minister or by the head of the appropriate state organ, as the case may be, from a short list of nominees provided by the board” (article 52 and sub article 1). However, most informants noted that the decision to continue with an appointed president was found to be “contradictory with the very HEP, which granted universities full institutional autonomy to set up its organisational structure and to enact and implement internal rules and

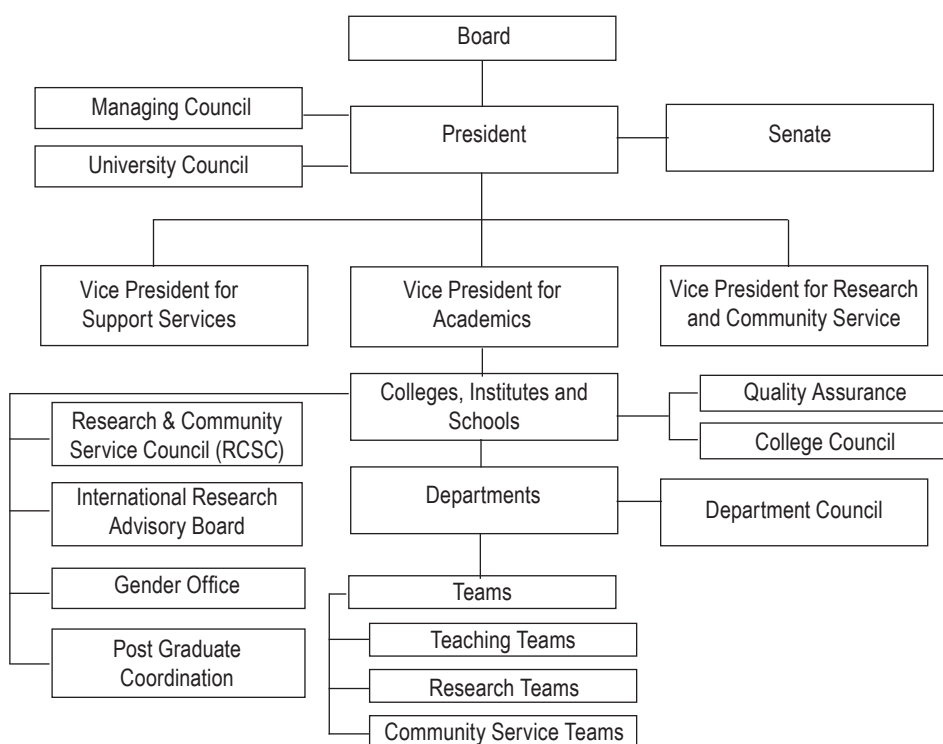


Figure 4. Institutional governance arrangement after BPR

Source: Adopted from the Senate Legislation of MU (MU, 2014b)

procedures” (UM5). For some informants, the absence of such power, however, “resulted in frustration and feeling of powerlessness on the majority of the academic community where the government interference is boldly manifested” (UM6). One informant alluded this practice to the notion of “the politicisation of higher education mission and vision against the academic values and norms” (UM4). This shows that the new organisational structure of the university, which was supposed to be designed based on BMTs, was largely dictated by the HEP of the country. In other words, the radical restructuring could only work if it was fitted to the pre-existing higher education proclamation.

Reorganisation of the core missions of the university

As shown in Figure 4, following the implementation of BPR, the visible structural changes were the separation of teaching and RCS core processes into two vice president offices, the reorganisation of the former faculty-based organisational structure to college-, institute- and school-based structures, and the creation of teams under the department structure (MU, 2008). All informants acknowledged that the university management

clearly identified teaching, research and community service as the core processes and the administrative activities as supportive processes. Consequently, the three core processes, formerly organised under the Vice President for Academics (VPA), were placed into two vice president offices, the VPA and newly created Vice President for Research and Community Services (VPRCS).

Documents released by the Taskforces identified three interrelated reasons as possible factors for the reorganisation of the core processes of the university and its BAUs. First is related to the growing understanding of the weak performance of the university integrating and equally pursuing teaching and research and community service (MU, 2008). Second is the institutional makeup and workflow where the university functions were considered evidently incapable of successfully responding to the demands of the internal and external stakeholders, and appropriately performing in the ever-changing competitive environment (RCSPT, 2008). Third is the perceived non-institutionalised quality assurance system, unstable and overlapping academic calendar, poor teaching and student evaluation methodologies and poor teaching-learning environment in the academic core (APRT, 2008). These were followed by poor research quality and quantity, weak community service offerings, and insufficient funds for RCS in the research and community service core (RCSPT, 2008) as the major reasons that forced the reorganisation of the core processes or missions of MU.

Furthermore, some informants said that the decision the university made to focus on three core processes as equally important missions eased the burden of the VPA and improved the decision-making capacity of the designated offices established to run the core activities.

Before the reorganisation took place, it was too difficult for the VPA office to handle three core missions in one office equally and effectively. There were huge burdens to coordinate these missions. Due to this, the focuses largely fell to teaching activities. Research was seen as something additional activity, and RCS was not even considered as one of the major missions of the university. Therefore, BPR came to resolve this problem. I believe that at least we are now in a position to know what to do in each core missions, and we are able to relate our research activities with the country's national growth and transformation plan (UM1).

Another informant, when asked about the possible results of the restructuring process, said:

It helped us to have a clear focus on what and how to do to achieve the vision of our university in relation to teaching, research and community service. Similarly, we managed to identify the major problems we have had in teaching, RCS. This in turn played a decisive role in setting workable plans and facilitating the decision making process of our university (UM3).

Moreover, informants indicated the separation of teaching and RCS did not only remain at the vice president offices, but it also went down into college, department and team levels.

As a response to give equally focus for all the core processes, we established a new office called VPRCS. This office is responsible for coordinating all RCS activities of the university. Besides, as we are committed enough to integrate our teaching activity with RCS, and to bolster our research products, we also created research council at college level and encouraged course teams to involve in research and community service (UM1).

Even though all informants applauded the decision by the university management to restructure the core missions, some informants raised their concerns about the expected changes.

In spite of some visible changes here and there, the very goals and purposes of handling these core processes have not shown significant changes. The teaching system has not improved as much as expected, and our research in terms of quality and quantity is still low. Besides, our community service activities remained traditional (UM5).

This view was echoed by UM2, who said “strong linkage has not been created between teaching and research yet, despite the reorganisation”. Moreover, “the newly created work processes under the department structure such as teaching and research teams are not working properly as to the expectations” (UM4).

The reasons for such problems were attributed to the “lack of enough funding for the research activities and insufficient follow up of the university leadership which are located at different levels of the university” (UM5), and “the absence of incentives promised for researchers who excel in their research activities” (UM6).

The views of informants showed two important issues. First, the decision by the university management to restructure the core missions as a direct response to the government initiated reforms was an important and bold move. In principle at least the university management recognised the value of having an equal focus on teaching and RCS. Second, even though MU responded by creating a new and visible structure, the quality of the core missions remained unchanged compared with the objectives set by BMTs. This indicated that sufficient resources, incentives, quality leadership and commitments did not follow the new structures and positions. So despite the need for change, the response of the university was more window-dressing than substance, symbolically adopting new structures instead of implementing a real change that meaningfully solved the inherent problems of the university.

5.2.2 A decentralised management system and institutional autonomy

The issues of institutional autonomy and academic freedom attracted the attention of all informants. It seems that the university’s management tried to address these issues by introducing a decentralised management system to the university following the implementation of the reform tools. The university management clearly accepted that the past management style had to be adapted to the new environment (MU, 2005). As was discussed in the previous sections, the new environment was partly related to the

pressures the university faced from external and internal forces to introduce a decentralised management system and to ensure an institutional autonomy at all levels of the university.

Changing a faculty-based structure to the college, institute and school levels

All informants conceded that the most visible changes at MU following the introduction of the BMTs was the introduction of a decentralised management system where the BAUs of the university were granted relatively more power and autonomy to carry out their missions. The change started from reorganisation of the faculty-based structure to colleges²⁵, institutes²⁶ and schools²⁷. This means that “all faculties were promoted to colleges, and some reorganised as institutes and schools based on their research focus, disciplinary background and similarity of work processes” (UM1). This was premised on the assumption that “colleges, institutes and schools would have more power and autonomy to exercise their missions than the faculty based structure would otherwise do” (UM4). Accordingly, MU managed to form seven colleges, eight institutes, two schools and seventy-three departments across its six campuses (MU, 2014a).

Some informants argued that the decision to adopt a decentralised management system and the subsequent reorganisations of the BAUs should be considered as a bold move that responded effectively to the internal problems of the university. The justifications were that “the former faculties did not have enough power and autonomy to pursue their missions autonomously and effectively” (UM5). Besides, “the former faculties and academic programs were organised in very unsystematic ways that let many similar academic programs and disciplines organised in irrelevant faculties” (UM1). This organisational structure was especially believed to contradict the very ideals of BPR, which mainly focuses on identifying and grouping similar work processes together (RCSPT, 2008). Therefore, informants noted that the old academic structure of the BAUs resulted in “persistent complaints from the academic staff because many of the academic programs were organised in irrelevant disciplines. In addition to this, duplications of similar academic programs in different faculties were also noticed that unnecessarily wasted the meagre resources of the university” (UM3). Moreover, it was indicated that “it [the faculty-based structure] has become one of the sources of conflict inside the academic community” (UM6).

Informants on the whole felt that the reorganisations of colleges, institutes, schools, departments and teams were done based on the criteria of grouping BAUs that were believed to have similar work processes and disciplinary backgrounds (UM5). The comment below illustrate the reorganisation processes as follows:

25 College refers to an academic unit in the University which may consist of departments, canters, and teams/chairs (MU, 2014b, p. 27).

26 Institute refers to an academic/research unit of the university with the principal objective of carrying out and disseminating research, but which may also engage in teaching where appropriate, particularly at the graduate program level (MU, 2014b, p. 27).

27 School refers to an academic unit in the university which may consist of programs/departments, centres, teams/chairs and others as may be established by the senate (MU, 2014b, p. 27).

When we saw the lower level organisational structure [BAUs], there was only one college that was health Science College. The rest were many faculties and several departments under ... Right after the implementation of BPR, however, most of the then faculties were reorganised as colleges, and some of them merged with other faculties who had the same or similar work processes. [As a result], seven colleges, four institutes [and one school]²⁸ were established in 2009. The restructuring also went into department level.... BPR created process based departments in a sense that departments or academic units that had the same processes were grouped together. Some of the departments were merged with others or transferred to other faculties. For instance, the formerly cooperative department was moved from the faculty of agriculture to college of business and economics as it has more economics background than agriculture. Under the department level, three teams, such as teaching, RCS were emerged to integrate the core-processes of BAUs (UM3).

Apart from the reorganisation of the BAUs, the next move of the university management was to delegate some of the power that was formerly concentrated at the institutional level (i.e., president and vice presidents) to the BAUs. Informants identified four important areas that showed power delegations from the top university level to the BAUs. These were related to academic issues, and financial, human and physical resources. When informants were asked about the possible indicators MU used to measure the improved institutional autonomy of BAUs, all informants concurred in the view that the power to open and close academic programs, to improve and develop curriculums, to administer the budget and to control the human and physical resources of the university without much intervention of the government and the top administration of the university respectively were the major indicators of success for MU.

Academic power

Most informants agreed that the first visible change with regard to the empowerment of BAUs was the power delegated to BAUs to open and close academic programs, to develop and improve the curricula of academic programs, and to improve the services they provide to students and other stakeholders. However, two divergent often conflicting discourses emerged from the data with regard to the power of BAUs have to manage some of their pedagogical activities. Whilst a minority mentioned that BAUs were autonomous enough to carry out all their pedagogical activities, others argued that the power of BAUs on some major pedagogical decisions, such as modularisation and continuous assessments, were not changed. As UM6 commented: “the changes in the institutional autonomy of BAUs with regard to some pedagogical issues were not as comprehensive as someone would like to think. I think there are still some major interventions by the MoE” (UM6).

It was indicated that the issues of empowering BAUs to open new academic programs and close those phased out or unnecessary ones were at the centre of the academic core process reengineering. According to informants, the opening of academic programs was

²⁸ Currently MU has seven colleges, eight institutes and two schools (MU, 2014a).

also related to curriculum development and improvement. Most informants conceded the view that compared with past practices, BAUs were in relatively better positions now to decide on their academic programs.

This [the lack of power to open and close academic programs] was one of the core issues where the academia forced to feel powerless, and that we constantly received complaints. The decisions of opening and closing academic programs were not in the hands of the faculties or departments; rather it used to be decided by the university management or the senate. The MoE sometimes even had a say on opening new academic programs. Now [after the implementation of BPR], our colleges are free to open new academic programs and to close the irrelevant ones (UM3).

We gave the full power for BAUs to open and close academic programs based on the need assessments they carry out. The process [of opening and closing academic programs] is now clear. Departments prepare their proposal, it passes through the DC and CC, then finally to the senate for final decision. For that matter, a proposal that passes through all the DC and CC is unlikely to be rejected by the senate. It only comes for approval and legality. In the past practices, however, it was a tiresome activity which used to take more than a year to pass through all the levels and to get decisions (UM1).

However, as was mentioned above other major pedagogical issues including the introduction of modularised curricula and continuous assessments were not done as per the demands of the BAUs, but were solely decided by the requirements of the MoE. The comment below illustrated this:

Irrespective of their importance to BAUs, the issue of modular curriculum and continuous assessment were pushed by the government. Personally, I like the idea of modular curriculum and continuous assessment, but they should not come as obligation to be implemented by all academic units. I feel that such decisions did not take into account the disciplinary differences of academic units. When the MoE came with those ideas, then we as university leaders made the decision to be implemented in all academic units. However, the results are not as much as we expected them to be. You see different results from different academic units. Some have done good jobs, but others have still problems in using these tools (UM3).

In principle, BAUs were granted the autonomy to decide on their academic issues. However, in practice they are not fully empowered. The cases in points are modularised curriculum and continuous assessment. Such initiations should come from within not from without. I think, it partly shows us how we are still short of institutionalised system in our university. Of course, you can clearly see the influence of the MoE. If the university management is not free from the influence of MoE, it is naive to expect that academic units would be free of the university management. Therefore, the MoE sent us directives to implement these issues [modular curriculum and continuous assessment], then we [university management] did not have a choice than to order the academic units to implement the tools (UM4).

In summary these results show that there is a mismatch between the laws on paper and in practice with regard to BAUs' power and autonomy in academic issues. This means despite the proclamation clearly indicating that the university and its BAUs are autonomous enough to pursue their missions, in practice they are far from enjoying this power. As a

result, it seems that MU's management body is sandwiched between the pressures of the government and the internal needs of the university. However, as the pressures from the government are strong, the university management is largely complying with the new institutional requirements (see Chapter 6).

Financial, human and physical power

All informants indicated that the effect of the new decentralisation system was stronger and more visible in the financial, human and physical resources in than the academic processes of the university and BAUs. As one informant put it: "...the tangible result of BMTs in MU is the power the university and its BAUs have to control their financial, human and physical resources" (UM3). The following comments illustrated the processes of financial and human resource autonomy at MU:

As a university, we are in a good position to make decisions on our resources [financial, human and physical] without much interference of the MoE than we were few years ago. We get our budget from the government as a block grant based that let us allocate and use it as per our priorities not as per the priorities of others. Our academic units can recruit and hire their employees based on their interest. We can also buy our educational and office materials based on our demand. Besides, we established some important offices both at the academic and administrative wings to facilitate such practices. Moreover, we use strategic planning as a tool for forecasting our future financial, human and physical resources. I would say on this regard we progress positively (UM2).

When we talk about the power academic units have with regard to human resources, it encompasses both recruitment and career promotion. They [BAUs] can hire their employees based on their academic and administrative staff developments plans without any influence of the university following merit based systems and through fair and open processes. They can recommend promotion based on article 32.2²⁹ and sub sequent articles of the legislation of the university, which was approved after the new reform tool implemented. However, the final decision is made by the senate. Of course, what is recommended by the academic units is unlikely to be rejected by the senate as long as it passes through all legal requirements (UM3).

As discussed elsewhere in this study, the reform targeted all levels of the university. Besides, the Taskforce's manuals indicated that the decentralisation of power was supposed to go down to the level of departments and teams structure. However, it seems that much of the power was concentrated at the college level not at the department and team levels. For example, informants revealed that departments could make decisions on their human resources, but financial and physical resources were kept in the hands of college deans.

29 The final decision would be made by the senate of the university upon the recommendation of the BAUs:

- a) To the Ranks of a Lecturer and below, when approved by the DC;
- b) To the Ranks of Assistant Professor when approved by the CC or Institute Council (IC);
- c) To the Ranks of Associate Professor as of the filing date of the secretary of the senate;
- d) To the Ranks of Professor as of the filing date of the board chairperson when approved by the board (MU, 2014b, p. 56-65).

The budget we [the management body] got from the government (in a block grant form), we directly allocate it to the various colleges and institutes based on their past performances, the number and types of academic programs, the number of students and employees and plans among others. Then these colleges are free to allocate [the budget] to their respective departments and free to use it according to the plan they have already developed. For instance, they can purchase their educational materials, recruit their human resources and conduct any financial activities by themselves of course by following the finance rules and regulations of the government. The relationship between the university management and the colleges is only limited to follow up and reporting. We as university management, only focus on follow up and supporting activities. However, the financial decentralisation has not gone beyond the college, institute and school level. I know that the necessary structures were not created at department level to carry out such financial issues (UM2).

When informants were asked the possible reasons behind the reluctance of the university management not to decentralise the power fully down to the level of department or team structure, they identified three interrelated reasons. First, they indicated that departments were not organised to handle such power. As UM4 put it, “the necessary administrative units to handle the financial and other resources were not established in the department and team levels”. Second, similar to the first reason, this lack of decentralisation was attributed to the “lack of trust of the university management that assumes departments and teams are not ready to accomplish these complicated financial regulations” (UM3). Finally, it was also associated with “the mismatch of the new BPR rules with the finance office of the government” (UM6). This means despite the fact that the new BPR structures allows departments as legal entities to carry out any financial administration, the finance office failed to recognise these new rules.

Problems in the decentralisation processes

However, some informants indicated that some processes of reorganisation of BAUs to colleges, institutes and schools were not as smooth as they were expected to be. The problems emerged when some academic units were combined with other disciplines. It was noted that some academic units were merged with or placed into disciplines that they had no disciplinary relationship with. As a result, some academic units felt that they lost their former status or identity. In relation to this UM4 commented:

I remember there were strong oppositions in some academic units when the reorganisation started to take place. For example, one of the strongest opposition came from the school of law after they were merged with other academic unit to form the college of law and governance. Members of law school strongly opposed this merger because of two main official reasons. First, the law school became law department, which created fierce resistance because many of them [academic staff] took this decision as the loss of status or demotion. Second, the law school leaders argued that the disciplinary nature of the school and the research methodology that it followed had nothing to do with political science and governance, which the law school obliged to join with I know still there are some complaints from some academic units who think they were placed in the wrong

discipline. Of course sometimes some of the complaints are more of a personal one than based on significant disciplinary differences. However, I personally believe that some of the complaints are reasonable and should be revisited.

This shows that even though the university responded rightly to the internal and external pressures to introduce a decentralised management system, the implementation processes are affected by both internal and external problems. This means some of the major elements of the decentralisation system are not incorporated at the department and team levels, and that the decentralised management system is not structurally integrated with the values, norms and practices of all levels of the university and its BAUs.

5.2.3 New planning and measuring tool

MU adopted BSC as a planning and performance measuring tool in all parts of the university few years after the implementation of BPR. All informants indicated that unlike BPR, which is purely a radical organisational change tool, BSC is a planning and measuring tool for the newly reorganised academic and non-academic units. As was reported by the informants, it seems that the fine line between BPR and BSC is that the former was chosen to restructure the university from the scratch. However, the latter is not about radical reorganisation, but rather about shaping the missions of the university in the right direction and creating strategically aligned goals between the university and its BAUs. It was thus claimed that “BSC is a complementary tool for BPR which helped the university and its newly organised academic units to produce effective and measurable plans that are strategically aligned with the overall missions and goals of the university” (UM1).

The interviews and the BSC documents produced by the Institutional Transformation and Quality Assurance Directorate (ITQAD)³⁰ showed that BSC in MU and its BAUs was primarily built around four strategic themes that served as pillars of excellence for the university: academic excellence, research excellence, community service excellence, and dependable support services. It incorporated six core values that showed the university’s commitment to pursuing excellence in all its core businesses, namely excellence, quality service delivery, academic freedom, good governance, a culture of fighting corruption, and sensitivity to cross-cutting issues. Moreover, it was also noted that the BSC initiative at MU was guided by four major perspectives, which are customer satisfaction, an internal perspective, a learning and growth perspective, and a financial perspective. The university believes that these four perspectives are the reflections of the real motivations behind adopting BSC and which provide the frames of reference for objectively measuring the performance of the university and its BAUs (ITQAD, 2012).

The rationale behind adopting BSC at MU was that the university and its BAUs lacked strategically aligned goals, experienced continual customer dissatisfaction with the services

30 ITQAD is an office which was established as a direct response to BPR, and it has the responsibility of leading the reform processes of the university and monitoring the quality assurance activities (MU, 2014a).

they provided, had an inability to measure the performance and progress of the university and its BAUs, were unable to create and improve important values, and lacked diversified funding, among others (MU, 2012). However, some informants argued that these problems should not be taken as factors behind adopting BSC at MU. It seems that all informants agreed on the stated problems of the university and its BAUs, but some informants felt that the increasing pressures of the government were the major push factors that forced MU to comply with BSC requirements. In relation to this UM4 noted; “as it was for BPR, the issue of accountability was at the centre of implementing BSC at MU. The MoE came up with this idea [BSC], and we had to comply with it”. Similarly, UM6 commented:

As far as I know, major reforms that have been implemented in MU were initiated by the MoE. I think everybody knows that we [MU] work under the strict regulations of the government. Therefore, we are obliged to accomplish the government rules irrespective of the relevance these rules would have to our context. Now the question should be ‘how to implement these new rules into our context’? This worries me sometime (UM6).

Informants indicated that the first response of MU was to establish a Taskforce that could lead the implementation processes. The taskforce, which was led by the ITQAD office, was responsible for identifying the strategic themes or performance areas in which the university aimed to excel, the core values that could serve as tools for pursuing excellence, and the institutional perspectives that would indicate the major key performance indicators.

When the issue of BSC came into the agenda of the university management, under the guidance of the university president and other responsible bodies, ITQAD took the leadership to form a special taskforce from various parts of the university and made extensive studies on how to adopt BSC in our university. Following the identification of business processes of the university [by BPR], the strategic themes and the core values, ITQAD came up with four major perspectives which serve as the guiding frames of references for the implementation of BSC at levels of the university (UM3).

According to informants, the first action of the taskforce was to identify the strategic themes or performance areas of the university and its BAUs. All informants conceded that identifying strategic themes, which comprised the major policies and programs of the university, was the most important issue, because it was believed that they define the fundamental reasons why the university exists. However, compared with identifying the performance indicators, informants argued that identifying the strategic themes of the university was not a difficult task. Talking about this issue, UM1 said:

We did not have much difficulties on identifying our strategic themes or the performance areas that we want to excel. First, our strategic themes are in one way or another related to our missions, and as you might probably know university’s missions are universal. They are all about teaching, research and community services. Second, we have already done a good job in the first reform [BPR] to identify our strategic themes. Third, we were also guided by the strategic directions we received from the government. Therefore, in that sense we easily managed to develop university wide shared strategic themes.

As mentioned above, however, identifying and applying the institutional perspectives or key performance indicators was difficult. As UM5 put it, “the identification of key performance indicators and applying them to the real context of the university were very complex tasks, which the university still has failed to solve”. As a result, “they remained to be the source of contentions among the academic community” (UM4).

It [identifying performance indicators] was difficult, because, it has to do with the lack of experience we have to developing performance indicators based on BSC approach. You don’t have to forget that we used the traditional quantifiable academic indicators, such as enrolment, graduation rates, dropout rates, repetition and retention rates, numbers of programs and other demographic indicators, that have less to do in achieving academic excellence. Whatever the case, we managed to develop some key performance indicators. However, I would say the transition was not as smooth as we expected it to be. There are still confusions and misunderstanding inside the academicians on how to use the indicators (UM1).

The leadership of the university totally agreed that the traditional performance indicators neither comprehensively portray the success of the university nor do they well integrated with the university’s missions, visions and goals. Therefore, it was must for us to develop key performance indicators that were in line with the strategic themes and objectives of the university. Following empirical evidences, we managed to develop four perspectives, such as customer satisfaction, internal perspective, learning and growth perspective, and financial perspective as key areas of measuring performance. Based on that, we developed a lot of performance indicators. However, when we interred into practice, many problems appeared and still we could not effectively solve them (UM3).

Moreover, some informants argued that the problems observed in relation to identifying workable performance indicators were largely related to the mismatch between the nature of the core processes of the university, which are widely considered hard to measure, and the requirements of the new rules.

I agree that the whole processes of identifying performance indicators and relating them to the strategic themes of the university was a difficult task. However, it is difficult for us, because as university we work in knowledge production and dissemination. In other words, we work mostly in intangible elements, which are normally hard to quantify. That is why, when we entered into practice, all BAUs were confused. The academia started to raise many practical questions which we [university management] failed to respond effectively. In one hand, the performance indicators we identified were too general to use them. On the other hand, they did not take into account the disciplinary differences between academic units (UM4).

In my view, we had two major problems in applying BSC at all levels of the university. First, we did not have a baseline data to make a cross reference between the results we want to achieve and the performance indicators we identified. Second, apart from the performance indicators we identified in our university, HERQA sent us piles of performance indicators that we have to use. There were some incompatibilities between our indicators and the indicators sent by HERQA. I think these created huge confusions. In other words, we were not sure how to balance all these indicators (UM5).

Irrespective of the aforementioned problems, it seems that the university management managed to develop a corporate- (university-) level BSC plan. The objective was to cascade the university-level BSC plan to the BAU and individual levels. Therefore, ITQAD developed a comprehensive BSC cascading and implementation roadmap (ITQAD, 2014). Collected documents showed that ITQAD established three major strategic plan cascading teams, the strategic management team, the strategic themes team, and the objective owners' team, which were mandated with cascading and implementing the strategic plan of the university (ITQAD, 2014). ITQAD specified the composition of these three teams and the sub-teams to be established under them. As a result, the strategic management team, which was accountable to the board of the university, was comprised of the university President as a chairperson of the team, all vice presidents, the planning and programme budget director, institutional development and quality assurance director, and corporate communication director. This team was generally responsible for overseeing the implementation processes, providing leadership, and monitoring and evaluating the whole process.

The strategic themes team, which was accountable to the strategic management team, had five sub-teams: academic excellence, research, community service, support service, and cross-cutting issues. For example, the academic excellence sub-team was comprised of the vice president for academics as chairperson, the academic programme director, distance and continuing education director, registrar and alumni director, and quality assurance unit director. This team was particularly responsible for ensuring that the corporate-level objectives related to the academic excellence themes were properly cascaded to all levels. The research excellence sub-team, which was comprised of the vice president for research and community service as chairperson, the director of UICL, MU's business and consultancy enterprise manager, and an ITQAD representative, was mandated with ensuring that corporate-level objectives related to the research excellence and community service excellence themes objectives were properly cascaded to colleges and subsequent academic units.

As was mentioned above, the whole idea of developing the BSC plan was to cascade the corporate-level plan to the business level [college level] and subsequently to the operational level (or department and individual level). In other words, "when you want to prepare a plan at college level, it should be done based on the plan prepared at the university level. Then the college plan should be cascaded down to departments, teams and then to individual teachers to have shared visions and missions" (UM2). Therefore, "colleges, departments and teachers were expected to develop their own strategically aligned plans with the centrally prepared BSC plan of the university" (UM4).

However, most informants indicated that the efforts made to cascade the corporate-level BSC plan seemed to stop at the college level. During the data collection period, it was observed that BSC had not yet reached in department, team and individual levels.

We [university level] tried to make our plans based on BSC for the last three years. Nevertheless, we failed to institutionalise it effectively. The corporate plan was sent

to the colleges, and we know that all the colleges developed their plan based on BSC, nevertheless many of them failed to cascade down their plans for the department and individual levels. Besides, despite ITQAD established various teams to lead and facilitate the cascading processes, most of them failed to live up to the expectations. As I have said before, BSC was a new experience for many of us, and thus academic units had serious difficulties in identifying the right performance indicators with the performance areas we identified. Of course, not to mention the resistances of the academic community for such kind of business related performance measurement tool (UM5).

Surprisingly enough, most colleges failed to cascade down its plans for department, teams and individuals. You might see some differences between academic units in adopting BSC. I think apart from the resistances of the academia, the practicality issues became very bold. Many ambiguous performance indicators and coupled by lack of baseline data left the BAUs and its academic staff into frustrations and confusions. Cognizant of these problems, we [university management] tried to provide additional trainings for the academic units by inviting external consultants, but no substantiation change has been brought, yet (UM2).

Informants were asked the reason behind the differences shown between BAUs adopting BSC in their units. All informants attributed these performance differences to the leadership quality and commitment of the BAUs, not to their disciplinary differences and financial powers. For example, UM1 commented:

In general, it is difficult to say BSC was implemented in its full sense of the word in all academic units. However, some BAUs have shown relatively better performance than the others cascading down to the operational levels. For that matter, it is not only in BSC but also in BPR, there are differences among BAUs. We observe that there are significant differences in the quality of leadership and commitments between colleges, institutes, and schools. For example, college 'X' and 'Z'³¹ have shown better performance than the others. As I said before, we tried to evaluate the reason, then we found out that the level of commitment and the leadership skills in these two colleges were better than the other colleges (UM1).

Moreover, informants were asked if either the disciplinary differences or the financial capacity differences between colleges had an impact on the responses of BAUs. However, all informants denied that such factors could be considered as influential factors in the MU context and did not see evidence that shows otherwise.

It is true that some of our colleges have more money than the others. Especially, colleges that have wide-networks and that are active in international partnership have relatively better sources of funding than the others. However, their performances in relation to government sponsored reforms have been as similar as those who have not. You should know that regardless of their sources of funding, they all work under the strict control of the government rules. Therefore, they do not have any extra leverage to respond differently. At least we have not seen that in our university (UM6).

This shows that disciplinary differences between academic units at MU have nothing to do with the performance of BAUs in responding to the new institutional rules and

31 These letters were used to keep the anonymity of the colleges as per the request of the informant.

requirements. In summary, these results show that MU complies with the pressures of the government to adopt BSC without carefully deliberating on the relevance of BSC to the university's values and practices. In other words, it seems that the decision the university management made to adopt BSC as a strategic management tool was guided by legitimacy factors and a response to the ever-increasing accountability pressures of the government. This is evidenced by the university failing to integrate BSC at all levels of the university.

5.2.4 Reengineering the academic core processes

Informants on the whole demonstrated that one of the central focuses of the BMTs was to reengineer the three core missions and the subsequent sub-processes of the university and its BAUs. As was indicated in the previous sections, the governing body of MU set up two major Taskforces, the APRT and RCSPT, to reengineer the core processes of the university, namely teaching and RCS. These two Taskforces were responsible for carrying out comprehensive SWOT analyses of teaching and RCS activities and coming up with radical solutions for the deep-rooted problems of the university and its BAUs. Informants said that after a few months of studies and deliberations, the APRT and RCSPT produced their study results and submitted them to the governing body of MU for approval. Informants indicated that university management accepted almost all of the recommendations provided by both Taskforces, and created the proposed new work processes for discussions and implementation to BAUs. It was noted that both Taskforces analysed the old problems—the “AS-IS”—and proposed the desired work processes—the “TO-BE”—of the university and its BAUs (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008). As a result, all taskforces produced new work flows which were considered to be abrupt shifts from the old teaching and RCS processes.

Informants on the whole demonstrated that one of the major criticisms of the government on the performance of MU was its traditional academic processes and the subsequent processes attached to them. MU thus decided to radically change the teaching-learning process and its support systems to ensure academic excellence and meet the educational needs of the society (APRT, 2008). Accordingly, the APRT, under the jurisdiction given to it by MU's management, identified four key problems with the then, or “AS-IS”, processes, which were related to (a) the governance and management of academics, teaching and learning, and (b) student services and staff. UM3 commented:

After deliberating on these issues for several months by making extensive internal and external environment analysis, such as academic staff, stakeholders, steering team members, subject matter experts, MoE and benchmarked organisations, our university came up with some key recommendations that aimed to bring about radical change in the academic core process of BAUs. Issues related to changing the teaching and learning approach, governance and management of academics, student and academic staff services became the focal points of reform tools.

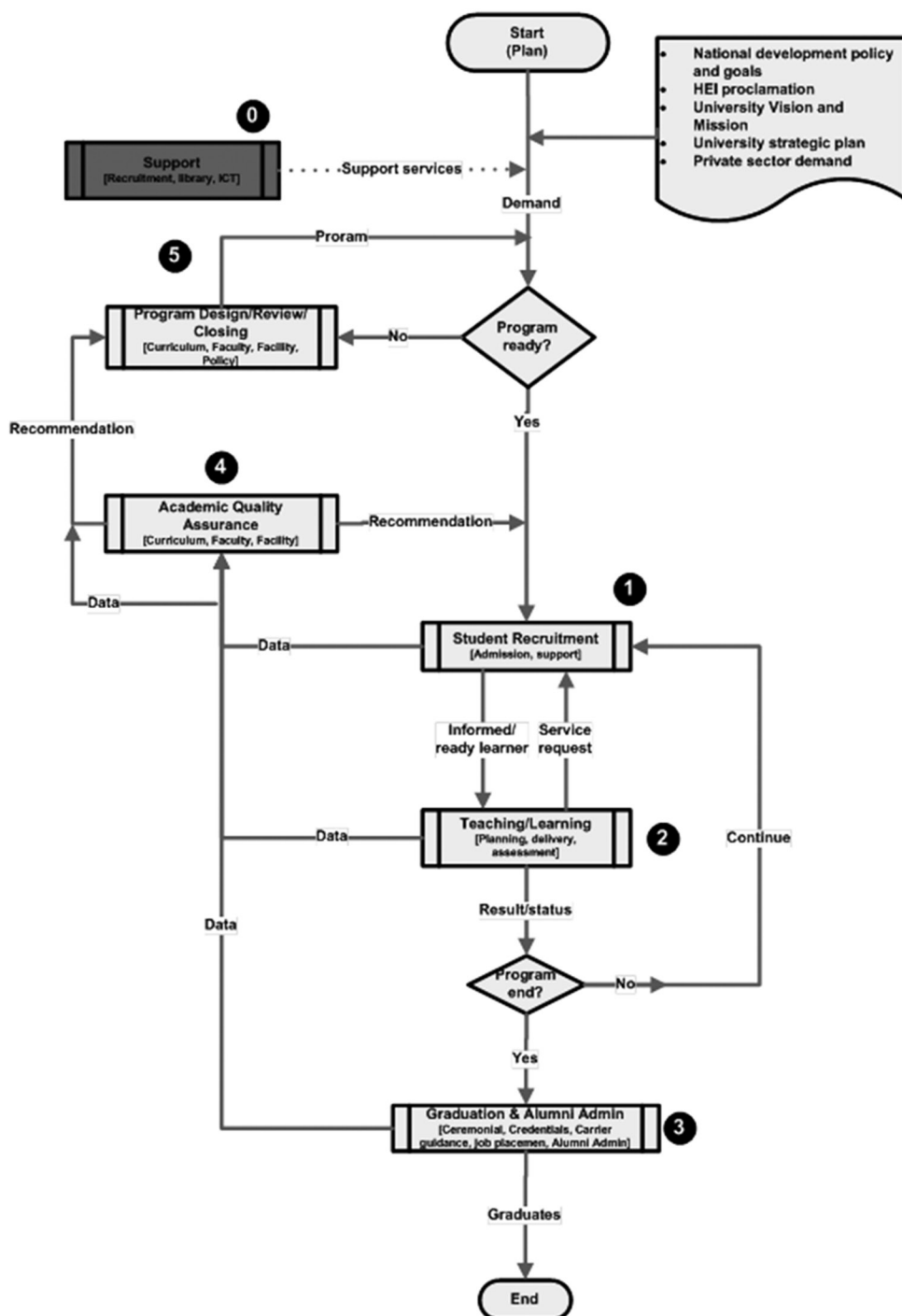


Figure 5. Flowchart of the new academic core process
Source: APRT, 2008, p. 32.

Documents showed that MU designed a new flowchart that clearly depicted the major elements of the academic core and their interactions to radically change the teaching and learning activities of the university and its BAUs. As can be seen in Figure 4, the identified key elements were student recruitment, teaching and learning, graduation and alumni administration, a quality assurance unit, and programme design. Informants argued that these five key elements were chosen because “MU was ineffective and inefficient in those aspects. Therefore, we [MU management] believed that if we managed to change these processes, then it would be easy for us to achieve academic excellence” (UM2). UM1 commented, that “the sub-processes are part and parcel of the academic core process, and hence it is believed that they directly influence our academic core process” (UM1). As is shown in Figure 3, these key elements were treated as sub-processes of the academic core process.

A. The student recruitment sub-process

As shown in Figure 5, the first intervention area in the new academic core-process was the change suggested in the student recruitment sub-process. The restructuring of this process was done on the assumption that the former process was too “fragmented into a number of processes [which had to be] accomplished by many functional departments such as the department, faculty, faculty registrar, faculty ICDE and main registrar” (APRT, 2008, p. 36). Therefore, it was indicated that the new student-recruitment process was designed to “attract and retain high calibre students through effective communication and information provision, seamless admission and support services, remedial actions, strong advisory and guidance systems, scholarship opportunities” (APRT, 2008, p. 33). It seems that MU created the “TO-BE” processes with the aim of combining several dis-integrated activities into an integrated end-to-end sub-process to be accomplished in one-window. More importantly, the new workflow recommended that remedial actions should be designed before admission in order to support mature prospective students. Also, the need for maintaining students’ related information centrally and making sure it was accessible to all frontline operators with the help of ICT, such as electronic card identifiers, was recommended (APRT, 2008).

Informants indicated that the new flowchart had some organisational implications for the university and the BAUs. This means “it demanded the establishment of a new student service team with the mandate to coordinate the student-recruitment centrally and with branch offices at every academic unit” (UM3). The whole idea was that the student service team, as the owner of the process, it would collect information from all academic programs and colleges, and should advertise through the relevant means of communication, such as the university webpage, public and private media and printed documents, so as to provide timely information to students. The APRT suggested that for a fully empowered student-

recruitment team could perform end-to-end services effectively and efficiently (APRT, 2008).

However, most informants were critical about the discrepancies observed between the newly designed students' recruitment sub-process workflow and the actual practices at MU and its BAUs. For example, informants argued that Ethiopian public universities do not have the power and autonomy to recruit their regular students, the MoE does. Therefore, they criticised the use of having new policy for recruiting high quality students from the market. For example, UM4 was critical about the situation:

I have some difficulty understanding this [the necessity of student recruitment process]. We all know that student's placement is done by the MoE at national level. We don't dictate the recruitment process. We only inform the MoE about the number of students we can admit in each programs not the quality of students. In other words, regardless of their quality the MoE places students in all universities. The university only recruit fee paying students, who are in the extension and some summer programs. So the new policy is just a symbol for me. I do not see its relevance to us.

Moreover, it was indicated that the remedial program³², which was one of the core features of the student recruitment sub-process and was considered as an important tool for supporting the academic survival of students, was not structurally integrated at all levels of the university (UM5). It seems that the remedial approach had three important phases: pre-remedial, during-remedial and post-remedial. According to UM6, the idea behind the remedial programme was that "students should not be dismissed for the very reason that they failed to pass an exam without getting continual help from remedial programs [...] but none of them are effectively institutionalised".

The idea of introducing a remedial programme was fabulous. It was all about giving support to students from the day of admission to graduation. Its main objective was to empower students to achieve their learning objectives and to help them competent enough for the next learning objectives. Under any circumstances, you do not defy this objective. However, I would say none of its objectives has been implemented yet. I can mention several reasons behind its failure, such as lack of resources and leadership commitment. But for me, I believe that the university was not ready to exercise these fabulous programs. I think the taskforces during the benchmarking process copied them from international universities. However, our university was not ready to adopt such practices, conceptually and technically. We may get positive feedbacks from the government and other partners when they saw MU incorporated such important processes in its academic core-process (UM4).

However, it seems that the student recruitment sub-process had other important sub-components that the university also improved, namely providing seamless information for students about academic programs, e-student services, and student record management among others.

32 In the remedial program targeted students get pre-university-admission courses and are assessed on whether they satisfy the minimum requirements to be admitted or to follow a specific program. It is used to fill the gap between the requirements of a program and the capacity of the student. The program office serves as a back-office in preparation of preparatory programs as appropriate (APRT, 2008).

If we take the case of the university's Registrar office in handling students' records, you will easily observe the changes. The student service units were organised in different ways than they had been before. Currently, the issues of students' records are being handled by a single team on the database of the university that is fully responsible for keeping the records of students from the day of admission to graduation efficiently. This service used to be handled by many personnel and units that were considered as ineffective and had faced many criticisms from students. However, the student service unit introduced e-student service in which students able to get services related to their academic credentials and records in one-window shopping system through internet. Students do not need to make long lines in front of the registrar office as it had been for many years, rather they can check their academic status (dismissal or pass) through the e-student service created by BPR (UM1).

Overall, these results indicate that even though MU conforms with the requirements to improve students' record management and e-student services, MU only symbolically complied with the pressures to develop student recruitment policy and to provide remedial activities for its students.

B. The teaching-learning sub-process

As shown in Figure 5, the second major element in the academic core work process was the teaching-learning sub-process. The choice of the teaching-learning sub-process at the core of the reengineering process was made on the assumption that "teaching in MU was largely characterised by a traditional approach whereby teachers dominate the teaching and learning process with no room for students to reflect on the contents of the courses" (UM2). Therefore, the APRT designed a new process with the overall objective to provide student-centred education that enhances learning outcomes (APRT, 2008). The teaching-learning sub-process had specific target groups—students, teachers, external stakeholders and the university—that were expected to benefit from it. As indicated in the APRT document, students would get sufficient information about the programme and specific courses, opportunities for participation in course planning and evaluation. Besides, teachers would use students' participation as inputs to course improvement and developing skills in team planning. Similarly, the external stakeholders would have skilled graduates with quality training. In this way the university could ultimately guarantee academic excellence and achieve a transparent and standardised evaluation system. This sub-process was particularly composed of several activities and tasks to be performed by the newly established course teams. The major tasks and activities of the course teams included presenting course plans, lesson planning, lesson presentation, formative assessment, remedial action, progress evaluation and summative evaluation, among others (APRT, 2008). The idea of modularised curriculum was also added recently as part of the BPR initiatives (MU, 2012).

Documents also showed that MU forecast the anticipated costs that were needed for the successful institutionalisation of the teaching-learning sub-process. According to the APRT documents, the identified costs were related to technology, materials and training.

In other words, the APRT demanded fully-equipped ICT infrastructure, modern office furniture and continuous training for all academics. Moreover, the APRT designed the organisational implications of the new teaching-learning sub-process to BAUs. That means that unlike the former structure that gave a large amount of power to the faculties to organise their teaching and learning activities, in the current structure, the course team leaders or owners were supposed to own and lead the teaching-learning sub-process.

A closer look at the teaching-learning sub-process, however, showed that the responses of the BAUs were influenced by the imbalance between the actual capacity, such as the human, financial and physical resources of the university, and the obligation to accommodate a large number of students that was placed on the university by the MoE. Some informants criticised the government pressures to bring radical change in the teaching-learning sub-process while the necessary resources were not allocated to the university. For example, they argued that despite the fact that the APRT clearly estimated the anticipated costs and the types of inputs necessary to bring about radical change in the teaching-learning sub-process of the university, it was reported that none of them were adequately provided by the university and the government. A common view amongst informants was that MU and its BAUs were forced to do more with less. Therefore, they indicated that the teaching-learning process was still teacher-centred, and the much-anticipated changes in modernising the process were yet to be structurally integrated at all levels of the university.

The other major problem identified in relation to the poor institutionalisation process of the teaching-learning sub-process was the readiness of the academic staff to adapt to the new requirements, and the inability of the university to provide constructive training to solve these problems. For example, UM4 commented:

Most of our instructors in most of the colleges do not have any pedagogical backgrounds. Notwithstanding the university started Higher Diploma Program (HDP) in 2005 to improve and develop the knowledge and skills of instructors of teaching methodology, the high rate of academic staff turnover made the programme difficult to overhaul it. The other alternative the university left with is the Institute of Pedagogical Science (IPS) that by itself has been under constant of waves of reforms with very limited number of teaching staff. I think it is too easy to observe how difficult it was to give quality trainings with badly equipped institute for the whole university academic staff. I would not say we were successful in giving comprehensive trainings to the academia (UM4).

Following the results of BPR, we tried to introduce continuous assessment system and modularised curriculum in all academic units. We decided to adopt modular curriculum and its sub-component a continuous assessment because we believed that the former courses delivery system was only discipline based and fragmented in its nature. In other words, the courses were not organised around competences, and hence we failed to produce competent graduates to the labour market. Therefore, our intention was to change the system based on modular curriculum to give students the chance to develop particular competence that helps them in their future career. However, I would say we have not succeeded as much as we wanted it to be. I think everything comes suddenly to the university and academic units, and thus we failed to focus in some very important elements of the change initiatives. As a result, this has brought impromptu responses in every reform initiative introduced to our university (UM6).

When informants were asked about the reason behind the failure to develop effective modular curricula in the BAUs of the university, they pinpointed two practical reasons. The first was related to the disciplinary nature of academic units, and the second was more due to the lack of experience of academics in developing modular curriculum.

I remember some academic units did not like the very idea of modular curriculum, because they believed that it was not important for the very nature of their disciplines. They argued that they are better-off with the old course delivery system. It must be noted that modular curriculum came as a must package to be implemented by all the academic units irrespective of disciplinary differences. Therefore, they introduced it, but when they did, they did not follow the basic principles of modular curriculum. Besides, they acted as if they had adopted modular curriculum. However, our [university management] evaluations proved otherwise. I think this could be taken as one of the reasons behind its failure (UM4).

Moreover, as was indicated above, the responses of the university and its BAUs were also affected by external factors, such as the interference of the MoE in the internal affairs of the university, which were typified by the placement of large numbers of students over the enrolment capacity of the university.

The idea of introducing a student centred teaching methodology, which was proposed by the APRT and latter approved by the university management, was noble by any standard. The existing situation of our university, however, does not allow us to introduce it [student centred teaching method]. There have always been mismatches between the number of students our university can accommodate and the demands of MoE. Every year, The MoE places many students in our university more than our enrolment capacity, both in terms of the number of teachers, classrooms, libraries and laboratories we have. As a result, we have been forced to place more than 60 students in one class that makes it difficult if not impossible to the teachers to effectively exercise student centred teach approaches and related activities of the teaching learning sub-process (UM5).

This shows that the whole idea of radically changing the teaching-learning sub-process is not completed in its fullest sense. Despite the fact that some improvement in the students services, most of the components of the teaching-learning sub-process remain unchanged. In general, as it is in the other cases, MU conformed with the pressures and requirements of the reform tools by designing various structures and introducing rules and guidelines; however, the majority of the newly created work processes and programs are not yet fully functional. This might imply that MU complies with the increasing pressures of the government for legitimacy reasons rather than as a deliberate response to change the university and its BAUs based on the requirements of BMTs.

C. The graduation and alumni administration sub-process

As shown in Figure 5, the third sub-process in the academic core process is the graduation and alumni administration of the university. The need for designing the graduation and alumni administration as a sub-process of the academic core process was done based on the objective:

“[...] to authorize the knowledge and skills gained as a graduate; equip the [s]tudent and graduate with the necessary orientation and support regarding his/her future career; and establish a means by which the graduate can continuously collaborate with the university” (APRT, 2008, p. 47).

According to the APRT guideline, the graduation and alumni administration sub-process was composed of six elements—graduation approval, academic credentials issuance, job marketing, alumni membership registration, alumni administration, and graduation ceremony organisation. Graduation approval, which was also part of the old structure, was related to the official signing of academic credential that marked the successful completion of the minimum programme requirements. Academic credential issuance, like the graduation approval, was part of the previous structure. It particularly addressed the provision of academic credentials as evidence for the successful completion of study programmes. Similarly, the graduation ceremony was part of the ceremonial event for the official conclusion of academic programmes. However, informants indicated that three elements of the graduation and alumni administration, namely alumni membership registration, alumni administration and job marketing were new elements incorporated with the new structure. It was noted that the identification of the latter three elements was done on the assumption that “MU lacked institutionalised support systems to graduate in job hunting and career development. Besides, it was believed that the relation between the university and its alumni was rather informal and less targeted” (UM1).

According to informants, the first response of the university was to recognising alumni as decisive input to the advancement of the missions and vision of the university, and to design effective and vibrant documentation systems. Informants further reported that the next move of the university was to design the structures, jobs and positions for that particular sub-process.

We designed a new organisational structure and detailed job descriptions. For example, the graduate and alumni team is responsible for producing academic credentials of graduates upon signed by the president of the university, then it would be issued at the student service unit. Then the academic unit in the presence of the graduates and the university community would carry out the graduation ceremony in the university’s convocation hall. Whereas the job marketing and alumni registration and administration would be the responsibilities of the job-hunting and career-guidance sub-team of graduation and alumni administration team, student support unit and in business enterprise part of the university (UM2).

All informants illustrated that similar to the teaching-learning sub-process, MU clearly forecast the major costs that MU should guarantee if the basic elements of the graduation and alumni administration sub-process were to be changed radically. It was reported that the costs were related to technology and infrastructure and training of the academia, support and managers. In other words, this sub-process demanded the availability of strong ICT, especially fully-fledged office automation, databases and up-to-date processing tools.

However, as in the other sub-processes of the university, the initiative of MU to introduce graduation and alumni administration as an important element of the teaching core process has shown mixed performances. It was indicated that compared to the old system, some elements of this sub-process, such as academic credential issuance, graduation approval and ceremony of the university showed some improvements under the current structure.

However, most informants commented that the efforts made to introduce vibrant alumni registration and administration and job-marketing services to graduates failed to bring any substantial change. It seems that the structure was created under the name of the MU alumni relations office, but “in practice this office failed to live up to the expectations set by the APRT” (UM6). Informants recognised that similar to the teaching-learning sub-process, the three major newly introduced elements, such as alumni registration and administration, and job marketing service were “severely compromised by the lack of modern infrastructures (UM4), “limited awareness of their use and lack of focus of the leadership of the university” (UM5), and “negligence” (UM2) on the part of the university management body.

D. The academic quality assurance sub-process

As illustrated in Figure 5, one of the major or new changes in the academic core-process was the establishment of QAUs at every level of the university. The establishment of the academic quality assurance sub-process was mainly aimed at ensuring academic excellence and promoting academic programs for national and international accreditations by aligning overall academic activities with the university’s goals (APRT, 2008). According to the official documents released by ITQAD, the university first identified important components beneath the academic quality assurance sub-process to guarantee quality education, such as course self-assessments, programme self-assessments, peer review programme self-assessments, peer programme visits, external reviews of peer assessments, and institutional self-assessments, among others. In general, the quality assurance sub-process, which consists of internal and external quality assurance elements, broadly focused on self-evaluations, peer reviews and external audits (MU, 2009).

According to ITQAD documents, the next responses of MU were to specify the components of the academic quality assurance sub-process and to demarcate the boundaries between the components. As a result, it was indicated that the course self-assessment referred to the collection and analysis of data for a particular course with regard to its course content, lesson planning, materials used, teaching, assessment method and student support services among others. This scientific analysis aimed to examine and improve the standard of the course. The establishment of programme self-assessment as the second major activity was not about a particular course, but rather about improving the standard of the whole academic programme including curricula, staff competence,

student performance, academic governance, facilities and support services, among others. The peer review programme self-assessment was about thoroughly revisiting and evaluating the report documents produced by programme self-assessments. The peer programme visit referred to activities where peer reviewers from peer institutions visit the programme and cross check the report documents with the reality on the ground and finally give workable recommendations. The external review of peer assessments was related to activities in which external reviewers from national and international accreditation agencies revisit the programmes' self-assessment reports and the reports documented by peer reviewers. Moreover, institutional self-assessment was the collection and analysis of detailed data collected from academic programs on staff competence, student performance, academic governance, facilities and support services etc. to identify the institutional standard of the university. Last but not least, the improvement planning and implementation activities focused on the preparation and implementation of the suggested and agreed plans by specifying the necessary budgets and resources to the programme evaluation institution.

Following the identification, definition and demarcation of the components of the academic quality assurance sub-process, it seems that the university tried to set the organisational implications these elements could have to the academic core structure of the university and BAUs. Consequently, it was revealed that course teams and departments in cooperation with the institutional quality assurance office, institutional self-assessment team, peer review team and external audit team would do all the academic quality assurance sub-process elements. Specifically, the course-team and programme levels (i.e., courses, laboratories and practical) were assigned to carry out course assessments, whereas programme assessments were supposed to be done at the college level. The university management body was responsible for conducting institutional assessments.

Informants on the whole admitted that that unlike the old organisational structure, which did not give any place for quality assurance, the new work process clearly recognised the values of quality assurance practices and established QAUs both at the university and BAU levels. It was also noted that to institutionalise the practices of institutional quality assessment, MU produced a written and formally-endorsed quality assurance policy in 2008. Moreover, MU responded actively by establishing a central quality assurance office to be merged with the institutional transformation office, which was later renamed ITQAD, and establishing subsidiary offices in all BAUs. Nevertheless, most informants criticised the decision of the university to place the QAUs in the BAUs, instead of making them independent units that can carry out their missions without the direct interferences of BAUs.

I think there was confusion with regard to the concept of quality assurance. We did not establish QAUs to functions as relatively autonomous units, rather we tried to mingle them with our day to day activities. That is why you see the college level quality assurance heads act as vice deans. I think this created a problem of integrity, because these [quality assurance] heads are accountable to both the college dean and the central QAU office. It

is not thus difficult to imagine how the institutional quality assessment would become somewhat biased (UM6).

According to informants, the establishment of academic quality assurance as a sub-process of the academic core process, “got the approval and appreciation of many” (UM3); however, it seems that “its institutionalisation process has a long way to go” (UM5). Informants identified several reasons behind the poor institutionalisation process, including the lack of readiness and commitment of the academic leaders and the faculty, the lack of experience and proper training, and the interference of the external quality assurance agency, HERQA, and its complex quality indicators.

The university was getting bigger and bigger, and regardless of whose initiative it [quality assurance] was, it was a timely decision for our university management to adopting the establishment of quality assurance units and its subsequent guidelines and procedures. However, if I have to measure the performances of these [quality assurance] units in terms of their job descriptions, I will say they are far from to be institutionalised effectively. I think many of us did not wholeheartedly accept or understand the contribution it would make for our university. Sometimes, I ask myself whether we really believe in it, or just adopt it for the sake of getting the approval of the government. For example, the different formal written guidelines and procedures produced by the university to ensure the quality assessment failed to be strictly followed by people who work at different levels of the university. In general the structures, jobs, positions, rules, and indicators are there, but the university and academic units are not working accordingly (UM5).

I think when the idea of quality assurance came to the university with BPR, I would say few have some knowledge about it. The most visible work of the QAUs is the course audits they make twice and more in a year. Of course, you might also observe some ad hoc activities, especially when unexpected problems occurred, done in the name of quality assessment. The major essence of quality assurance, which is about enhancing quality, however, has not been carried out yet. I considered this partly as lack of knowledge and experience. Moreover, the efforts we made to develop the knowledge of the academic staff about quality assurance practices were not enough. Training were given, but they were not continuous and lacked focus (UM4).

As was mentioned above, the efforts the university made to structurally integrate the core values and principles of quality assurance at all levels of the university were also influenced by the numerous and complex quality indicators sent by HERQA to the university.

As university, we comprehensively developed several internal quality assurance indicators for all levels of the university. Based on these indicators, we tried to make some sort of programme evaluation and course edits in the past few years regardless of their quality. However, it has been common to observe that HERQA sent many indicators that were very complex to adopt in our university context. I think the interferences of HERQA forced our QAUs to work in confusion. I mean, it created a sense of ‘which indicators to follow—our university’s? or HERQA’s?’ Moreover, there were no meaningful responses by our university to integrate both indicators (UM6).

Taken together, these results suggest that the establishment of internal QAs at the university and BAU levels is an important decision by MU management. However, as the

need does not come from within, but was pushed by the MoE, the efforts of the university management and the BAUs to structurally integrate at all levels of the university are seriously hampered by readiness, knowledge and external interference problems. A closer look at the adoption processes thus shows that it is more symbolic compliance that is done for legitimacy purposes than an informed decision to bring radical organisational change as is suggested by BMTs.

E. The programme design and review sub-process

The programme design and review sub-process is located at the end of the academic core workflow that is mainly envisioned to regularly review and expand programmes, and to design new or cancel existing academic programs based on the perceived demands (see Figure 5). This sub-process consisted of some basic activities, such as needs assessment, business plan development, stakeholder input on business plans, stakeholder input on designs or reviews, pilot implementation, stakeholder input on pilot implementations, expansion/cancellation strategies, and programme institutionalisation. According to UM2, “the whole idea behind all these activities was that there should systematic approach that allows all stakeholders of the university participate in assessing the overall academic programs and to come up with relevant and well demanded solutions” (UM2). Moreover, the identification of these major activities was done on the common understanding that the old governance system of the university was highly centralised which left the programme-level units little freedom to exercise programme design and review activities, and the role of programme experts was also undermined (APRT, 2008).

It seems, therefore, that MU set up the programme review and design sub-process to empower programme-level teams to introduce new programmes and make changes as deemed necessary. In this sub-process, the role of the management body was “only limited to set the policy frameworks and guidelines to govern the system. However, the course and program teams were designated as the owners of all academic programs and provided full responsibility for enhancing program relevance” (UM1).

According to the documents produced by the APRT, such restructuring would have organisational implications. In this process, it was reported that the BAUs of the university would ultimately own the programme design, review, expansion, and cancellation powers. The new document also recognised the inputs of stakeholders—university management, government, and society—as the basis for programme review and design. Most informants agreed with the view that this sub-process granted more power to the BAUs than the former practice, though on paper only. Besides, it was indicated that “MU produced new legislation, guidelines and organisational structure to facilitate its institutionalisation process” (UM2).

However, the new strategies set out by MU to structurally integrate the programme design and review sub-process at all levels of the university exhibited some flaws. Even

though all informants conceded the view that the more hierarchical features of the university were changed so that BAUs became relatively more powerful when it comes to reviewing and designing their academic programs, most of the informants argued that the basic steps identified as major elements of the programme design and review were not strictly followed. For example, UM2 commented, “the major activities such as the participation of the stakeholders as decisive sources of inputs to the program review and implementation, and the pilot testing procedures were rarely practiced”. To this end, UM5 metaphorically put it, “the body is there, but not the soul”. When informants were asked about the possible reasons behind all the flaws, UM3 said:

I think, it [the flaw in practice] has to do with the influence of the old practices. When the whole [programme design and review] sub-process was designed, similar to other core and sub-processes, it was designed by some group of people and approved by the university management. I would say the participation of the academic community was low, and the efforts we [university management] made to develop their awareness were not that effective. The rules and guidelines are somewhere shelved, but very few know them. As a result, they [academia] tend to use the old practices (UM3).

This view was echoed by UM4, who considered that the major elements were not structurally integrated into the core values, norms and practices of the university and its BAUs:

Colleges and institutes have started reviewing and designing their academic programs [since the introduction of BPR], but I would not say the programme review and design processes have been done according to manuals produced by BPR teams. At most academic units, the processes of programme review and design have not been systematic and less institutionalised. It is sometime common to see academic programs are opened just by the personal desires of individuals without passing through the necessary steps. As a result, we have seen the duplications of academic programs being given at different colleges and institutes without substantial differences. I think this happened partly because the academic community does not know the rules well, and sometimes I observe some people manipulate the rules for their own advantage (UM4).

In general, the most common view among the informants was that BAUs were given the power to design new programs and review them; however, when the BAUs tried to exercise this power, they did it in the old ways rather than by following the new rules.

5.2.5 Reengineering the Research and Community Service core-process

As has been mentioned repeatedly in this study, RCS was one of the core missions of the university and its BAUs that was at the centre of the reforming processes. Moreover, it was reported that the identification of RCS at the core of the reengineering process came from the basic assumption that “the vision of MU as a centre of excellence will not materialise without actually achieving its mandate pertaining to research and community service” (RCSPT, 2008, p. 8).

MU established taskforce [RCSPT] that was responsible for making extensive studies on the main problems of the RCS and on how to bring radical change to achieve the vision and mission of the university. RCSPT was comprised of seven staff members of the university who had different disciplinary backgrounds (UM3).

With the power vested in it by the university management, the RCSPT focused on “redesigning [the RCS of the university] from clean sheet based on the strategized desired outcomes and stretched objectives” (RCSPT, 2008, p. 8). The RCSPT thus identified several major problems in the old RCS endeavours of the university, such as limited research quality and quantity, poor community service, insufficient funds for research and community service, tedious financial and administrative procedures, poor research cultures, fragmented processes, an ineffective research management system, weak relationships between teaching and research, and a lack of clear research agendas, among others (RCSPT, 2008). As a result, after thoroughly analysing the problems related to RCS, the RCSPT produced a new workflow that showed the new RCS processes and the interactions they would have with the teaching core process.

The team redesigned the job and structures for the processes, and described the management and measurement system and value and belief systems. Moreover, the RCSPT produced policy, guidelines and procedure manuals for research, consultancy and community service, intellectual property right, university-industry-community linkage, and clearly articulated the need for the establishment of research institute centre of the university (UM1).

As shown in Figure 6 below, the new RCS workflow is comprised of three interrelated elements: information extraction is at the apex of the flow, knowledge production/information processing is at the centre of the process, and marketing the knowledge is the final stage of the workflow. (This final stage was in turn supposed to relate with the information extraction sub-process discussed above.) Furthermore, it was indicated that the newly designed process flow demanded RCS as a mandatory job to every academic staff member, in the sense that the members of the academic staff should spend at least 25-75% of their working time on carrying out basic and applied research as per his or her disciplinary affiliation. In the new “TO-BE” process, RCS was considered as inseparable, and the sub-processes were also supposed to be highly interrelated all the way from information extraction to knowledge marketing. This means that the new workflow was designed in such way that problems for research activity would arise from the community, and the results of the research outcome should solve community problems (RCSPT, 2008, p. 12).

Informants on the whole demonstrated that after the RCSPT designed a new RCS workflow, MU management approved the study results and directed it to the BAUs for possible implementation. However, most informants conceded the view that the RCS core-process was one of the least reengineered parts of MU and its BAUs.

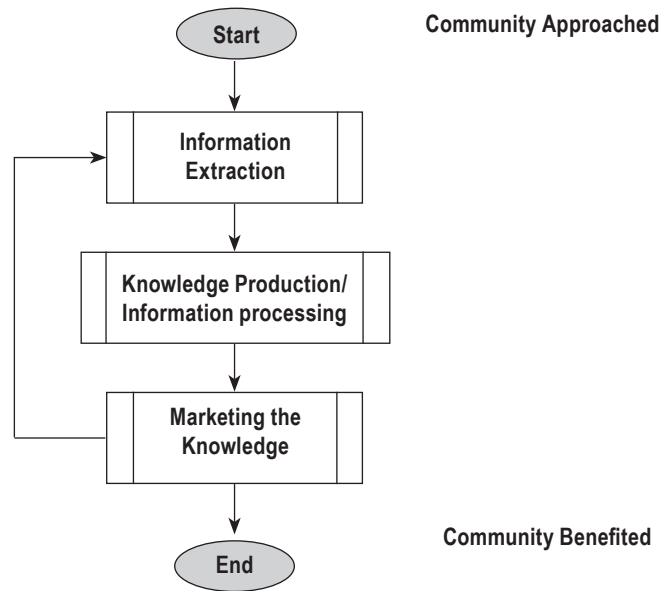


Figure 6. Research and community service process flow: Context diagram
Source: RCSVRT, (2008, p. 13)

A. The information extraction sub-process

As shown in Figure 6, the first sub-process is information extraction that lets the researcher or the research team “extract information largely from the community and generate new information” (RCSVRT, 2008, p. 13). This sub-process particularly took into account the inputs that come in the form of requests from the community, curious intellectual observations, earlier research and literature and problem databases, among others. The idea was that newly generated ideas would be systematically “registered and documented in the form of draft proposal or concept note that is to be registered online so as to avoid duplication and protect intellectual property [rights] and university’s assets management” (RCSVRT, 2008, p. 13). It seems that there were two assumptions here: first, if a new idea generated from the extracted information could solve problems for the local and scientific communities, or students, then the new idea would be marketed to the end user. Second, if that was not the case, then the information extracted entered into the sub-process of information processing and knowledge production (RCSVRT, 2008).

Some informants, however, said that the information extraction sub-process was not followed by BAUs as per the new workflow requirements. It seems that the old practices of the academic units, limited experience of researchers, and lack of sustainable research funding affected the whole sub-process.

I believe that the new [RCS] workflow is perfect. However, most of our academic units are struggling to adopt the new processes. As the saying goes, old habits die hard. Especially, it is unlikely to see researches made based on community request in all BAUs. Most of our researches are made where the money is. You do not see systematic ways of registering concept notes or draft proposal as per the recommendations of the study. I would say researches in our university are mostly done whenever external or internal funding is available or based on the individual researcher's efforts. Surprisingly, when research proposals came for possible research funding to the university, it is common to see BAUs pretend as if they carried out all the information extraction activities (UM2).

First, our researchers are not fully aware of the basic steps information extraction sub-process. Even if they do, it is common to see they chose the old procedure, the comfort zone. Second, it is also related to lack of funding. When researchers most of the time failed to get funding for their registered research proposals, they are discouraged to follow the new system. In other words, it is all about motivation (UM4).

B. The information processing and knowledge production sub-process

The second sub-process of the RCS core process is information processing and knowledge production (see Figure 6). This sub-process primarily “deals with information infrastructures that should be maintained in the form of workshops, seminars, panel discussions, media pronouncements and other forms of communication with local and scientific community” (RCSPT, 2008, p. 94). The information processing and knowledge production sub-process consisted of six major activities: idea generation, concept note registration, literature review, proposal writing, scientific activity, and documentation of new knowledge.

Informants reported that the identification of the information processing and knowledge production sub-process was also designed to create direct relationships between RCS and the teaching-learning sub-process. In other words, teachers were expected to extract information from both the local community (extracting practical cases for the teaching and learning process) and the scientific community (extracting information from scientific journals and books). As a result, the extracted information would be further processed through rigorous scientific endeavours, and then new knowledge would be produced and used in classrooms (RCSPT, 2008).

However, as was the case with the information extraction sub-process, informants indicated that the BAUs did not regularly follow the major steps of the knowledge processing and production sub-process. Some informants underscored that concept-note registration and documentation of new knowledge in particular were rarely practiced by the BAUs (UM6). Likewise, the teaching-learning sub-process was still less supported by the research results of academic units (UM4).

Even though we designed a clear organisational structure with its job descriptions to accomplish the new sub-processes, most of BAUs failed to follow them. Most of the time, they preferred to work in the old system. Inside the academic community, you can see a bit of resistance against adapting new ways of doing. Similarly, you can also see a feeling of mistrust. For instance, BAUs and their researchers were told to use the

concept note registration and documentation of new knowledge; however, practically they are reluctant to do that for fear of copy right violation, lack of experience issues and others (UM5).

C. The knowledge marketing sub-process

As depicted in Figure 6, the third and the last sub-process is knowledge marketing, which focused on promoting and delivering the right products to the right customers at the right price and place (RCSPT, 2008). It also consisted of six important elements: testing new knowledge, dissemination of knowledge, scientific publications, project proposal writing, and project proposal marketing. This sub-process focused on value-adding activities that could in turn increase the income of the university. The general understanding was that once the research outputs were produced they needed to be marketed in ways that maximise the values of the university. Therefore, to achieve the strategic objectives of the university, it seems that MU developed a special organisational model.

The new business diamond model consisted of four major elements, namely RCS, the reward system, BSC, and job and structure (see Figure 7 below). The model shows that RCS is identified as a core business process of the new business diamond model, the reward system as performance enhancement strategy, BSC as a tool for performance management and measurement, and a new organisational structure and clearly defined jobs to improve the accountability and transparency of the university in its research endeavours.

Informants indicated that the central concept of BPR is the business diamond model that primarily takes into account the identification of a proper business process (i.e. RCS and teaching in MU's case) at its apex. As shown in Figure 7, the successful accomplishments of the newly-identified RCS's strategic objectives for MU were largely determined by

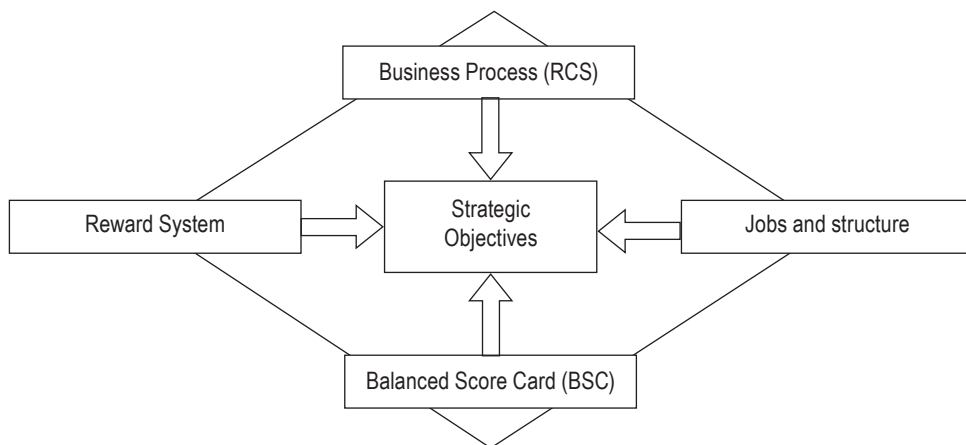


Figure 7. The business diamond model of MU

Source: Adapted from RCSPT's (2008, p. 68) business diamond model

the effectiveness of the jobs and structures, the utilisation of systematic performance management and measurement tools, and the availability of a meaningful and transparent reward system (RCSPRT, 2008). In other words, it was assumed that the proper definitions of *Business Processes* (RCS) lead to the identification of clear *Jobs and Structures*, which in turn demand relevant *Management and Measurement Systems* that reinforce a set of *Values and Beliefs* that can be promoted by having a dynamic *Reward System*. As a result, the strategic objectives of the business process would be attained. Since the issue of BSC was discussed in the previous sections, the two remaining major aspects of the business diamond model, jobs and structure and the reward system, will be the focus of attentions in the following section.

Job designs and structures

Informants demonstrated that MU redesigned the jobs and the structures of the BAUs to create strategic alignment within RCS activities. In so doing, MU identified nine types of work positions: senior researcher, assistant researcher, finance coordinator, procurement officer, university-industry-community-government (UICG) liaison, ICT expert, community project engineer, community project innovator and marketing manager. The university also developed detailed job descriptions for each work position. These work positions in turn were further categorised into three teams: the knowledge engineering team, knowledge management team, and support team. The RCSPRT documents showed that senior researchers were supposed to lead the knowledge engineering team, and the community project innovators were assigned to administer the knowledge management team. It was indicated that the new structure was designed to give more power and autonomy to BAUs to facilitate their RCS activities as effectively and efficiently as possible. In general, according to informants the proposed organisational structure was flat, in which BAUs were supposed to carry out their RCSs autonomously based on the missions and visions of the university. However, a closer look at the institutionalisation processes of the new jobs and structures showed that most of the new structures and positions remained inoperative. It seems that the means was taken as an end in the sense that the reforming processes failed to go beyond setting up the new structures and jobs. The following comments illustrated this situation:

In this aspect [restructuring RCS], much has been said than done. Yes, we designed new structures and jobs. This is commendable in any aspect, because without creating clear organisational structures and job descriptions, it would be meaningless to think about the next steps. However, it is unfair to claim our new structures are fully functional as much as we wanted them to be. It is common to see the academic units' work mixing the old and the new rules. In other words, despite the new rules, there is no mutual understanding between the university management and BAUs on how to proceed with the new rule (UM2).

Out of all the structuring things [of the RCS], the only meaningfully operational structure is the RCS at the colleges, institutes and schools. I can confidently say, this [RCS] council is working well in terms of coordinating and facilitating RCSs of academic units. The rest positions and structures are, however, simply there for sake of having them, nothing more nothing less. Researches are done somewhat haphazardly. Academic units use the new rules and structures only if they need them or when they are in some sort of trouble. In general, sometimes you don't see uniform work processes (UM5).

The reward system

One of the basic elements in the business diamond model is the introduction of a new reward system for researchers who excelled in their research activities (see Figure 7). The assumption behind introducing a new reward system based on performance was that “effective [organisational] change cannot happen with workforce that is not up to the task. [In other words,... to make it all work, a dedicated, inventive, and dynamic workforce was needed, which is a [precondition] for success” (RCSPT, 2008, p. 196). Moreover, as UM1 put it, “reward in MU was considered as an investment for effective organisational performance”.

Informants indicated that relying on the aforementioned assumptions, the RCSPT designed a new reward scheme, which was later accepted and approved by the university management. The RCSPT clearly analysed four types of reward systems—pay level, base pay progression, variable pay, and benefits and indirect compensation—in the context of the traditional and modern approach, and chose the most relevant reward system for MU. It was reported that after analysing the merits and demerits of each reward scheme, the RCSPT recommended a group variable pay reward system. According to the RCSPT (2008, p. 199) document, the decision to introduce a group variable pay reward system was made, taking into account the fact that “as work has become more process-oriented, teams have become an increasingly attractive and common way of organising efforts”. This system rewards an entire group of employees or teams for achieving results. It was indicated that the reward scheme was supposed to encourage group planning and goal-sharing activities based on business performances. The RCSPT document showed that the new reward system was guided by four major indicators: four key performance areas (cost, productivity, quality, and customer service); goals set by making forward-looking business judgments and not dictated by historical data; participation goes wall to wall, embracing all employees to reflect a team culture; and the plans are designed year-to-year with a requirement to revise, renew, and evolve the programme as the business grows and changes.

However, the decision made by MU to introduce a performance-based reward system, which was “applauded by the majority of the university community” (UM2), “failed to be materialised” (UM5), because “the major elements of the new rewarding system were found to be in contradictions to the civil service and financial law of the country and rejected by the government” (UM4).

Moreover, apart from the influence of the external forces, some informants indicated that the bureaucratic nature of the university negatively affected the new reward system. For example, UM6 commented:

In the new reward system, we designed an incentive mechanism for researchers who are very active in working with external funding organisations and partners. For instance, based on the new incentive scheme, researchers who bring external funding from outside, are supposed to get 10 per cent of the funding. However, this has not been happened yet. It was not because the government rejected this aspect of the proposal, but the reluctance, unnecessary bureaucracy of the university and the operational nitty-gritty of our university. I think when you think of a reward system based on performance measurement, you need to have the experience and meticulously designed plans and systems. However, our university was not ready for such kinds of activities. As a result, we are working on the traditional compensation system, which is based on the number of years a particular lecture serves not on the performance he or she shows

This shows that the much-appreciated reward scheme, which is believed to encourage academic excellence, is hampered by both the rules of the external environment and by the bureaucracy and lack of readiness of the university. Even though MU responded to the demands by designing a new reward system, its adoption is symbolic in a sense that none its major elements become operative.

5.2.6 Benchmarking

All informants said that when the pressures to adopt BMTs increased, MU used benchmarking as one of the strategies for facilitating the institutionalisation process. According to the informants, the purpose of benchmarking was “to collect important experiences that would help us reengineering our processes” (UM1), “to know what top ranked universities have been doing to reach at the level they are now” (UM3) and “probably to emulate [the best performing institutions]” (UM5). As a result, all Taskforces, such as the APRT, RCSPT and Procurement Process Reengineering Team (PPRT), identified some local institutions and two international universities, namely the University of Pretoria in South Africa and the University College Cork in Ireland to be benchmarks.

According to informants, the first action of the Taskforces was to set up objectives and to identify the long lists of important indicators that would help them benchmarking the selected institutions. The indicators covered all the activities of the core and sub-processes of the university that should be radically changed. Therefore, it was noted that the teams made visits to the selected local institutions and two international universities, and finally managed to come up with the lists of practices and experiences. The teams then prepared and compiled their reports, and tried to incorporate their new processes (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008).

Both the APRT and RCSPT documents showed that good practices were identified from the University of Pretoria and the University College Cork, and lessons were drawn

accordingly. For instance, the APRT listed the lessons they took in the areas of teaching-learning and assessment, student services and support, campus enterprises, information technology services, library, education innovation, corporate communication and marketing, quality assessment unit, human resource and finance, among others. Similarly, the RCSPRT also identified key practices, such as the necessity of university autonomy, research and policy issues, community consultancy, community engagement, curricular and research related community and research excellence, among others.

However, some informants were critical of the quality of the benchmarking processes and the results the benchmarking had brought to the university. All the informants acknowledged the importance of carrying out benchmarking in situations where radical organisational change was being aimed for, and appreciated the decision by the university management to support the benchmarking processes. However, they questioned whether the claimed benchmarking was a real benchmarking in its fullest sense, and whether the results of the benchmarks were structurally integrated at all levels of the university.

We cannot deny the efforts they [the Taskforces] did to get the experiences of other best performing institutions. However, as far as my knowledge goes, benchmarking is not only about collecting best experiences and should not be seen as an offshoot activity either. Rather it is a serious endeavour that demands rigorous efforts in which organisations examine various aspects of their processes in relation to the best practices of other similar organisations. From this perspective, I would not say we had carried out benchmarking; rather it was simple experience sharing with some visits (UM5).

I know benchmarking was done by the reform teams. For me, however, the questions remain, how did they come up with the benchmarking institutions? Were the benchmarked institutions relevant to MU? What kinds of internal and external analysis were done in hand to carry out the benchmarking activities? What efforts were made to let the academic community know about the results of the benchmarking institutions? As far as I know, the whole benchmarking process was just a knee jerk reaction which was made in hasty. Especially, I could not say the academic community was very well informed about the results of the benchmarking process. It [the result] was only limited to very few people (UM4).

The results suggest that benchmarking was one of the strategies MU management used to adopt BMTs in the university. However, it seems that the benchmarking processes failed to follow standard procedures.

5.3 Summary

Overall, informants report changes in their institutional environment after the implementation of the BMTs. However, there are some divergent views among informants about the cause, constituents, context and control of the reform tools, and the possible impacts the institutional environments caused in the efforts MU made to structurally integrate the BMTs with the values, norms and practices of the university and its BAUs.

Most informants share the view that the justifications given for introducing the BMTs, the forces that control the reform process, and the means these forces use to implement the reform tools affect the responses of the university and the BAUs to adopting the BMTs. It is indicated that the adoption of BMTs at MU was largely dictated by the interests of the government, not by the actual conditions of the university. In other words, the government, which is influenced by national and international dynamics, forced MU to adopt BMTs as radical organisational change tools irrespective of the relevance of the BMTs and the demands of MU. However, some informants feel that MU is an outsider and failed to own the reform tools meaningfully. Most informants thus report that MU has no better option except conforming to the reform tools. They further argue that any deviant actions of the university would negatively affect its financial stability, since the university is totally dependent on government funding, and its legitimacy, as it is highly accountable to the government.

Issues related to the expectations MU had, (i.e., content) and the environmental condition upon which the pressures are exerted, (i.e., context) were also part of the main discussions with informants. The results, however, show three divergent viewpoints among informants; from those who totally support the compliance of MU to the BMTs as relevant reform tools for transforming MU to research university, to those who take the middle ground and suggest that cautious decisions should be taken if BMTs are to be complied to, to those who completely argue against the adoption BMTs in any way in the university context. However, a common view amongst informants is that MU has serious problems and should be reformed. These results thus show that the difference lies in opinions regarding the means of reforming the university. Overall, the results indicate that MU complies with BMTs and moves to implementation without creating common understandings about the appropriateness of the reform tools, even inside the leadership of the university.

It is indicated that MU's management body believes that the only (and probably the best) way to alleviate the deep-rooted problems and to transform the university is to implement BMTs like BPR and BSC. Regardless of whose initiatives the reform tools are, some informants conceded that MU has been ineffective in all its missions, and they, therefore, demand fundamental and radical changes rather than incremental changes. Therefore, they see the emergence of BPR and BSC, which are pushed by the government, as the best opportunities to take advantage of, not as threats to be avoided.

However, some informants have reservations about the increasing trend of transferring BMTs to HEIs. They strongly believe that MU needs to be transformed, but they are sceptical about the appropriateness of BMTs to MU's values, beliefs and practices. Despite the fact that this group considered BMTs as scientific management tools which have been tested and worked relatively well in for-profit organisations, they questioned their relevance to the HEI context. Nevertheless, they do not disregard every ethos of BMTs for universities; rather, they prefer cautious and selective approaches over rashly adopting them

organisation-wide. The third view, however, totally rejects the idea of adopting BMTs in knowledge-producing institutions. They believe that universities are special organisations with their own unique culture and are totally different from business organisations. They, therefore, demand different kinds of tools for HEIs.

Informants shared very similar views in terms of the compatibility between BPR and BSC, the approach of implementation and its effect on the institutionalisation process. Informants highlight that the source of the BMTs is the government, and thus the implementation approach is top-down. Besides, it is indicated that even though BPR and BSC are complimentary tools, the way they were adopted forced the university community to consider the reform tools as separate, incompatible and totally different. This means when BPR was implemented, very few individuals knew BSC would come later as a planning, measuring and management tool for supplementing BPR. As a result, this creates in the majority of the academy a feeling that the reform tools are fashions that come and go quickly. Besides, most informants conceded the view that the university's efforts to organise and provide training for the academic community to improve their awareness about the nature and use of the reform tools in the university context are largely ineffective. It is thus revealed that the approach the university management chose to use to institutionalise the BMTs at all levels of the university is more of coercive than normative.

In terms of the responses of MU to the changes in its institutional environment, all informants share the view that the responses of MU towards the government-led reform initiatives are heavily dependent on the level of dependency the university has with the government and the accountability instruments that are explicitly or implicitly stated in the higher education law of the country. Following the introduction of BMTs, MU focused on introducing new work processes, such as new organisational structures, identification of new core and sub-processes, a decentralised management system, planning and measuring tools, modular curricula, a quality assurance system, and benchmarking among others. However, it seems that the much-anticipated radical change, which was the main objective of the BMTs, failed to be realised as per the intended objectives. According to informants, the university responded by changing the organisational structure whereby several positions and work processes were introduced and bureaucratic hurdles reduced. Moreover, in an attempt to increase the autonomy of the BAUs, the university management introduced a decentralised management system where every BAU has the power to administer its human, physical and financial resources. In this sense, it is noted that MU largely conforms to the requirements of the reform tools.

Notwithstanding some improvements in the organisational structure and the decentralised management system, the reorganisations of the core missions of the university have not shown major improvement other than changes in structures and names. The teaching and learning process of the university is still far from able to be called student centred; it is not only that classrooms are overcrowded but also the new processes that were identified failed to be structurally integrated at every level of the university. The adoption of continuous assessment and modular curricula to improve the competencies of students

have become symbolic rather than substantive, as there were no common understandings inside the university of the nature and use these tools would bring to the university and its BAUs.

The university introduced new QAUs both at the university and BAU levels to improve the quality of its education. However, informants conceded that the QAUs fail to serve their purpose, because apart from the lack of experience the whole process is influenced by the demands of both internal and external forces. As a result, MU tries to balance between the demands of the internal QAUs and the requirements of HERQA. It does so by following largely symbolic compliance strategy, struggling to maintain its own quality indicators and at the same time trying to conform to the ever-increasing pressures of the government.

Moreover, in some of the major intervention areas, similar symbolic compliance strategies are detected. For example, in the academic core process, sub-processes such as graduation and alumni administration and programme design/review, MU complies symbolically to these new pressures. In compliance with the new structures, offices are established and rules and guidelines are set up to improve the effectiveness of the newly identified sub-processes, but these structures, offices and rules are simply there in form, far from operational. It is also observed that the new structures and guidelines only work when something new comes to the university that needs the services of these offices. This is another indication that the structures and guidelines are not structurally integrated at all levels of the university. This means the new structures and rules function in an ad hoc or episodic fashion, and that they only serve for solving an immediate crisis.

It is noted that the RCS, which is one of the core missions of the university, exhibits visible changes in its organisation and structure. In the former structure, RCS was treated as part and parcel of the teaching core; however, after the implementation of the BMTs, RCS became an independent core process with the objective of becoming a research-oriented university and achieving academic excellence. As a result, new structures and positions are created, such as VPRCS, research councils at the BAU level and several new research teams under the department structures. The restructuring of the RCS was partly made by imitating prominent research universities as part of the benchmarking process. It is, however, observed that similar to the academic core process, the RCS core process has not shown substantial radical changes. MU complies with the mounting pressures from the government to restructure its RCS and to achieve research excellence. However, a closer look at functions of the new structures, jobs, positions, rules and regulations shows that MU and its BAUs only symbolically comply with the new institutional rules.

One of the major changes in the institutional environment of MU is the introduction of BSC as a tool for planning, measuring and management of performance. Results show that despite the fierce resistance of the members of the academic community to adopting a business-related performance management system, the university management decided to conform to pressures and requirements of MoE. It is indicated that the university conforms with these external pressures to gain social support and legitimacy. However, it is noted that

BSC has not been fully adopted at all levels of the university. It seems that the resistance of the faculty is still too high, and the experience and knowledge of the university and its BAUs regarding the adoption of such reform tools is still too low. Therefore, the university management finds it too difficult to structurally integrate BSC at all levels of the university with the core values, norms and practices of the BAUs (see Chapter 6).

In an attempt to adopt BMTs at all levels of the university, the university management tries to organise and provide training to the university community and carries out benchmarking with local and international institutions. However, informants claimed that the trainings were too ill-managed and disorganised to bring common understandings about the nature and use of BMTs with relation to the university values and beliefs. The benchmarking also lacks rigorous studies and is largely seen as nominal. In this sense, these activities are considered merely as efforts to look committed to the requirements of the government without actually working to solve the problems. In other words, it seems that these efforts are simply legitimacy actions to gain the approval of the government and social support from other major external stakeholders.

6 PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES OF MU'S BASIC ACADEMIC UNITS

This chapter presents and analyses the interview data and documents derived from the case study of the BAUs at MU. The first section presents the perceptions of BAUs towards their new institutional and technical environments and the possible effects these perceptions bring to the adoption processes of BMTs. As discussed in Chapter 2, the institutional environment of MU in particular refers to the changing rules, laws and regulatory structures and mechanisms related to the reform tools. The task environment is analysed in terms of changes in the economic resources available to implement the reform tools, and the interdependence between the resource providers and receivers. The second section focuses on the BAUs' responses to the perceived changes in both the institutional and technical environments. In this section, to interpret the responses of the BAUs, three interrelated elements, the nature of the responses, the response strategies, and the levels of structural integration with the practices, norms and values of the university are used. The last section presents a summary of the major findings. The quotations used in this chapter are the views and opinions of the members of the BAUs of MU labelled from ACU1 to ACU12.

6.1 Perceptions of the basic academic units of the new institutional environments

6.1.1 The rationale and relevance of BMTs

One of the major themes that was raised by the informants of this study was the rationale and relevance behind implementing BMTs at MU. In this context, the rationale refers to the basic justifications given to introduce the BMTs or the main causes that triggered the need to introduce BMTs as radical reform tools at MU and its BAUs. The relevance, however, is related to the appropriateness of the BMTs to the core missions, culture and organisational complexity of the university. In other words, on one hand, it reveals why the BAUs were being pressured to adopt management innovations that are more common in the business sector, and on the other hand, it shows what are the pressures consisted of and the nature of the context in which the BMTs were adopted. In so doing, it examines the perceived relationship between BMTs and the particular characteristics of the BAUs at MU.

A closer look at the views of informants indicates that despite some differences in the perceived relevance of the reform tools to the university context, all informants shared the view that the introduction of BMTs in the BAUs of the university was solely dictated by the decision of the government rather than the internal demands of MU. For example, informant ACU1 said:

Despite the fact that our university management and the reform teams sometimes claimed the internal situations of MU as triggering cause for the adoption of BMTs in our university, the initiative to introduce such tools was taken by the government. I know and everybody in this university knows the deteriorating quality of education and ineffective leadership and management. However, taking these factors as the major cause for introducing BPR and BSC is literally deceptive. As far as I know, it was not on the agenda of the university leadership to reform MU by using BMTs, rather they [university management] conformed to the initiative taken by the government and decided to take the reform tools as opportunities to transform the university. A case in point is that I knew a few years ago before the adoption of BPR and BSC, the university management had made some studies in order to analyse the internal situations of the university and came up with some solutions on how to reform the university. However, as far as I remember the study results did not recommend BPR, BSC or Kaizen as solutions for the predicaments of the university.

This view was echoed by informant ACU3 who commented:

No one in this university would go against the need for reforming MU. Even though the university has shown remarkable progress since its establishment, the promising change that started to flourish at its early years did not last long. As the university gets larger in terms of the number of students, academic programs, teaching and non-teaching personnel it accommodates, the governance and management of the university have become difficult. Therefore, the need for reforming was imminent. However, regardless of MU has been passing through all types of problems, the university failed to take the initiatives. The approaches the university used to solve any kinds of problems were more of 'firefighting' than comprehensive and systematic ones. Then the government came with a nationwide reform programme that was based on business or industry oriented management style. Therefore, as far as my knowledge goes, the management of MU forced to accept the government initiatives such as BPR, BSC and now Kaizen.

Turning now to the perceptions of the informants of the relevance of the BMTs to the basic activities and missions of the university, participants exhibited two divergent and often conflicting discourses. Whilst a minority of the informants conceded the idea that BMTs are scientific management tools that can potentially work effectively in higher education institutions if proper implementation is carried out, the majority argued that even though the reform tools are scientific management tools, they are not relevant to the nature of HEIs in general and to MU in particular. The former believed that despite the reform tools being external to the university, they could be instrumental in radically changing the university with proper adoption processes. For example, ACU2 said:

I think there are enough grounds that help these reform tools can be applied in HEIs. If we see back the basic aims of BPR, they are all about shortening the work processes and satisfying the customer needs. The same is true for BSC that focuses on planning and

measuring the major activities of an Organisation. These major themes of BMTs, in one way or another, are part and parcel of university activities. Therefore, what we need is cautious and systematic implementation strategies.

Sharing similar views, but underlining the need for finding a middle ground to adopt the reform tools in the university, ACU9 suggested:

It is wrong to deny the reform tools are brought from industries and business companies that are commonly considered strange for knowledge producing institutions. Nevertheless it is also equally wrong to deny the fact that these organisations do not have some common characteristics. Therefore, for me the right thing should be to carefully adapt the reform tools to our context, not to copy them as it is and to the worst not to close our doors and try to prevent the unpreventable.

However, most of the informants rejected these views. They argued that adopting any management tools like BPR and BSC from business organisations to universities might be theoretically sound but practically difficult if not impossible. For example, ACU4 commented:

These BMTs are supposed to identify and reorganise similar work processes together, provide effective and efficient one window shopping services to customers and measure performances accordingly. Theoretically, they might be good and might also effectively work in other service giving organisations. However, for me, this is linear way of thinking in which quality inputs and processes ultimately result on quality products. However, the problem is that when we try to directly implement them in HEIs. I assume that politicians or top decision makers [of the country] are failed to understand that fact that universities are special and complex organisations where the values, norms and practices are different from that of business organisations, and more importantly the processes of knowledge production are not linear rather more abstract. I think the government did not take these factors into account nor did it listen to the heartbeats of the academic community. Therefore, from my perspective these tools are less relevant to universities. That is why from the beginning up to the ending there have been huge resistances from the academic community and I believe these resistances affect the institutionalisation processes. It would have been better if our university chose or given the chance to choose other reforming tools than BMTs.

ACU6 also described how BMTs do not work in the academic parts of the university but do in the administrative wing.

Basically, the science they [BMTs] are based in is clear and justifiable. I know that they are here to help the university to have effective and efficient services. However, I believe that these reforms can be applied effectively in some parts of the university, [such as] the administrative wing, but they cannot be applied or successful in the academia parts of the university. For example, they [BMTs] proved to be successful in the registrar, financial and physical issues of our university. However, I do not believe that these reform tools would be effective in the academia and research wings of the university as they were in the other processes. To give you two practical examples, we were told to align our goals [BAUs] with the organisational goals, which may seem right at the outset, but practically every academic unit is different and has its own priorities. Therefore, it is difficult to force them completely follow the organisational goals of the university without giving due attentions for disciplinary differences and missions.

Besides, the issues of having measurable objectives and performance, as it is introduced by BSC was one of the controversial issues in our university. Largely, the academics focus on teaching, learning and research that are commonly difficult to measure and quantify as proposed by the reform tools. I do not think BSC could effectively measure the whole processes of the teaching and research activities. In my understanding, its adoption witnessed that it focused mainly on simple measureable objectives than the substantive, but difficult to measure processes and outputs. I, however, believe they [teaching and research activities] should be measured, but not the way BPR or BSC suggest.

In general, those who argued against the relevance of BMTs to the university's values and norms mentioned three important but not necessarily independent factors. First, they identified the issues of BMTs that aspire to radical change as contrasting with the values, norms and beliefs of universities (ACU11 & ACU8). Second, the complex interaction of business processes (i.e., core missions) in universities compared with business organisations (ACU4 & ACU5). Third, the ambiguity of goals and the difficulty of measuring the teaching and research activities of universities were identified as sources of inappropriateness (ACU6 & ACU7).

Some informants argued that unlike BPR which is normally considered as a radical organisational change tool, "organisational change in knowledge producing and distributing institutions cannot be radical, rather it is incremental" (ACU11), because "universities work on knowledge production and dissemination, and changing human mind. To change these activities thus would ultimately demand long processes and time" (ACU8). Moreover, some informants indicated that the "values, beliefs, habits and norms in universities are totally different from that of business organisations" (ACU 10). Therefore, "any efforts made by university leaders and government to radically change or replace the university values with business values brought fierce resistances from the academic community and ended up as failure story" (ACU12).

The second relevance issue was associated with the complex interactions of the core processes (i.e., teaching and research and community service) of the BAUs. Some informants argued that "universities work on knowledge as substantive element and its process of producing and distributing it very different from that of business organisations" (ACU4). In a sense, "the relationship between input, throughput and output is not that linear as it is the case in business organisations" (ACU10).

BPR focuses on improving processes, but in universities the processes are not that clear and cut. Academic units value their autonomy and anything that is perceived to disrupt such values could not be successful. Therefore, reform tools like BPR and BSC cannot effectively identify and reengineered its core-processes (ACU5).

The third issue is related to the problems of identifying and defining goals in the university and measuring them as was suggested by the BMTs. As one informant commented, "It is not always that easy to have well-defined goals in universities, and even more difficult to develop indicators to measuring these goals" (ACU6). Besides, informants criticised the over-emphasis on measurable goals as it forces academics to focus on simple and easily

achievable goals at the expense of the substantive and major goals that are not as easily measurable. Comparing the principles of BSC, ACU7 had this to say:

BSC is all about planning, measuring and aligning the goals of each activity and individual with the strategic goals of the university. At a face value, it may seem sound, but practically it does not fit with us [university activities] because we have many activities that cannot be measured outright. Besides, we do not even have baseline data to set our goals and measure against them accordingly (ACU7).

6.1.2 The approach of implementation

This section addresses issues related to the source of the reform tools, the strategies used by both the government and MU to introduce them, the power of MU to reject and modify the reform tools and the role of the BAUs in implementing the BMTs. As was discussed in Chapter 5 and in the above section, the government took the initiative to introduce various governance reform tools over the last two decades. All informants conceded the idea that the government, as a response to the changes in the political, economic and social environment of the country and to the growing international pressures to reform the public sector, and partially due to discontent with the weak performance of the HEIs in the country, initiated the reform agenda and sent the reform tools for implementation as quickly as possible in all public sector organisations in general and HEIs in particular. This move, however, was highly criticised by the academia as it contradicted the institutional autonomy and academic freedom of the university, which are fully granted by the HEP.

The Ethiopian higher education system is mainly governed by government rules and regulations. All HEIs are accountable to the MoE and the government is the sole funder of Ethiopian public HEIs. The role of other external stakeholders and partners in financing the university was only limited to donations and collaborations. This shows that the government with its subsidiary ministry offices, MoE and MoFED, politically and monetarily dictates the actions of public HEIs. MU, as part of the public higher education system, was greatly influenced by the decisions made by the government. The government mainly used legal and monetary tools to influence the activities of universities in general, and the adoption of the reform tools in particular. All informants thus agreed that MU's management was in no position to reject the reform tools, but rather had to adopt them to the context of the university. Therefore, the informants placed more emphasis on the strategies MU used to adopt the BMTs and the roles of academics in the adoption process.

All informants were very critical about the strategies MU's management body used to implement the reform tools. Many of them criticised the rashness observed in implementing the reform tools despite the strong pressures from the government. One of the informants argued how such rashness affects the implementation process:

No sooner than the government sent the reform tools to be implemented, the university management run to establish taskforces that can facilitate the implementation process.

The majority of the university community, however, was kept in the dark. Many of us [academia] heard about it [the implementation of BPR at MU] through informal ways or grapevine. They [the university management and taskforces] came to the staff after they had made studies on how to implement it. The academic community, which is the core element of the university, did not participate in any of the decisions of implementing these [BMTs] reform tools. Many of us felt that our opinions, views and inputs were not seriously taken into consideration. I think this is one of the major problems that affect the institutionalisation process of the reform tools (ACU6).

When the informants were asked about the possible reasons behind the spontaneous response of the university management to implement the BMTs, they mentioned two interrelated reasons. On one hand, “the strong push from the government to see the reform tools in place as quickly as possible” (ACU8), which might in turn “[create] a sense of urgency in the leadership of the university” (ACU4). On the other hand, “the inclination of the university management body to get the recognition of the government by implementing the reform tools before any other public universities” (ACU10). As ACU8 put it,

I think the university management did not want to take the risk, as rejecting or in one way another slowing down the implementation process might have political ramifications to our leaders and the university. These reform tools have been parts of the national agendas of the country, and the government, which was guided by its political and economic motives, was highly committed enough to transform the public sectors by introducing several reform initiatives. Therefore, regardless of the relevance of these reform tools to our university context, the university management did not have the courage nor the power to stand in front of the government demands, but rather took the opportunity to win the support of the government by quickly implementing the reform tools at the expense of the needs and values and norms of academic units (ACU8).

This shows that the quick response of MU’s management to implement the reform tools without getting the consent of the academia was done for the sake of legitimacy rather than operational efficiency. However, behind such a kneejerk response from MU, there seemed to be some micro-strategies employed by the leadership of the university to institutionalise the BMTs. The comment below illustrate the whole picture:

The first thing they [the university management body] did was to establish several taskforces, who were handpicked, that can make studies and come up with solutions on how to implement the reform tools. Then after a few months, the taskforces came up with their findings and submitted to the university management body. Right after the approval of the new documents, the university started to give some trainings to the members of the university community on the nature of the reform tools and the process of implementation. However, the trainings were very few and not systematically coordinated. Moreover, the taskforces also benchmarked local and international organisations. However, they were not as substantial and dynamic as one would expect. As far as I remember, many questions were raised by the academic staff, but the answers given by our leaders were not satisfactory. They wanted to go quickly to the implementation stage without winning the minds and hearts of the academia I think this created huge frustrations and confusions inside the academia (ACU12).

Moreover, some informants commented on the necessity of carrying out needs assessments before implementation took place and impact assessments after the implementation process.

Generally, I could say there were some efforts to make need assessment, but ... that need assessment had been tailored towards studying external good practices. In the strict sense of internal need assessment, you may not say it so. I cannot say the university had made extensive internal need analysis or assessment inside the university. Generally, I can safely conclude that the studies were both shallow and external oriented (ACU3).

As part of the implementation program, impact assessment was also mentioned as an important strategy, which MU and BAU leaders failed to accomplish.

No systematic studies have been made by the university to assess the impact these reform tools have brought so far. They [the university management body] usually asked us whether we introduce these reforms or not. No responsible part of the university has ever said to us whether the necessary changes have been accomplished or not. However, in the media outlets we frequently heard that 'MU is successful in implementing BPR or BSC'. For me, this is a clear indication of 'showoff' the university management trying to get the recognition and social support from the external environment or the government (ACU10).

ACU9 commented on how the spontaneous action of the university management affected the implementation process:

The ways the reform tools have been approached by the university made me feel uneasy. The fact is that we were forced to implement these tools one after the other without deeply understanding them. There [has] not been enough time for us [academic staff] to internalise these reform tools meaningfully. For instance, right after we had implemented BPR, BSC came into the agenda without assessing the results of BPR. To add insult to injury, another reform tool came by the name of Kaizen without making any impact assessment on BSC. Such trends made us to take these BMTs as fashionable items, which they come and go seasonably. At least the university management should give us enough time to systematically study the merits and demerits of one reform tool, and take lessons from it and so that we could proceed to the next level (ACU9).

Apart from the aforementioned views, all informants demonstrated that the reform implementation process was characterised by a top-down approach, unlike the expectations of the academic community. Following the government initiative, it was "the expectation of the academia the implementation approach would be participatory" (ACU3). However, it seemed that was not the case. "The university leadership and our deans reacted swiftly and established some teams to facilitate the implementation process without creating a university-wide of consensus" (ACU5). Despite some efforts to organise and provide awareness by creating training programs and workshops, it was noted that "the whole approach was not participatory" (ACU8), which was "largely characterised top-down approaches" (ACU1). This means that instead of giving priority to making the reform tools be accepted by the academic community, "the university management went to develop several guidelines, rules and regulations to facilitate the implementation process" (ACU11).

These results indicated that the reform process was guided by the stringent rules of the government without giving enough space for the university and its BAUs to provide their inputs, and the management body of MU followed a similar approach to the adoption of the reform tools in the BAUs. Apart from the coercive pressures used by the government and the university management, the overall approach of the implementation was top-down with little opportunity for academic units to participate in the implementation process. The majority of informants believed that the reform processes largely failed to embrace the values, norms, and underlying assumptions that guide the behaviour of the university and its BAUs.

6.1.3 Compatibility of the reform tools

In this context compatibility only referred to the relationship between the two reform tools. In other words, it showed whether BSC was used as a complementary tool to BPR and vice versa, and if it was adopted by creating a sense of complementarity for the implementers. All respondents shared the view that both BPR and BSC were compatible in their very nature. However, the way the reform tools were introduced into MU and its BAUs forced the informants to think otherwise. For example, ACU1 commented:

Let alone us [the members of BAUs], the university management was not even well informed about the next reform tool that was going to be introduced. Surprisingly enough, we did not even see any of the reform tools in the strategic planning of the university. When we implemented BPR, we did not have any information about BSC. When we were implementing BSC, we did not know that Kaizen would come after it. They all came spontaneously as big surprises to the member of the academia. I think such situations created confusions in the academia that let for unceasing resistance (ACU1).

A common view amongst informants was that BPR and BSC are theoretically and empirically proven to be complementary reform tools, but that the way MU approached the reform tools sent the wrong message to the members of the academic community.

As far as my understanding goes, BPR is here to change the organisational processes and structures, whereas BSC is to systematically measure the work processes and performance areas that were identified by BPR. From this angle, you feel that they are compatible. The problem is the timing on the implementation of the tools. Four years after we implemented BPR, BSC came as something a new reform tool. When you see BPR in detail, however, it support having management by values, which BSC is considered as a right fit. However, the university management did not say anything about BSC when BPR was implemented. As a result, several questions were raised by the members of the academic community, but none of those questions got convincing answers. When they [university management] failed to convince the academia, we were told 'rules are rules' so that we have to adopt them accordingly (ACU6).

Hence, the problem was not about the complementarity of the reform tools, but the approach the university made towards adopting them. Despite BMTs that seemed to be

complementary in their very nature, the approach MU used to implement the tools created negative perceptions in the academic units. Some informants showed their concerns about the growing feeling that the academic community was treating any reform tool as a fashionable item that comes and goes fleetingly. Moreover, according to informants neither BPR nor BSC were indicated in the strategic planning of the university as possible reform tools that the university would adopt at some future point in time. The arrival of both reform tools were sudden circumstances for the university and its BAUs.

6.1.4 The decentralised management system

All informants indicated that decentralised management was a new phenomenon in their institutional environment. The new institutional rules not only changed the former faculty-based organisation to a system based on colleges, institutes and schools, but also brought about changes in the structure of departments and the creation of new teams. New course and research teams were created under the department structure, which are accountable to their counterpart department. The assumption behind restructuring the BAUs was that colleges and departments would have more power and autonomy to decide on their core missions and administer their human, physical and financial resources if a decentralised management system was properly introduced.

Opinions about decentralisation

Most informants had positive feelings about the new decentralised system even though there were some concerns about its sustainability. Informants indicated that compared with the prior organisational structure, BAUs currently have more power and autonomy in carrying out and administering their activities and resources.

In general, informants believed that the increased power of the BAUs of the university resulted “in relative change in institutional autonomy” (ACU7) and “improved the decision making processes” (ACU9). According to some informants, the improvement in the institutional autonomy of BAUs can be measured by the power “they [BAUs] have to open new academic programs and to close the unnecessary ones” (ACU6), “to improve the services they provide their stakeholders” (ACU1), and “to administer their resources” (ACU4). Underlining the importance of having the power to open and close academic programs, ACU10 commented:

I had an annoying experience with regard to opening and closing academic programs. It used to take us [BAUs] years to get the approval of the top decision makers of the university. For example, the normal procedures were that if a particular department wanted to open a new academic program, it had to go all along the faculty dean, the vice president, the president and the senate. However, this situation is changed. Now we do not have to go all the hierarchies, the colleges can make the final decision without the

close scrutinise of the vice president, president or senate. This is a huge achievement for me (ACU10).

The new institutional autonomy also granted BAUs the power to handle students' issues at the department level. Most informants indicated that students' services were improved after colleges and departments were empowered. The improvements in students' services were explained in relation to admissions and the students' record management system. As a result, it was noted that the much more centralised and inefficient registrar work, "which was considered as sources of complaints to many students and teachers" (ACU1), now "decentralised to the college and department levels so that BAUs managed to give one window-shopping service to their students" (ACU8).

Moreover, BAUs' power to administer their human and financial resources showed significant improvement after the adoption of BMTs. For most of the informants, the most visible change of the reform tools was the power BAUs gained to administer their own resources.

Colleges, institutes and schools have the real power to recruit and to decide on the career developments of their employees without getting the approval of the university management. In the old practice any recruitment and promotion related issues used to be handled by the top management body of the university, which were the main sources of complaints as such decisions used to take long time. Right after the implementation of BPR, however, departments are empowered to hire and give promotion up to the level of lecturer and colleges up to assistant professor. For instance, if one member of the academia gets his Master's degree, the department head together with the DC, can promote him or her to the level of lecturer (ACU11).

However, some informants showed their concerns about the recently growing interference of the university management in the internal affairs of BAUs.

I have recently observed some level of interventions on some of the activities of the colleges and departments. For instance, I sometimes observed the top management of the university tried to appoint teachers to the departments without the knowledge of the academic units. Normally, the departments are supposed to recruit teachers and researchers for their course teams. Such interventions have created huge tensions between the university management and the colleges, and feeling of disappointment is growing inside the academic community (ACU8).

ACU6 also mentioned similar incidents.

When some decisions are made by the academic units which in one way or another contradict the interest of the top management body of the university, they usually try to interfere on the decision making process by giving feeble reasons (ACU6).

Generally, the decentralised management system resulted in some notable changes in the institutional autonomy of BAUs. However, the interference of university management in the internal affairs of BAUs, in contrast to the power given by the reform tools, showed that the new rules and practices were not structurally integrated with the values, norms and

practices of the university and the institutionalisation of the reform tools in the university and the BAUs was still work in progress.

6.1.5 Reorganising the core missions

Informants indicated that reorganisation of the core and sub-processes of the university was the central feature of the reform tools. It was also noted that identifying new processes and reorganising them accordingly created a foundation for improving other important aspects of the overall reform process. The main rationale behind the reorganisation of the core processes of the BAUs was done on the basic understanding that “the vision of making MU a centre of excellence will not materialise without actually achieving its mandate pertaining to research and community service” (RCSPRT, 2008, p. 2). As a result, three core missions or processes, which used to be coordinated under the office of the VPA, were identified and separated into two offices called VPA and VPRCS that are now responsible for teaching and learning and coordinating issues of research and community service respectively. This, however, does not mean that MU just identified three core processes (i.e., teaching, research, and community service) after the implementation of BPR; actually they were clearly put in the strategic planning of the university long before the introduction of the reform tools. It only showed that MU was finally providing equal attention to all of its missions by assigning two vice presidents to ensure both academic and research excellence (APRT, 2008).

All informants welcomed the separation of the three core missions into two different offices.

As part of the academia, I feel that the university has more balanced outlook on the three core missions of the university than it was on the older organisational structure. The good thing about restructuring the core missions is that we [the academia] all come to realise that we cannot become a centre of excellence as university without giving due emphasis to research and community service. In the former structure, the focus was more on teaching less on research, and community service was totally out of our hindsight. Irrespective of the changes we have achieved so far, the mind setting of the university and the academia has been changing since the introduction of the reform tools (ACU9).

Restructuring the core missions into two different offices has brought three important changes to our colleges. First, we start to believe that we cannot be a research university without focusing on research and community service. Second, the structures and the rules and regulations to accomplish these missions were clearly identified and created. Third, such new structures have facilitated the effective and efficient decision making process (ACU2).

As it was discussed in Chapter 5, the opening of two vice president offices for academics and RCS “gave the momentum for MU not only for having equal focus on each mission but the chance of integrating them” (ACU2). The establishment of new structures such as

the teaching, research and community service teams under the structures of departments was meant “to integrate each mission and to support each other” (ACU7). However, most informants were very critical of the effectiveness of the two offices that were supposed to handle the core missions as per the requirements of the reform tools, and of the organisation of the new course, research, and community service teams that were established under the department structure.

I think that the problems squarely fall on the readiness of the newly opened vice president offices. It seems to me that the university leaders took the means as an end. In other words, they are satisfied more on the creation of new structures than the results that the structures have brought to the academic units. I have not seen any meaningful effective leadership in both offices to integrate the core missions of the university. I think this is largely related to the unpreparedness of the university management to introduce such kinds of reforms. The reform tools were imposed on the university by the government, which our leaders had to conform with them. Therefore, when the pressures from the government increase, the university management focuses on more visible parts of the change not on the substances. That is why it is common to see in most of our academic units when the old practices always overruled the new initiatives (ACU4).

I feel somewhat comfortable with the new structures [compared with the past]. We have VPA that is only responsible for teaching and student related issues. RCS activities are under a newly designated office called VPRCS. To facilitate the core missions, we have developed courses, research and community service teams under department. However, practically speaking these teams are not working according to the expectations. It was the expectations of many that the establishment of these new structures would be followed by enough trainings and resources (i.e., financial and physical) and appropriate guidelines to coordinate them. In practice, however, that was not the case. I would say the expectations were high, but the academic staff was not ready to handle all the pressures. I mean most of the academic staff do not know their roles on the newly identified core-processes. The guidelines were designed in such a way that the staff forced to follow its instincts to actively participate in achieving the missions of the university (AC10).

The majority of the informants argued that more problems were observed in the research and community service wing than the teaching wing. For example, ACU6 commented:

Structurally speaking, the new change that we have seen after the implementation of BPR is research and community service stood independently. As a result, we expected some visible changes in the participation of the academia in the research and community service activities, and possible changes in the quality and quantity of the research products of our academic units. Unfortunately, the changes we have so far are not that substantial. It is hard to say our research has been improved in terms of both quality and quantity, and above all our teaching is not yet supported by the researches we make. .

A critical look at the informants’ views and the documents collected showed that the problems were not only limited to the functionalities of the new teams under the departments, but also occurred with irregularities shown in the new workflow identified by the RCSPRT (see Chapter 5). Some informants underscored that changing the structure should not be taken as the end of the whole objective, but rather should be viewed as an important means within the change process.

For me it seems that the university management afraid to lose its old bureaucracy as the new structure gives more power to the academic unit. It seems that they [MU management] are over satisfied with the new structure of the core missions of the university. If you see the process deeply, some important elements did not follow the new structure such as incentives, planning and measuring tools, and clear job descriptions. Without these elements, the RCS activities have remained business as usual (ACU7).

As discussed above, the university designed a new reward system for researchers who excel in research and community service. Its practicality, however, was hampered by the “inherent bureaucratic nature of the university administration” (ACU3), and “mismatch with the financial laws of the government” (ACU4). This can be seen in the “frequent rejections of research proposals and projects designed and/or brought by the academia” (ACU3), and “unwillingness to pay the agreed 10% for researchers who managed to bring new research funding from outside” (ACU4).

In general, the opinions of informants showed that the reorganisation of the core missions of the university and its BAUs was more of a structural than substantial one. Even though the reorganisation of core processes brought positive feelings regarding the need for change in the university, most of the new structures remained symbolic. According to some informants, the over-emphasis on changes in structures instead of their substance were a reflection of the university management’s desire to symbolically comply with the needs of the government rather than make a genuine commitment to transform the university’s vision and missions.

6.1.6 New planning and measurement tool (BSC)

The new planning and measurement tool was an important topic for all informants since it was directly related to the day-to-day activities of the BAUs. Almost all informants questioned the relevance of BSC to the missions of the university and their own basic activities. While all informants agreed on the importance of well-structured planning and measurement tools in their university, they, however, perceived BSC as an inappropriate tool to the BAUs and at least for the present condition the university is in. Their objections began with the mismatch observed among the requirements of BSC, the nature of the activities of BAUs and the present situation of their university.

Universities are established to produce knowledge and to disseminate it. These processes are not as linear as some would like to think. Of course, you can easily measure enrolment, graduation, gender, programme etc., very easily, but they do not give you the whole picture of the university. In other words, the relationship between the inputs, throughputs and outputs is very complex that you cannot easily measure with some indicators. Therefore, I do not see the need for adopting BSC to our university (ACU10).

If you look at the implementation of BSC in our university, it was guided by four perspectives such as customer perspective, internal perspective, learning and growth perspective, and financial perspectives. They focus about the desired outcomes sought

by the university, and how the university creates the desired outcomes. In the paper, they look attractive and perfect, but they need suitable environment to be implemented effectively. For instance, the idea of improving the satisfaction of our customers is noble, but the problem is we [at MU] do not even have baseline data that show where exactly we are now. Therefore, it is difficult for us to clearly quantify the target we want to set for the future. Moreover, it has financial perspective, which focuses on increasing the financial power of the university. However, we are not working in financially vibrant environment. The government is the main source of our budget. The competition we have with private universities is very low. For these and more reasons, I would say BSC is irrelevant for our context, at least for the situation where we are now (ACU1).

Apart from the aforementioned differences in values and practices between academic units and businesses performance measurement techniques, some informants mentioned the limited knowhow of the university leaders regarding the nature of BSC and the training they organised for the academic staff as possible causes for aggravating the negative perceptions of the adoption of BSC as a performance-measuring tool. For example, ACU8 commented:

When you bring such a new planning and measurement tool, the least you would expect from your leasers is that they would know it very well. In reality, they do not even know about BSC more than we [academic staff] do. They just accepted or obliged to comply with it from the government without reflecting on it, and passed it to us [BAUs]. The problem came when we tried to cascade the centrally designed plan to our units. As the new requirements associated with BSC were too vague to understand, we sometimes went to the university leaders to explain for us or to give us some practical solutions, but many of them failed to provide any meaningful help. You can simply understand how the tool was pushed from outside without their [university leaders] consent. As result many of us do not have positive judgements about BSC in our units (ACU8).

As the idea of BSC was a new phenomenon for the university in general and for the BAUs in particular, the need for continuous and effective training to create a sense of awareness and consensus in the university community was believed to be important by all informants. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, however, “the efforts made by the university management to organise and provide continuous and relevant trainings were not up to the expectations of the members of the academic units” (ACU11). Despite some efforts by the university management to provide training related to the nature of BSC and how it can be implemented into the university context, most informants thought that the adoption approach was “more of forcing than helping the academia to integrate the tool with the values, norms and beliefs of the university” (ACU4). The view of ACU12 summed up the views on the approach to implementing BSC in the BAUs:

Trainings were given to us by some external consultants or experts about the what, why and how of BSC. The university leadership also tried to organise some workshops with regard to how to develop measurable plans. I can pinpoint two major problems here. First, the trainings given by external experts were very irrelevant to our university context. The cases they tried to mention to substantiate their argument came from the industries and business organisations that had fewer similarities with us [academic units]. Most of us [trainees from academic units] found it hard to associate it to our

context. I remember the trainees raised many questions to the experts, but they failed to give us any sensible answers, because they did not even know the working processes of universities. Besides, the workshops or trainings that were organised by the university leadership had their own problems. They were not effectively organised and very few people participated in them. That is why very few people know about BSC in our university. However, Regardless of the readiness of the academic units and the strong resistances shown by the academic staff, the university management sent the rules and guidelines to us [BAUs] to be implemented at any costs (ACU12).

The effects of the lack of meaningful training for academics were felt when the centrally-developed BSC plan of the university was cascaded down to the BAUs. MU prepared new university-wide a strategic plan in 2010. This strategic plan was thought to be “the first in its kind in MU as it was prepared based on BSC” (ACU7). After providing some training for academics, the management of MU pushed for the BAUs to develop their plans by aligning them to the strategic goals of the university. However, as the “awareness and knowhow of BAUs and their academic staff were low” (ACU6), and “the resistances of the academic staff who viewed the tool as irrelevant for the university was high” (ACU8), real problems started to become apparent when the colleges tried to develop their plans and to cascade them down to their respective department, team and individual levels (ACU12). As ACU2 reported:

It took us a long time to develop our college’s plan following the cascaded plan of the university. We have faced many problems contextualising to our practices and values. We have not even cascaded down to the department and the individual level as it was supposed to be. In the first place, our academic units do not have any baseline data to develop performance areas and indicators. Without real and comprehensive baseline data it was meaningless to develop BSC plan. Second, BSC over emphasises the alignment of the strategic goals of the university with the academic units. At the face value, this might seem sound and good, but it fails to take into account the disciplinary differences and the goals attached to them. This is to mean that every academic unit is different, and based on their disciplinary background they have their own particular missions and objectives that they aspire to achieve. However, the new system does not allow them to follow their paths as much as they want it to be. This is viewed by the academic staff as detrimental (ACU2).

To sum up, despite the negative perceptions of the faculty, which were largely typified by persistent resistance, towards the use of BSC in their practices, the university management forced the BAUs to conform with the new rules, requirements and expectations.

6.2 Responses of BAUs to the institutional environment

This section presents the practices and responses of MU’s BAUs to the perceived changes in the institutional environment. The response of the BAUs is interpreted based on the nature of the responses, the response strategies, and the levels of structural integration with the values, norms, practices and policies of the BAUs. Accordingly, some themes were

identified as possible responses of BAUs, including the training given to academics to adopt the BMTs, the establishment of course and RCS teams, the empowerment of the BAUs, the formation of QAUs, and the diversification of funds, the introduction of BSC among others. As indicated in Chapter 2, the analyses of the response strategies of the BAUs were done based on the three strategic responses identified by Oliver (1991), namely compliance (conformity), symbolic action (de-coupling, sealing off) and manipulation (pro-active). In connection with this, the response strategies of the BAUs to the BMTs were also analysed by their levels of structural integration with the values, beliefs, norms, and practices of the BAUs. For this purpose, this study used Dass and Parker's (1996) organisational response to diversity pressures that suggests the levels of structural integration of the reform tools with the values, norms and practices of the organisation determine its responsive capacity to external pressures. Accordingly, the response could be episodic, programmatic or process-oriented.

6.2.1 Organising trainings for academics

As discussed in Chapter 2, the responses of the BAUs to the adoption of BMTs were characterised by the actions and decisions academic units made to adopt the BMTs. The assumption was that the new HEP of the country and the legislation of the university unequivocally granted BAUs institutional autonomy to pursue their missions and visions pursuant to the higher education law of the country. However, as HEIs are highly accountable to the government, similar to the university as an organisational entity, BAUs at MU directly or indirectly are highly susceptible to the government's coercive approach. Therefore, the responses of BAUs to the new institutional environment were influenced by the context and environment within which they function, and by the actions and decisions the academic units made in adopting the new changes. As a result, it was observed that BAUs largely used strategies of compliance or conformity to the reform tools pushed by the university management, and at times symbolic compliance, such as sealing off and decoupling strategies were demonstrated in some of their responses. Moreover, it was noted that BAUs responded to the pressures of BMTs in more of an episodic fashion which was characterised by an ad hoc approach. This means the responses of BAUs to pressures and requirements related to the implementation of the BMTs were more aimed at addressing difficulties or crises only when they arose, but did not happen in a very strategic or systematic manner.

When the pressures from the university management increased, and when the BAUs knew that the adoption of BMTs in their units were mandatory and unescapable phenomena, their first action was associated with the need to create awareness inside the academic community about the possible ways of institutionalising the reform tools. As was discussed in Chapter 5 and earlier in this chapter, the basic assumption behind adopting BMTs at MU was that fundamental changes in the business process, jobs and structures,

management and measurement system structure, and values and beliefs of the university's core processes would enhance the quality of education and services the university provides its internal and external stakeholders (MU, 2008).

Most informants, however, indicated that the adoption process of these BMTs was marred by various internal and external challenges. As discussed in Section 6.1.1 of this chapter, the fierce resistance of the academics regarding the relevance of BMTs to the university's values and norms was considered as one of the major tests of the institutionalisation processes. The management body of MU, however, assumed that such resistance was a direct reflection of misunderstandings of the real contributions BMTs would make to the university (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008). As a result, the leadership of the university and the BAUs' leaders decided to organise training, and produced important guidelines in the hopes of lessening the growing resistance of the faculty and to facilitate the institutionalisation process. The following comments illustrated this:

When we were told to implement these reform tools, the first thing we did was to organise and provide training for our staff members. We did this because we believed that the best way to implement these tools was first to develop the awareness of our staff members about the "what, how and why" of the reform tools. Besides, parallel to the various training and workshop, several guidelines and documents were also produced by various colleges (ACU2).

It should be noted that both BPR and BSC reforms were forced upon to our university by the MoE, and the university to us [BAUs]. Besides, both reform tools were here to radically change the existing structures, beliefs and values of the academic units. Therefore, it was likely that the suspicions, confusions and resistances of the academic staff would follow the reform tools. To reduce the resistances and to bring common understanding about the use of the reform tools to the university's function, some trainings and discussions were organised by the colleges and institutes. Someone may argue on the quantity and quality of the trainings, but the fact is that, for example, the first thing our college did was that to organise such kinds of trainings and to produce manuals that guide the implementation processes (ACU9)

This showed that BAU leaders felt there was a need to make sure the new values and beliefs of the BMTs were embraced and internalised by the academic staff as part of their social obligations and normal work processes rather than by the enforcement of rules. However, the majority of informants commented that the training and workshops organised were very superficial, poorly coordinated and failed to bring any meaningful shared understandings to the academic staff. In addition, informants indicated that the efforts the university and BAUs made to hire external consultants to provide training did not help the process of institutionalising the reform tools, only the publicity of the university.

I participated in some of the trainings and discussions organised both by the university and my college. However, it is hard for me to say they were perfect. They were very few in number and low in qualities. I think that in a situation like us [when radical reform tools are implemented] the need for continuous and well-organised trainings is mandatory. In reality, we did not have them. Colleges did not have a clear road map for such kinds of activities. You only see training or workshop when some problems arise. They are

like fire-fighting approaches. The more I participated in these trainings, the more I got confused than got solutions (ACU8).

The problem is that even those who organised the training did not have much knowledge about the nature of the reform tools than the academic staff. They tried to brief us the general situations, but failed to elaborate to us how the new processes are interrelated, and how they affect our activities. For instance, when the academic staff raised some critical questions about the applicability of the reform tools, no one was ready for giving competent explanations for them. We thus started to feel frustrated on the whole process of implementation. I can safely say the use of external consultants was just a symbolic action to look hardworking in front of the government and other stakeholders (ACU4).

Apart from the leadership problems at all levels of the university in delivering well-designed training platforms, “the over politicisation of the reform tools affected the institutionalisation process” (ACU6). This means that “the whole reform process of the university was initiated and tightly controlled by the government” (ACU10). ACU7 thus argued that “the roles of the university and BAUs were largely limited to simply adopt the reform tools without questioning their relevance and compatibility to their context” (ACU7). It seems, therefore, that no matter how hard the university management tried to organise training programs for the academic staff, the perceived interference of the government in tightly controlling the reform tools made it difficult to change the perceptions of the BMTs.

The training and workshops organised by MU and its BAUs were expected to have systematic ways of addressing these features of HEIs. However, informants stated otherwise.

You need to have outstanding strategies when you think of implementing such business oriented reform tools in knowledge producing institutions. From my experience as university lecturer, anything that comes to us [the academia], we see it whether it matches with our values and practices or not. We always like to be in the comfort zone, academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Anything that we think or perceive in one way or another would affect these values, we are always against it. I think this is right. In my understanding, the problem is not having such kinds of attitudes; rather the problem is when the university leaders failed to show the academics the merits of the reform tools and their relevance to academic institutions’ values and norms. I think our college leaders were not ready to change this deep-rooted thinking. For me, the so-called trainings they organised proved this fact (ACU2).

In general, it could be argued that that the BAUs’ organising training and workshops as tools of awareness development in response to members’ growing dissatisfaction was a correct decision. However, the way the training and workshops were organised and provided to the academic staff proved the fact that that they lacked a systemic approach and were more or less organised in an ad hoc fashion. In other words, the response was more of a symbolic act than a deliberate and conscious move to effectively address the issue.

6.2.2 Establishing course, research and community service teams

Following the identification of teaching and research and community service as the core business processes of the university, the BAUs were required to establish new structures, positions and jobs at the college, department and team levels to accomplish the missions of the university. One of the major changes that attracted the attention of informants was that the establishment of teams under the department structure as the lowest level of academic unit. Informants indicated that all BAUs formed three major teams under the department level, namely the teaching, research and community service teams. As discussed in Section 6.1.5, the main purpose of establishing structures of this kind was to integrate the core missions and achieve academic excellence.

Therefore, as shown in Figure 8, under the recommendations drawn from the task forces' study results, all BAUs organised the academic programs each departments into three teams beneath the department level. These teams were formulated based on the similarities of their thematic areas or processes. Informants indicated that all teams had members and leaders that were accountable to the department head.

The following comments from two informants clearly illustrated how the BAUs structured the teams and their purposes.

For instance, if you see the department of psychology, we established five teams based on their thematic areas, research focus and work processes. These are developmental psychology, social psychology, counselling psychology and special needs, psychological testing and research, and psychological research and special support units. That means lecturers who specialised in one of the fields would be grouped in their areas of specialisation. Therefore, all team members are expected to plan and coordinate their teaching, research and community service activities together (ACU4).

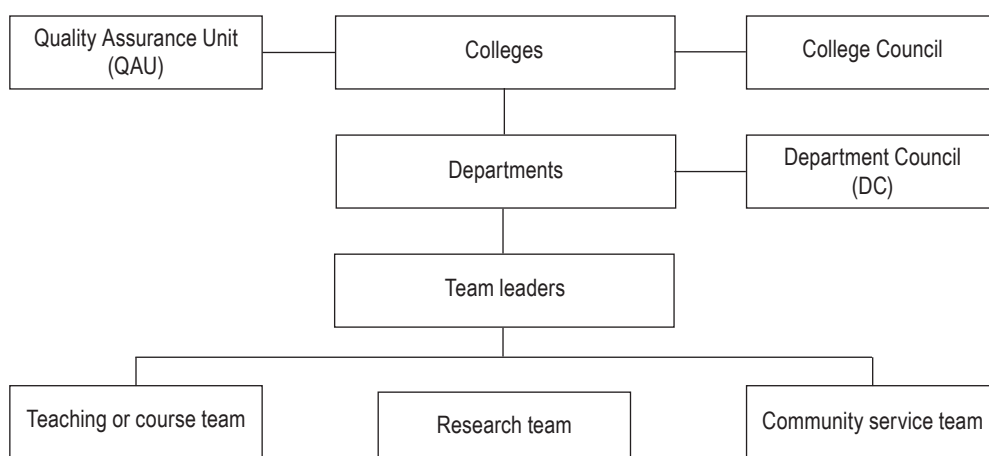


Figure 8. BAUs' structure at MU

Source: created by the author based on the Senate Legislation of MU (MU, 2014b)

The rationale behind introducing these new team structures was based on the understanding that they [BAUs] have had big problems in their teaching, research and community service activities. As a result the university and BAUs' customers, especially students have not been satisfied with the services they got from the university. Therefore, it was time for academic units to restructure their activities and processes. Then it was decided to form teams under the department who can plan and work together based on the similarities of disciplinary background and work processes. The assumption was that if teachers with similar specialisation able to work together, then it would be easy for them to identify their problems and come up with workable solutions that effectively improve the quality of their teaching and research (ACU6).

As can be seen in Figure 8, all teams have team members and leaders who are accountable to the department head. Also, note that every teaching-, research- and community-service-related issue was supposed to be handled at the team level. The team leaders were responsible for leading the teaching, research and community service activities of their own teams, and representing their team in the DC. The team members were accountable to the team leader. This implied that the role of the department head was only limited to coordinating and facilitating the activities of each team.

Whilst a few informants argued that the establishment of teams based on similarities of thematic areas should be considered as step forward for balancing and integrating the teaching and research and community service activities of academic units, the majority of the informants, however, indicated that the team structure failed to serve its purpose due to various conceptual and practical reasons. Informants who had positive experiences commented:

As members of course team, I think that I have more balanced approach to teaching, research and community service than the old structure. At least it gives me the opportunity to work with colleagues who have the same specialisation. Besides, it is easy to communicate each other as we have the same educational background (ACU9).

The most important thing about this new team structure is that it develops team spirit. Despite some inconsistencies in its application, we start to identify problems, develop solutions and make plans together. For instance, if a particular problem pops up in one course; all members of that team sit together and try to bring practical solution for it. This has not been the case in the old system. In the old system, it was more of individual decision than peer decision (ACU2).

However, for the majority of informants, in practice the team structures were more symbolic than functional. They mentioned two major factors that affected the practicality of the new team structures, namely conceptual and technical problems. Conceptual problems were related to the justification given for forming the team structures. This means the concept of 'similar processes' was found to be debatable among academics. Some informants argued that grouping several disciplines just because of their disciplinary background inhibited interdisciplinary research and teaching in the BAUs. They also noted that practically speaking it was more difficult to find a clear boundary between courses which at times deterred collegial decision making practices.

As the teams were organised based on their process or disciplinary similarities, but practically it was very difficult for us [academic staff] to place one course in one particular team as courses have interdisciplinary nature. This means one lecturer could be placed in various teams. However, the formation of the teams did not take into account the overlapping nature of courses. We [academia] tried to explain our concerns with regard to the interdisciplinary nature of courses to the leaderships of the academic units and university, but no one was ready to give us comprehensive solution. Despite our college started modular curriculum, but it has many problems in its implementation. Sometimes, we tried to invite lecturers from the other teams to participate in our teaching, but as it is not systematically and legally supported practice most of the time we failed to get these lecturers. Therefore, the only alternative we had was to act as if we followed the new rules, but practically these team structures are only here in names (ACU10).

I do not oppose the creation of teams under departments, but I am not comfortable with the way they are structured. You cannot build your own world by the very fact that you have specialised in one discipline. These days the concept of discipline has become very blurred and illusive. We [members of the academic staff] have witnessed that several specialisations were proliferated under one discipline. I assume that the team structure we have in our units, which is based on the similarity of disciplines, prohibited interdisciplinary activities. We should have a system that encourages the concept of multidisciplinary. That is the only way that we can effectively solve the over increasing demands of our stakeholders and achieve the quality of education. As the new system does not recognise the interaction of courses in different teams, personally we tried to cooperate with other teams to fill the gaps. However, this action is more of personal than systemic, thus it does not have any continuity. Furthermore, as the new modular course delivery is in its early stage and which is also characterised by various problems, it failed to serve as a solution. In general, I would say the team structure is practically non-existent. I, however, know that the legal reports that our college leaders sent to the authorities of the university showed otherwise (ACU3).

Moreover, informants indicated that the team structures deterred collegial decision-making practices in the academic units. Therefore, they argued that such practices affected the implementation processes of the team structures.

In the old structure, all academic staffs were members of the DC, and used to fully participate and made decisions at every affair of their department. This structure, however, was changed after BPR. In the new [team] structure, we [academic staff] are not members of the DC, but only the team leaders do. That means the team leaders represent their teams and make decisions in the DC on behalf of their teams. I think this inhibits the direct participation of the academia, which is against the normal collegial way of decision-making process. This makes me feel outsider to my department. Furthermore, as the means of communication in our department is very ineffective, there have been many incidents that most members of the [academic] staff failed to be timely informed about the decisions that were made at the DC. Most of the time, thus, we followed the hearsay than the actual information. As a result it is common to see the academic staff trying to 'sabotage' the system (ACU7).

Technical problems referred to the constraints related to legal and financial issues with facilitating the implementation process of the team structures. Informants claimed that the unavailability of clear job descriptions and responsibilities that were supported by the

legislation of the university, and lack of proper budgeting and other resources to accomplish the objectives, deterred the BAUs' responses to the requirements of the reform tools.

I do not have any problem with the establishment of the teams and their objectives as such. The problem is that colleges failed to produce legally set job descriptions and responsibilities for the newly established teams. You might read some of their job descriptions in the BPR manual produced by reengineering teams, but they are meaningless unless they are supported by the legislation of the university. When we [academic staff] entered into practice, there have been many problems and conflicting practices on the role of the team members, the team leaders and their interactions with the departments. In the absence of clear rules, as member of the academic staff, I tried to work in the new structure by following the old rules. For me, it is like a new wine in an old vessel (ACU11).

It is very funny for me to see that you set new structures and placed lecturers to work under it, but with no financial and physical resources to run their activities. This does not make sense. Such situations forced me to think, after all, the formations of the new structures were not well-thought ideas, but just reflex actions to convince the external stakeholders, the government as if we were doing a great work. As a result, the academic staff members find it hard to effectively work on the new structure. We just simply act as if we were doing something new, but practically we are working the business as usual things (ACU1).

The above excerpts indicated that BAUs symbolically complied with the new team structures under the department level. On one hand, all BAUs designed these structures based on the requirements set out by the university management. On the other hand, in practice the course teams did not function according to the expectations. This implies the teaching and RCS of the BAUs continued to follow the old system by sealing off most of their core missions from the university management.

6.2.3 Empowerment of BAUs

Empowerment in this context refers to the institutional autonomy of BAUs to carry out their core missions. As has been discussed repeatedly in this study, one of the major objectives behind adopting BMTs at MU was to ensure the institutional autonomy and academic freedom of the BAUs by introducing decentralised management as a tool for their empowerment (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008). For example, with the objective of greater institutional autonomy, the faculty-based organisation was thus changed to colleges, institutes and schools. It was assumed that the new college-based structure would enable BAUs to have more power to control their academic, human, financial and physical resources without direct interference from the top university management and the government. As a result, all of the BAUs of MU tried to reorganise their academic work, and restructured their human, financial and physical resources management accordingly.

Human and financial resources

In this context, all informants agreed that there was visible change in the structure of the BAUs compared with the old structure. Furthermore, many of the informants acknowledged the autonomy BAUs now have in managing their human and financial resources even though they were very critical on academic-related issues.

I would say our college is the direct result of BPR. Two faculties were merged together based on the similarity of disciplinary background and work processes. We formed appropriate offices that can manage our human and financial resources. Recruitment of lecturers and researchers, which is based on merit, is now under the power of departments. This helps us to find competent teachers from the market. The practice is that academic units usually initiate the request and communicate it to the respective human resource office for an open recruitment process. Normally, the concerned academic staffs carry out the hiring based on the regulations of the university. I think we are in a good position to administer our financial resources compared with the past practices (ACU3).

After the BPR studies had been made, the first thing, as a college we did was to establish the necessary organs that can serve us the tools of our institutional autonomy. Recruitment of competent lecturers was one of the major issues that have been sources of dissatisfaction in the old governance system. Now we are freely recruiting our human resources without any direct influence. The second important issue is the power we have to administer our financial and physical resources. At a college level, we have responsible offices that can administer our financial and physical resources. More importantly, we have established some units that relentlessly work on diversifying our financial resources. For instance, we have started consultancy work with different stakeholders; we provide short and long term training when the need come from the stakeholders, and generate funds for various research from national and international partners (ACU2).

It seems that the power of BAUs to freely administer their human resources is not only limited to the recruitment process, but is also found in the promotion of the academic staff.

It [the promotion process of academia] has been an awful experience for many of us [academic staff]. Thanks to the new reform, the promotion of academic staff up to the rank of lecturer and below is now being approved by the DC, to the rank of assistant professor is handled by CC, and the rest senior positions including associate professor and professor are approved by both the senate and board respectively. This new practice resulted on quick decisions and avoided complicated bureaucracies, which used to take us years in the old structure. I would say, on this regard, our college is doing well and the academic staffs are relatively satisfied with this process (ACU9).

However, informants indicated that nothing has been changed in the criteria for promotion. The old criteria such as length of service within a given rank; demonstration of effective teaching based on the candidate's work performance as measured by the evaluation of their students, immediate supervisor, and peers; research and publication; and participation in the affairs of the university remained to be the basic indicators for promotion.

Following the structural change in the university and the academic units, it was in my expectation that the promotion process of the academic staff would be changed too, at

least to show some amendments. However, that was not the case. Despite some clarity problems in the old promotion system, our college still follows the old criteria (ACU9).

Surprisingly enough the university introduced new incentive or rewarding mechanisms for researchers or 'at least in paper', and BSC was introduced to plan and measure the performance of the academic staff. However, the current legislation of the university failed to take into account these new developments. As members of the academic staff, these situations make me confused. We talk about new structures and new tools, but we failed to update the rules that govern them (ACU4).

When informants were asked for possible reasons for keeping the old promotion criteria despite the new developments in the university, ACU6 said, "Colleges are not autonomous enough to change the legislation of the university. The senate of the university is the responsible body for setting laws or criteria for promotions." Another informant added, "I think it has something to do with old habits. I would say we are not totally free of the old thinking and procedure. In short we have not internalised the new system yet" (ACU11). This shows that despite BAUs having the power to make academic promotion up to the rank of assistant professor, the new rules and requirements are not well integrated with the values, practices and norms of BAUs.

Curriculum development and modularisation

The newest HEP, from 2009, in its article 17, section A, clearly stipulated that public universities would have the autonomy "to develop and implement relevant curricula and research programs; and to create new or close existing academic programmes". Informants also tried to see the empowerment of BAUs from the perspective of academic processes. That means the strategies BAUs set out to improve their teaching-learning processes, to develop their own curricula, and to set their own research agendas, among others. As a result, one of the main issues that informants discussed was the modularisation of curriculum and its subsequent elements. Informants reported that BAUs conformed to the requirements of the new rules. However, when they did so, BAUs only symbolically complied with the new requirements and pressures.

All public HEIs in Ethiopia implemented a modularised curriculum approach as part of the result of the BPR initiative (HESC, 2012). In the teaching core process of MU, modularisation was considered as an appropriate tool for the provision of relevant curricula and production of competent graduates (ACU5). It seems that the adoption of a modularised curriculum approach at MU was guided by four major factors that were stipulated in the national guideline for modular curricula³³. First, it was believed that the organisation of the old curricula was discipline-based which let courses to become fragmented, which meant that they were no longer organised around competence. This situation was taken

³³ A Guideline for Modularization in Ethiopian HEIs was prepared in 2012 by a consortium of six universities which was organised by HESC. The MoE accepted this document as a national framework for all public HEIs in Ethiopia (HESC, 2012).

as a deterrent factor for universities in producing competent students. Second, student workload, which is believed to be important for students' success in their academic life, was omitted in the old curriculum. That means the focus was only on the contact hours that teachers had in the classrooms. Third, there was felt to be a loose connection between the world of education and the world of work for students in the old curriculum. Finally, yet also importantly, the emphasis of the old curriculum was on teachers not on students. This in turn affected students' ability to actively participate in the teaching-learning process (HESC, 2012).

Generally, the aim of modularisation is mainly to facilitate competence-based education in the BAUs by increasing the degree of comparability and compatibility, curriculum flexibility, and student mobility. It was also supposed to serve as an important bridge between the university and the job market (HESC, 2012).

Following the introduction of the BMTs and the unprecedented pressures of the MoE to reorganise the curriculum of the university, MU introduced a modularisation curriculum in all BAUs, and designed guidelines on how to implement it in the BAUs. MU incorporated the need for modular curriculum approach in its new legislation, and clearly stipulated that all BAUs should strive to offer courses in modular form to maximise the competence of students, and that students are required to take more than one module at a time in one term (MU, 2014). Informants reported that despite some differences in the operational nitty-gritty among BAUs in adopting the modular curriculum, all BAUs conformed to the requirements stipulated by the national guideline.

When the idea of modularisation came to our university and to our college, the first thing our college did was to organise awareness creating trainings and experience sharing platforms by inviting national and international experts in the field. Moreover, the MoE through its Higher Education Strategic Centre (HESC) and Leadership and Management Capacity Development Project (LMCDP) organised some training of trainers on the process and concept of modularisation. Then the experiences gained through these activities were cascaded down to the academic staff. As a college, we tried to organise courses based on their thematic similarities. That means the existing courses were grouped into clusters and later comparisons were made with separately defined graduate profiles. Therefore, some courses were altered, removed and added to form modules (ACU2).

In our department, we clustered courses together and created modules. We had two options to deliver modular instructions. These were semesters based, which one or more modules are given in one semester, and the block teaching, which modules are given as long as they take. They could be finished in one semester or one year. We chose the former. However, you don't get similar module delivery approaches at all colleges, sometimes in even in the same college. Some of them give in the traditional semester-based and others deliver in block based teaching (ACU4).

However, the experiences of informants revealed that the aforementioned benefits of modularisation were far from actually being seen in the BAUs. According to some informants, the adoption of modular approach was affected by both conceptual and

operational details. The conceptual problems were associated with the mismatch between the principles of the modular curriculum and the way it was implemented in the BAUs of MU. For example, ACU7 commented:

The national guideline for modularisation clearly stated that essential skills to be developed should be identified first and then courses that help develop these skills should follow afterwards. The guideline also underscores that other important component of a module such as the learning outcomes, contents, teaching methods and assessment techniques should be selected based on the competencies that students are supposed to acquire. However, in practice most BAUs in our university adopted modular curriculum approach by just clustering the existing similar courses into modules. I cannot say the central principles of the modular curriculum approach are well incorporated with the values and practices of our academic units (ACU7).

When informants were asked about the possible reasons behind such conceptual problems, they mentioned lack of experience, the lack of readiness of the BAUs and the conflict of interests of some members of the academy as possible factors that deterred the responsive capacity of the BAUs. This means when the knowledge and experiences of BAUs were not up to the expectations, BAUs then chose the easiest way by just clustering courses at the expense of competency-based education.

The basic aim for having the modular curriculum was to have a competency-based education. The expectation was to make students have particular competencies. For example, if three years degree programs have three or four identified competencies and if one student fails to accomplish most of the competencies but only managed on one of them, then you certify this student with those particular competencies so that he could get some jobs with the minimum competencies he achieved. However, the problem was that we did not effectively follow the whole principle of competency based education or modular instruction. We only had the basic idea, but we could not organise the education materials to achieve the effective implementation of competency-based education. We only tried to combine courses that were formerly given separately. First, we did not clearly identify the competencies. Second, if competency based education is to be given effectively, then you should have first prepared the necessary education materials and then you encourage self-learning approach to students. In this regard, there was no any significant change. The teacher is still the centre of the teaching and learning process not the students. The measurement we used to assess the competency of students is also too traditional. I think these all problems have to do with lack of experiences we have on the concept of modular curriculum (ACU1).

The response of the BAUs was not only affected by the lack of experience in modular designing and but also by operational nuts and bolts, the perceived threats it posed to academics' careers, and by the new hierarchical relationship created to manage the modules.

In the process of modularisation, some courses were removed or modified to fit with modular curriculum. However, those teachers whose courses were removed or modified fiercely resisted the modularisation. They considered the modularisation process as a direct threat to their job and carrier. I think some academic units to address the concerns of some lecturers, they went out of the principle of modularisation and simply clustered irrelevant courses in some modules that should have been removed. This means

at some point personal interests affect proper implementation. In my understanding modularisation should not be clustering the existing courses in to modules just for some personal issues, but rather it is about reorganising contents based on their thematic arrangement to produce well defined competencies. At our college, we chose the clustering of courses in to modules, which is wrong. What is more annoying is that clustering of courses not competence-based education was taken as an end by itself in our college (ACU8).

One of the changes that modularisation has brought to our unit is that each module has owner. The module or course owners are responsible for coordinating all activities of the modules. The remaining instructors are assigned to teach topics in each module. As most of us have the same academic qualifications, and coupled with lack of transparency in the appointment of module leaders, it created a sense of inferiority-superiority complexes inside the academic staff. As a result it is common to see some sorts of ‘academic politics’ between [module] leaders and instructors. It is like ‘who the hell are you to own this course and to give me directions?’ (ACU10).

In general, most informants conceded that the modular arrangement in the BAUs was nothing more than a collection of previously-independent courses put together in terms of their similarities. Furthermore, they stressed that it was too difficult to claim that BAUs perfectly adopted a modular curriculum in the fullest sense of the concept—the practices were still largely the same as in the conventional arrangement, characterised by a teacher-centred teaching approach that left students to passively listen to lectures. This means that if there was a difference at all with the old approach, it was the introduction of block teaching and the increase in the number and type of continuous assessments. This shows that BAUs symbolically adopted the modular curriculum by sealing off its old practices.

6.2.4 The establishment of quality assurance units

As discussed in Chapter 5, even though the need to adopt internal quality assurance practices was dictated by the HEP of the country, MU’s management body incorporated it as central feature of the new reform tools. The study results regarding BPR indicated that establishment of internal QAUs at both the university and BAU levels should be seen as a core part of the university’s efforts to insure academic excellence in the university and its BAUs (APRT, 2008). It was noted that all informants welcomed the idea of adopting the practices of quality assurance in all academic units. However, as the idea of quality assurance was a new phenomenon in the university in general and in the BAUs in particular, and was coupled by some perceived external interventions, the BAUs symbolically complied with the rules and requirements sent from the government and the university.

All informants reported that the response of the BAUs was shaped by the HEP of the country and the quality assurance policy for institutional assessment that was formally endorsed in 2008 by the university. In addition to the endorsement of formal policy guidelines, MU set up a quality assurance office at the university level after the implementation of BPR. The then quality assurance office, which was merged with the

institutional transformation office and renamed ITQAD, set up quality assurance offices at the college, institute and school levels with the aim of monitoring and ensuring quality standards at all academic unit levels. All informants shared the view that when the pressures to adopt quality assurance practices became imminent, all BAUs responded by identifying the quality assessment systems of their units, namely self-assessment, peer review and external audit. However, informants exhibited divergent views about the strategies the different BAUs used to adopt the new quality assessment requirements and the level of structural integration with the values, norms and practices of academic units.

On one hand, few informants argued that ensuring quality should be seen as a process which demands time and commitments, thus the establishment of such units in BAUs and the identification of quality assessment systems showed the responsive capacity of the BAUs, as they would ultimately enhance the quality of the core missions of the university. This group of informants believed that the necessary foundations for quality assurance were laid, and course audits and some self-assessments were done at college level, therefore the remaining tasks should focus on making sure the system is made sustainable. For example, some informants noted:

I think we should not be overwhelmed by the immediate results only; rather we should try to see the big picture, the future. The establishment of QAUs in our university should be considered as something phenomenal. In my understanding, it gives us [the university] the opportunity to see where we are now, where we are going, and how we would arrive at our vision. Besides, I know that these [quality assurance] units so far have carried out course audits in all BAUs of the university. This has not been the case for many years. At this stage, I do not expect them to function as per the policy document and guidelines of quality assurance, but I think that we just started the journey, to quality (ACU3).

For me, I do not even consider quality assurance activities are part of BPR initiative. I think that should not be the important thing. We need sustainable quality assurance programs if we have to excel and become competitive with or without BPR or BSC. Of course, some routine monitoring and evaluation activities used to be done in our university. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to treat these activities as fully fledged quality assurance endeavours which are guided by the ethos of accountability, transparency and efficiency. Now every college has its own QAUs that is responsible for ensuring the quality of the teaching and learning processes. For example, at my college, several quality assurance activities such as course audits, students' satisfaction survey, and benchmarking activities have been done over the past few years. I think this is the way forward and it should be encouraged (ACU9).

On the other hand, the majority of informants expressed their concerns by highlighting the facts that the BAUs failed to adopt the minimum requirements of quality assurance practices properly. This group of informants pointed out that the lack of readiness and commitment of the BAUs' leaders and the interference of external bodies played major roles in shaping the responses of the BAUs when adopting the new quality assessment system. According to informants, external factors were related to the vagueness and incompatibility of the quality standard indicators sent from HERQA to the university (ACU11). They further argued that due to the internal and external problems, the BAUs'

possible responses were limited to just compliance, which was highly characterised by symbolic compliance. In other words, the new practices were not well integrated with the values, norms and practices of all academic units. The comments below illustrated this:

One of the new changes I have seen after BPR is the issue of QAUs at university and academic units' levels. Policy guidelines were produced by the university and academic units, and the MoE and HERQA also sent big policy documents and guidelines with very detailed indicators of quality which are hard to operationalise. However, in practice these QAUs failed to live up to the expectations. As far as my knowledge goes, I have not seen any major quality assessment done at my college or department other than the routine activities that we have done for some years before the establishment of the so called QAUs. However, when the pressures to carryout internal quality assessment suddenly increases from HERQA, it is common to see the so called QAUs haphazardly act superficially or pretend as if they were doing quality assessment activities as per the requirements of the agency while doing the usual quality assessment activities. In general, I would say much has been said than done in the issue of internal quality assurance units (ACU7).

Producing policy documents for internal quality assurance and establishing quality assurance offices at all academic units cannot and should not be taken as guarantees for quality enhancement. Unfortunately, this is what I have seen in our university. Instead of trying to contextualising the quality indicators to our context, and proactively work to institutionalise the new quality assessment, I frequently observed when our leaders boasted as if they achieved their target. For me, such actions are simply desperate actions to portray a wrong image of the university to its external stakeholders, especially to the government. All academic units have focused on the normal evaluation activities, such as students' evaluation on teachers' performance at semester bases, and vary rarely course audits. The rest may be the most important elements, such as peer view and quality audit have not been done yet as per the rules. In reality, QAUs are here in names only. I have not seen any bright future on them unless something a miracle comes (ACU1).

This shows that the BAUs used mixed strategies for adopting the requirements of the reform tools. On one hand, they conformed with the strong pressures of the government and the university management by developing the necessary guidelines and creating the structures, offices, jobs and positions at the academic unit levels that are supposed to facilitate the implementation process. On the other hand, when the BAUs conformed with the new institutional requirements, they did so via only symbolic compliance. This means guidelines and structures were developed merely as gestures towards accepting the rules and requirements. However, in practice the BAUs did not follow these new rules; rather, they worked based on the old rules.

6.2.5 Balanced score card (BSC)

As discussed in Section 6.1.6 and in Chapter 5, the new planning and measurement tool was one of the critical issues that elicited different perspectives from different categories of informants. As part of the organisational restructuring of the university and the BAUs,

the ideas of planning and measurement became the central agenda of the BAUs. MU underlined defining and communicating the strategic positioning of the university as one of the basic steps in strategic planning and implementation. BSC thus, as a powerful model for strategic management, was considered as an important tool for aligning the organisational objectives of different academic levels with the national objectives. It was also found to be essential in creating a shared vision and implementing the strategic plan of the university (ITQAD, 2014).

MU developed 20 years' worth of strategic planning in 2003, and thus it has been a routine activity for the university to design a new strategic plan every five years to achieve its missions and vision. Therefore, "considering its appropriateness and multifunctional advantages, BSC [has] chosen to implement the five year strategic plan of the University" (ITQAD, 2014, p. 3). MU thus designed a new corporate level (i.e., university level) BSC plan and cascaded it down to the BAUs. Colleges, institutes and schools were expected to cascading down their BSC plans to their department, teams and individual levels. Furthermore, the road map that was designed to guide the use of BSC at MU clearly specified the time dimension needed at each level to design BSC. For example, it was indicated that at university and college levels there would be a seven-year BSC plan; departments will have a two-year plan; teams shall have six-months to one-year plans; and individuals shall have four- to six-months plans.

The efforts to implement BSC at the college, department, team and individual levels, however, were affected by several problems. Informants argued that the implementation of BSC at the BAU level was largely affected by the perceived mismatch between the values and norms of the university, and the requirements of the new measuring and planning tools. Besides, the lack of readiness and experience of BAUs to implement the reform tool were mentioned as factors that deterred the effective adoption of the BMTs.

As discussed in Chapter 5 and Section 6.1.6, a common view among the informants was that universities are knowledge-producing institutions and the processes of knowledge production and distribution are very complex. They added that universities took human beings as inputs with multiple of personal goals and interests, processed them with knowledge, skill and attitude, and produced graduates as outputs that normally take years to pass through all the steps. Therefore, most informants strongly believed that the process of planning and measuring in the HEIs environment should be context-based and "should not be overwhelmed by business practices for the sake of accountability and transparency" (ACU6), and "at the expense of academic values and excellence" (ACU8).

I know that our university leadership think the problems shown in the institutionalisation of BSC are the direct result of the 'unreasonable' resistance of the academia adopting the new system. Nevertheless that is not the case. Of course, we resisted BSC, but not for no reasons. As member of the academic staff, I tried to develop my plan based on BSC, but most of the time I ended up with problems. Most of our activities are hard to quantify them precisely as per the requirements of the new planning and measurement tool. However, the pushes are there always from the university leadership to develop our plans based on BSC. To tell you the truth, we do not normally say no, but we act as if

we designed well-thought plans based on BSC. Practically there have been some paper works to satisfy the need of our leaders (ACU10).

When the idea of BSC came to us [academic staff], no one has had any knowledge about it. Then they [the university management] talked about having measurable plans and performances management. Honestly speaking no one disagreed about having good plans and effective performances, but the problem was on the applicability of such tools in university context. Even though we took some refresher trainings, we found it hard to meaningfully develop our plan based on BSC. The basic idea behind this new planning and measuring tool is that everything should be measured. However, in practice we work on knowledge production and dissemination, which is difficult to precisely measure (ACU6).

Moreover, some informants indicated that the responsive capacity of the BAUs was also affected by the low level of readiness of the university to provide important resources that facilitate effective implementation processes.

For us [academia] it is not only about lacking the experience and the will to implement BSC in our unit, but it is also about lack of the necessary data to design our plans and measure performances. For instance, customer satisfaction is one of the four major perspectives of BSC that we are obliged to focus on. To increase the satisfaction of your customers by some per cent, you need to know and have a baseline data that serve you as a benchmark to set your goals. Unfortunately, you don't get such data in our university, let alone at our college. Therefore, we just randomly chose big numbers without any justifications. I think our leaders also happy when they see such big numbers. However, deep inside in our heart we know that these numbers we set are just meaningless. They are only there just to avoid a direct confrontation with our leaders and to get their positive views (ACU3).

As per the rules of ITQAD, BAUs were responsible for cascading down and implementing BSC in their department, team and individual levels. Moreover, BAUs were expected to offer basic training to the teams and individuals in their respective units. The cost of the training and workshops would be borne by the respective academic units (ITQAD, 2014). However, informants argued that "BAUs are in no position to organise and provide such training for its teams and members" (ACU2). On one hand, "colleges do not have the expertise to offer such kinds of trainings to their members" (ACU11), and on the other hand, "their financial capacity and commitment to organise and provide such training are highly limited" (ACU7). This showed that despite all these problems, BAUs conformed with the pressures of the university designing the college-level BSC plan. However, it was indicated that BAUs failed at cascading down the college-level BSC plan to their counterpart academic units. Informants further noted that departments and course teams pretend as if they designed their plans following the requirements of BSC.

The ITQAD sent [university level] BSC plan to us [BAUs], and clearly ordered us to develop our plan based on the centrally developed BSC plan, and then to cascade it down to the department, team and individual levels. As I said it reportedly, the academic community think that it was a wrong decision adopting business values to knowledge institutions. Despite the reservations or resistances we had on the relevance of the

tool to our context, the university management did not take our concerns seriously. We were told like rules are rules. Therefore, as we are accountable to the university management, under all these limitations, we managed to develop a college level BSC plan. However, we could not cascade it down to the department, teams and individual levels because of the relentless resistance of the academia and the difficulties we faced in properly contextualising the ethos of BSC to the department, teams and individual levels (ACU1).

When informants were asked about the possible reasons for BAUs to comply with the new rules and requirements even though the requirements were believed to be incompatible with the values and norms of BAUs, they mentioned two possible reasons. ACU8 commented:

Colleges do not have such power to reject or modify orders from the university management. The normal practice is that what the university management decides should be implemented regardless of its relevance and benefit. Unless we [academic staff] do that it may have legal repercussions. Therefore, we always try to avoid unnecessary conflict with the powerful people by just simply accepting [the new rules] (ACU8).

Second, ACU12 also noted:

Apart from the fear the academic units have to avoid any conflicts with the leadership of the university, failing to accept any direction or rules would be reflected on the budget of the academic units. This means one of the criteria of budget allocation to BAUs is based on the performance they show in accomplishing their objectives and tasks. In other words, the willingness and ability of colleges to accomplish any rules, reforms, new programs, affect the amount of the budget they get from the university. Therefore, whether we [BAUs] like it or not, we try to adopt or act as if we adopted any pressures that come from the university management and the government (ACU12).

This shows that the coercive pressures of the university management forced the BAUs to conform with the requirements of the new institutional rules. However, the BAUs did this by symbolically complying with the pressures without structurally integrating them with the values, norms and practices of their academic units.

6.2.6 Diversification of funding

As was discussed in Chapter 5, the government allocated budgets to public universities in block-grant form. Informants also indicated that the management of MU allocated the budget to the BAUs based on a block-grant system, but with some clearly-specified indicators, such as the number of students BAUs have, the number of academic and non-academic staff, numbers of programs, the type of programs (i.e., laboratory, field work, etc., oriented departments), facility gaps, past performances and the number of research projects etc. However, it was indicated that “as the amount of budget allocated to BAUs was only limited to some basic activities, the capacity of BAUs to carry out their research and community services was highly affected” (ACU2). Therefore, as part of the decentralised management process, and as a move to reduce the dependency of MU and

BAUs on government funding, the university management introduced several funding diversification strategies (ACU1 & ACU3). Informants reported that BAUs were also told to diversify their funding sources to ease the burden of dependency they have with the university management. As a result, ACU10 commented “following the implementation of BMTs in MU, BAUs employed various strategies for getting additional financial sources to fill the gaps observed in their research and community service endeavours” (ACU10).

All informants revealed that apart from the usual extension and summer programs, which many BAUs have been actively involved with since their establishment, the BAUs tried to acquire research funding from national (e.g., Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Technology) and international funders, form collaborations with international partner universities, engage in consultancy services and provide short and long term training for local governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Most informants, however, admitted that in practice the capacity and capability of BAUs to generate more funding to effectively and meaningfully finance their research and community projects failed to reach at the desired level. Informants identified three major reasons that deterred the ability of the BAUs to perform below the expectations. The first reason was related to the stringent rules of the university and the capacity of the BAUs to deal with such complex bureaucracies.

In principle we are free to find external funding for various research projects we set. However, in practice, this process was too much complicated. The financial regulations of the university have remained too bureaucratic especially for research projects that are funded by external entities despite the reform process. As a result, most of the BAUs, who have been actively involved in developing research projects and finding the funding, were discouraged by the financial regulations of the university. For instance, at my college, when my colleagues and I got some funding from outside, the money directly went to the university account. However, the process of withdrawing money from the university's account for the research purpose usually took us more time than the time we spent finding the funding. I would say the old habits of the university on financial matters is affecting our performance (ACU5).

The second factor was associated with the lack of systematic skill and experience of the BAUs and their members in developing relevant research projects to attract funding organisations. One informant commented:

We [the academic staff] know there are handfulls of funding organisations and international universities that provide us money for our research and community service activities. However, as many of us do not have the experiences to produce such quality research proposals and projects that meet the requirements and needs of the funding organisations, most of the research projects we have identified failed to get external funding. As a result, we have always been forced to rely on mainly on university funding, which is very insignificant to carry out meaningful researches (ACU 8).

The second factor was more related to the mismatch between the priorities of the BAUs of the university and the funding organisations. Talking about this issue ACU9 said:

Normally, we [academia] identify research problems based on our analysis. After that, we develop research proposals for getting the possible external funding. However, in practice most of the funding organisations come up with their own interests and priorities, which at times totally contradict with the central values, beliefs and priorities of the university and the academic units, as preconditions to get the research money. I remembered such situations created some confusions and frustrations in the academic community (ACU6).

The informants on the whole demonstrated the importance of having diversified funding sources for BAUs; however, they were concerned about the consequences of the preconditions associated with the funding. They, therefore, argued that the BAUs had failed to keep the right balance between the vision and mission of the university and the demands of the funding organisations.

Now days it is common to see research projects that are not the priorities of some colleges. This means some research projects in some colleges were simply designed to fit the needs of some funding agencies. I can see two problems here. First, as university and college we don't have clear research policy that guides the way colleges should approach their research projects with funding organisations and even if we have it, many of us don't know it. It may be shelved somewhere else at the top [university management offices]. Second, as the university and the academic units have poor financial capacities, we are very weak to influence the partners and funding organisations (ACU2).

Apart from research initiatives taken by colleges, some researchers have been involved in different research projects by themselves. However, such individual based research projects are fragmented in their very nature and largely out of focus with a little contribution to the mission and vision of the university. Some researchers work where the money is without adding any values to the performance of the BAUs (ACU11).

These results suggest that BAUs have the power to diversify their funding sources to lessen their dependency on the university management, and to carry out relevant research projects and community service based on their plans. However, the process of funding diversification was affected by internal and external challenges. In other words, despite the fact that the BAUs proactively worked to diversify their funding sources, their efforts were hampered by both internal and external factors.

6.3 Summary of the perceptions and responses of BAUs

All informants from the BAUs reported some changes in their institutional environments, and shared similar views about the cause, constituents, content, control and context of the new institutional environment. Even though some informants believed that there were positive changes in MU's BAUs after the implementation of the BMTs, most informants conceded that the changes are more of structural than functional. The changes (i.e., structural or functional) that have attracted the attention of informants and discussed here in detail were largely related to the reorganisation of the core missions of the BAUs, the

new decentralised management system and planning and measurement system, and the establishment of quality assurance units both at the university and BAU levels.

All informants underscored that the adoption of the BMTs by MU and its BAUs has been influenced by some important factors, such as the justification given for pressuring the university, the nature of the pressures and the context within which the pressures were exerted. In other words, the rationale and the perceived relevance of the BMTs to MU's BAUs' contexts have played major roles in the efforts BAUs have made to structurally integrate the reform tools with the core values, norms and practices of their academic units. All informants thus agreed that despite the fact that MU's management body has acknowledged the poor performance of the university, and the need for comprehensive reforms has been on the agenda of the university for a long time, the adoption of BMTs in the university was dictated by the motives of the government. This means both reform tools were imposed by the government, which has been pushed by national social, economic and political agendas and the influence of international organisations, such as the WB and IMF, irrespective of the university's needs or their relevance to the university. As a result, most informants believed that as far as the university had the need and capacity for reforming itself, MU should have been left to reform its process and structures with reform tools that fit the nature and purpose of knowledge-producing institutions.

The relevance of BMTs to the university context was the central theme in most of the discussions as it was perceived as having decisive consequences on the institutionalisation process. Informants viewed the relevance of the reform tools in terms of the contents or nature of the BMTs and their relation to the context, values and beliefs of the BAUs. Even though a few informants viewed BMTs as scientific management tools that can be adapted in HEI settings if the necessary conditions are fulfilled, the majority of the informants conceded the idea that BMTs are alien to the university's values, norms and beliefs, and they affirmed the perception that adopting BMTs would bring more harm than sustainable solutions to the university in general and the BAUs in particular. They argued that unlike the business sector, whose processes are linear and whose fundamental principles are producing and distributing measureable products to make profits, universities work solely on non-linear processes, and knowledge creation, dissemination and advancing scientific thinking are less favourable for detailed measurement and radical change. As a result, informants assert that the over-emphasis placed on measurable activities has forced them to focus on less important work processes and easily measurable activities instead of the more complex but important core process in their BAUs.

The major forces behind the reform tools and the means of pressure these entities have used to force the university and its BAUs adopt BMTs are also the focal points of the discussions with informants. All informants unanimously agreed that the government, which is the sole funder of Ethiopian public HEIs, is behind all the reform tools that have been implemented in the university. The MoE has set up all the expectations and requirements for the reform tools, and has remained influential in keeping the university

focused on implementing and institutionalising the BMTs. As a result, informants believed that the university's management has not had the power to reject or modify the government initiated-reforms, but rather was forced to quickly adopt the reform tools in all parts of the university.

All informants shared the view that as the government is the major force behind these BMTs, it has used both explicit and implicit coercive processes to make sure the reform tools are adopted accordingly. All informants indicated that coercive rules constituted the primary means of control over all the reform tools, and any deviations from the prescriptions of the government would likely bring negative effects on the legitimacy of the university and its leadership. However, most informants have been surprised when the university management used more coercive rules instead of normative approaches to institutionalise the BMTs in the BAUs of the university.

The responses of the BAUs were analysed based on the nature of the responses, the strategies used, and the levels of structural integration with the existing practices, activities and values of the BAUs. In this regard, most of the informants had similar views about the strategies the university used to instil the values of the reform tools and the BAUs' responses and strategies for adopting the reform tools. In most cases, informants indicated that BAUs conformed to the pressures and requirements set by the university management. Most informants believed that BAUs conformed to the pressures and requirements of the university management because the pressures are largely accompanied by strong coercive processes. As a result, in most cases symbolic compliance strategies with institutional rules and requirements or strategic responses of acquiescence are also observed.

After the taskforces finalised the roadmap of implementation and they were accepted by the university management, providing various training opportunities and workshops for the university community was believed to be important by both the university management and the BAUs as tools for effective institutionalisation of the BMTs. Informants indicated that the need for providing comprehensive training had been chosen by the BAUs as the first step of implementation for two reasons. First, they selected that strategy as a way to curb the perceived stiff resistance of the faculty, and to create university-wide consensus on the urgency of reforming the BAUs by adopting the BMTs. Second, they decided to do that to guarantee sustainable change, which is generally embraced by academia, by using normative rules. The efforts that have been made by BAUs to use training and workshops as tools for creating communal understandings notwithstanding, most of the informants indicated that the training given both at the university and the BAU levels were ill-organised and failed to create mutual understandings inside the university community in general, and the academic staff in particular. They believed that the training and workshops both lacked continuity and were largely unrelated to the university context. For instance, informants reported that the university management and BAUs' leaders had hired external consultants to provide training to the academic staff; however, such endeavours failed to achieve their targets. Informants argued that the external consultants had no real knowledge or

understanding about the specific nature of universities and the core processes that they rely on. As a result, most informants shared the view that the training and workshops were just simple strategies for gaining the recognition of the university leaders and the government rather than systematically-designed strategies for galvanising the academic community for the effective institutionalisation of the reform tools.

In terms of the reorganisation of their core missions, BAUs used mixed strategies for the process of adopting the reform tools. On one hand, BAUs conformed with the requirements set by the university management to restructure their core processes at the department and team levels. Under the recommendation of the university management, the BAUs set up new team structures below the department level, and courses were regrouped by specialisation. That means teachers were allocated to different course and research teams based on their areas of specialisation so as to encourage team spirit and integrate teaching and research activities. These teams have their own leaders who can represent the teams in DC meetings. On the other hand, in reality the BAUs only symbolically complied with the design of new team structures and its subsequent elements as the teams largely remained inoperative. The expected integration of teaching and research, and teamwork, was rarely practiced. Most informants thus noted that the team structure mostly exists only in name, and many of the activities of the departments continued to be done according to the old practices.

The decentralised management system, which is largely typified by the empowerment of the BAUs, is noted to be the biggest change in the institutional environment. Despite some differences of opinion on the processes and results of empowering BAUs, most informants conceded the view that BAUs were relatively more autonomous than they had been before the new reform tools were adopted. In this context, the BAUs used the strategy of compliance with the requirements and rules of the decentralisation process of human, financial and physical resources that were recommended by the university management. Informants reported that the BAUs are in a position to spend their budgets on their priorities without the direct interference of the university management, and they could recruit the desired human resources from the labour market following the rules and regulations of the university. However, the financial decentralisation has not reached departments and teams yet. The promotion of academic staff up to the levels of lecturer and assistant professor, which had been in the hands of the top university management and which used to take far too long, are now left to departments and colleges respectively. Similarly, the opening and closing of academic programs are now totally under the control of the BAUs provided that they secured the funding to do so and followed the regulations set up by the legislation of the university.

However, informants noted that the BAUs employ a symbolic compliance strategy for adopting the rules related to empowerment to accomplish the objectives of academic processes. Despite the fact that the new reform tools granted full autonomy to the BAUs to restructure their academic core -processes based on systematic studies, in practice major

academic reforms that are part of the BMTs, such as modularisation and continuous assessment, have been directly sent from the MoE as obligatory tools to be adopted. As a result, regardless of the benefits these (i.e., modularisation and continuous assessment) would have provided to BAUs, the university management automatically incorporated them as parts of the major reform tools. Informants thus demonstrated that the BAUs mostly complied only symbolically with modularisation and its subsequent elements. For example, informants argued that unlike the principles of modularisation which focused on identifying and developing students' competencies and constructive alignment, in its present form, modularisation in BAUs is nothing more than a collection of previously-independent courses put together based on their similarities. Moreover, informants indicated that the BAUs at MU act as if the curriculum was modular, while the practices are still the same as they were in the conventional arrangement, and are largely characterised by their teacher-centred approach. If there is a difference at all from the previous arrangement, it is the introduction of block teaching and the increase in the number and type of continuous assessments.

The use of BSC, which is widely known as a planning and measuring tool and is common to business sectors, was at the centre of the new institutional environment for the BAUs. The university-level plan, which was prepared based on BSC, was cascaded to the BAUs to use as a basic frame of reference. As a result, colleges developed their plans using the four perspectives of BSC. However, it was noted that the BAUs failed to cascade the college-level plan to their respective department, team and individual levels as was originally planned. Most informants argued that this was largely because of the strong resistance of the academic staff and the lack of know-how among the BAUs' leaders on how to use BSC as a planning and measuring tool for the core missions of the university. Most informants said that the principles of BSC contradicted the core processes, values and beliefs of the BAUs. However, as the BMTs are obligatory, the BAUs used mix of compliance and symbolic compliance strategies. First, colleges complied with the rules and requirements to produce college-level BSC plans based on the university-level plan. However, the BAUs only symbolically complied with the requirements to further cascade down the college-level BSC plan for the department, unit and individual levels. In other words, BSC was not structurally integrated with the works, values and norms of departments, teams and individuals.

The establishment of internal QAUs is one of the major changes that accompanied the new reform tools at the university. The reform process demanded that the BAUs established QAUs at the college, institute and school levels, and carried out quality assurance activities as part and parcel of their missions. In this regard, BAUs complied with the requirements by establishing quality assurance offices at the college level and set up some strategies to carry out quality assurance activities at all levels of their academic units. As a result, some course-auditing has been done at the academic unit level. However, most informants believed that quality assurance activities had not been adopted in the real sense of their

principles. Informants indicated that the implementation of quality assurance practices had been affected by lack of clarity in the instrument, and the interventions of the MoE in prescribing several complex quality indicators to the university and its BAUs. Therefore, the BAUs were forced to balance the requirements of the MoE in one hand and the strategies set out by the university and its BAUs in the other hand. They did so by symbolically complying with the pressures of the government and the university.

In relation to the diversification of funding for the BAUs, informants reported that much more has been said than done. On paper the BAUs were free to generate as much funding as possible, but in practice the process was too complicated which left academics frustrated. Three interrelated reasons were identified behind this: the stringent financial rules of the university, the lack of skill and experience of the academics to develop research projects that attract the interest of funders, and the mismatch between the priorities of the BAUs and funding organisations. As a result, as the BAUs worked with meagre resources, and they did not have many alternatives, but to complying with the rules and requirements of the funding entities or institutions even if the requirements went against the BAUs' priorities, beliefs and norms. Moreover, as the BAUs failed to develop a comprehensive strategy for diversifying their funding sources, the academics tried to grab every opportunity they got to finance their research projects even if their research was disconnected from the BAUs' normal operating procedures, structures and activities.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the organisational responses of MU and its BAUs to the changing institutional environment and the introduction of BMTs. It also sought to understand how the perceptions held at various levels of the university affected the adoption processes of BMTs. In general, it focused on examining the interaction between the institutional environment and the institutional context, and how they shaped the responses of the university and its BAUs to BMT-related pressures, expectations and requirements. This was a single case study which relied on semi-structured interviews with key informants, such as the top university management body of MU, reform experts, the BAUs' deans, department heads and teachers, and documents pertaining to the reform process as sources of empirical evidence. This analysis was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Mekelle University and its basic academic units perceive the pressures and requirements of adopting business management tools and how these perceptions affect the adoption process?
2. How do Mekelle University and its basic academic units respond to the pressures and requirements of business management tools?
3. What are the main challenges of adopting the business management tools in Mekelle University and its basic academic units?

This study addressed these three questions by using the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories (discussed in Chapter 2). The first question addressed the opinions, evaluations and judgments of practitioners at MU and its BAUs concerning their new institutional environment, and how these views created a new meaning system in the university to which they had to respond. As discussed in Chapter 2, institutional environment was conceptualised in this study as the constellation of BMT-related pressures, requirements and expectations from the external environment. Following the works of Oliver (1991), opinions related to why MU and its academic units were pressured to adopt these BMTs (cause); who was pressuring the university to adopt the BMTs (constituents); what was the university expected to do (content); by what means the pressures were exerted (control); and the environmental conditions of the university within which the pressures were exerted (context) were the foci of the first research question.

In addition to this, as indicated in Chapter 2, both resource dependence and neo-institutional theories predict that the perceptions of organisational units towards their institutional environment will in one way or another affect the new meaning system in

the organisation and their capacities to respond to the institutional rules (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Hall, 1999). Therefore, this first question also addressed how the adoption processes of BMTs were affected by the perceptions held at various levels of the university with regard to the nature and relevance of the institutional environment and the perceived possible opportunities and constraints associated with the BMTs.

The second question addressed four interrelated issues, namely the nature of the responses (MU, 2008), the response strategies used (Oliver, 1991), the level of structural integration at all levels of the university (Dass & Parker, 1996 in Siegel, 2006), and the extent of institutionalisation (Scott, 1995) of the new programmes and interventions. The natures of the responses were analysed in terms of the strategic areas identified by the university that needed radical organisational changes and the types of interventions and programmes adopted by MU and its BAUs. It was revealed that MU responded by identifying new core and sub-processes, creating new organisational structures, introducing a decentralised management system, establishing an internal quality assurance system, designing a modular curriculum and introducing a new measuring and planning system, among others. These response strategies were examined in terms of the contingent responses the university and academic units employed to respond to pressures, demands and expectations from the external environment.

The discussion was made based on Oliver (1991), who demonstrated the fact that organisations that confront external pressures may employ strategic responses that range from passive conformity to proactive manipulation. Therefore, according to Oliver (1991), organisations' response strategies may include acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance and manipulation. The response of MU and its BAUs to the adoption of BMTs was also analysed by the level of structural integration with the existing organisational practices, values, norms and activities that was achieved (Dass & Parker, 1996 in Siegel, 2006). In this context, the responses of MU and its BAUs could be episodic, programmatic or process-oriented (see discussion in Chapter 2). Last but not least, the institutionalisation process was analysed by referring to the regulative, normative, or cognitive processes the government and the university chose to adopt the reform tools to the university and its BAUs.

The third research question focused more on examining the interaction between the organisational context, such as the values, beliefs, practices, structures and complexity of the university and its academic units (see Chapter 2), and the relevance of the pressures from the institutional environment. In the process of institutionalising any sort of organisational innovation (i.e., the adoption of BMTs), apart from the particular characteristics of universities, two important elements were taken into consideration, profitability and compatibility of the reform tools (Levin, 1980). According to Levin, profitability refers to the various perceptions the adopters (i.e., the organisation and its members) have towards the benefits they would get by adopting the organisational innovation. In this context, benefit could be interpreted as both intangible (security, prestige, peer approval, growth

etc.) and tangible (measured by monetary gains and career development and so forth). Both intangible and tangible benefits encourage an organisation to choose or maintain an innovation. Moreover, compatibility particularly refers to the extent to which the nature of the organisation is related to the values, norms and goals of the new innovation (Levin, 1980). This means that the compatibility of the new organisational innovation with the organisational culture determines the extent of resistance within an organisation to adopting the new innovation (Cai et al., 2015).

In this chapter, the major findings concerning the perceptions of the university as an organisational entity and BAUs to BMTs' pressures and requirements, the nature of the responses, the response strategies, the level of structural integration, and the major challenges of adopting the BMTs are discussed. Finally yet importantly, the implications and contributions of the study, suggestions for future research and limitations of the study are also discussed.

7.1 Summary of the major findings

This study has shown that there were notable negative perceptions about the relevance of BMTs to the university context within MU and its BAUs. Three important factors were identified as possible sources of these negative perceptions by the members of the university towards the BMTs. These were the mismatch between the nature of the BMTs and the basic characteristics of the university, the source of and approach to implementing the reform tools, and the means of institutionalising. Even though the reform tools were recognised as scientific management tools, their over-emphasis on efficiency and measurable performance and outputs were found to contradict the basic characteristics of the university, which is believed to solely work on producing and distributing knowledge. In relation to this, this study's results have shown that despite the fact that it has been felt that there is a need inside MU to transform the university by introducing self-initiated reforms, all the BMTs were initiated by the government (which was the sole source of funding for Ethiopian public HEIs) and were sent to the university as obligatory reform tools to be implemented at any cost. Moreover, the approaches taken to institutionalise the reform tools at all levels of the university were guided more by a coercive process than normative tools. These approaches, however, resulted in strong resistance on the part of the academic staff and failed to create any sense of ownership of the reform tools in the university and its academic units.

The study has also shown that MU has identified major intervention areas for adopting the BMTs. The intervention areas mainly targeted the identification of new work processes, restructuring the organisational structure of the university and its BAUs, and introducing new programmes and activities. In a bid to transform Mekelle University from a teaching university to a research university and to achieve academic and research excellence, MU identified teaching and research and community service as the core processes of the university. Accordingly, new structures were created to serve the new core missions of the

university. In this structure, the teaching function was organised under the vice president for academics, and research and community service, which were formerly also located under the vice president for academics, were moved under a new vice president for research and community service. Following the reorganisation of the core process, MU made visible changes to the organisational structure of the university at all levels. The new structure recognised the president of the university as the 'business owner' and chief executive of the university with strong powers to make strategic decisions with or without the help of other newly-established subsidiary units, such as the UC and MC.

The study also revealed that the new restructuring went beyond the academic unit level. In this sense, the former faculty-based structure was changed to a structure organised around colleges, institutes and schools. This resulted in a relative increase in the institutional autonomy of the academic units, especially in areas of financial, human and physical resources management. Moreover, the study results showed that unlike the former faculty-based structure, which took the department as the lowest academic unit level, the new structure added teams (i.e., course or teaching and research teams) located under departments as the smallest academic units, with the intention of integrating the teaching and research activities of the university. However, there was no strong evidence to support the assertion that the institutional autonomy of academic units, in terms of academic decisions, changed radically. In other words, evidence showed that the MoE was still interfering in the academic activities of the university and academic units by prescribing some programmes, such as a modularised curriculum and continuous assessments, without the consent of the university.

The study also found that, apart from the new structures, MU also established a new institutional transformation office that was mainly responsible for carrying out reforms in the university and suggested new intervention areas to the university leaders. Similarly, following the adoption of BPR, MU introduced an internal quality assurance system at the university and academic unit levels. However, results showed that the internal quality assurance system of the university failed to live up to expectations due to both internal and external constraints, including lack of experience on the part of university and BAU leaders, clear strategic direction, leadership commitment and the intervention of the HERQA by producing enormous and contradictory quality indicators to the university.

The study also showed that the adoption of BMTs did not bring the envisaged radical organisational change to the university and its academic units. Even though MU responded to the implementation of the reform tools by restructuring the work process and the organisational structure of the university and its academic units, and introduced several programmes at all levels of the university, evidence showed that the changes were more superficial than functional. Evidence shows that MU adopted the requirements of BMTs as it is without adapting to the university context.

Moreover, the study results showed that as the pressures from the external environment (i.e., the government) to adopt the BMTs were high, MU largely complied with these

pressures for the reasons of legitimacy and resource acquisition or survival to pursue its mission, beliefs and values. Similarly, evidence showed that as adoption of the reform tools were guided by a top-down approach and coercive rules, and coupled with the negative perceptions of the university community on the appropriateness of the BMTs to the university context, MU and its BAUs symbolically complied with most of the new programmes and activities introduced after the adoption of the reform tools. In other words, the new activities and programmes were not structurally integrated with the values, practices and policies of the university and its academic units. This meant the responses were of a more episodic nature, and were largely detached from the day-to-day activities of the university and its academic units. In this aspect, it can safely be concluded that it is easier to dedicate the structural changes in the university and its BAUs in response to the BMTs than it is to observe changes in the real activities, norms, values and cultures of the university and its BAUs.

The study also revealed that the process of adopting the BMTs was hampered by the perceived contradictory values of the reform tools and the university, lack of strategic leadership at all levels of the university, and interference of the government bodies. More interestingly, the study results showed that there was not ample evidence to support the assertion that disciplinary differences affected the responses of the academic units to the reform tools. The performance differences observed between academic units in responding to the BMTs were mainly related to the leadership quality and commitments inside the units, not due to any virtue of their disciplinary differences. This is attributable to the overdependence of MU's academic units on government funding. In addition to this, the results showed that MU and its BAUs adopted the BMTs largely to legitimise themselves by showing how responsive they are to the major phenomena in society.

7.2 Perceptions of the university management and the BAUs

According to resource dependence theory, the responses of an organisation to external pressures can be partly predicted by the availability of resources at its disposal and the dependency it has on other organisations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). However, apart from the stated objective resource dependencies and interdependencies, the way an organisation perceives its environment, how it acts control and avoid dependencies determines its response to external pressures (Gornitzka, 1999). This means the environment within which organisations live is not necessarily an objective reality, but also could be understood through the process of enactment, in the sense that how the environment of an organisation is defined depends on how it is perceived and interpreted (Gornitzka, 1999).

The adoption of BMTs at MU are part of the government's national initiative under which public HEIs in Ethiopia have to implement BMTs as obligatory reform tools. As a result, results of this study show that the adoption processes of BMTs at MU and its BAUs are affected by the perceived contradictions between the nature and needs of the

institutional context and the requirements of the external environment. As discussed in Chapter 2, the understandings and views of members of various organisational units partly determined the response of those units to the new institutional environment, because change in the governance structure of the university is likely to disrupt old traditions, and these changes might also be perceived and interpreted differently by members of the university. Therefore, the institutional environment where various views and opinions are expressed can be understood in terms of five interrelated issues: cause, constituents, content, context and control. The identification of these five institutional arrangements could also show the convergence aspect of the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories (Oliver, 1991).

7.2.1 Cause and Constituents

Ethiopian higher education policy area has changed significantly since the 1990s (Saint, 2004; Yizengaw, 2003). At the forefront of the discussions are the major reasons behind the reform tools and the constituents that pressure the university to adopt the reform tools. Despite the fact that MU has a mandate to bring solutions to its own organisational problems and was expected to do so, the university has no visible role in initiating the reform agenda, and its responsiveness to the BMT reform agenda is largely associated with the desire for survival and legitimacy. Informants in both groups (i.e., university management and the BAUs), identified two major factors as possible reasons that forced the government to reform public HEIs in Ethiopia by employing BMTs as radical organisational reform tools. These were associated with changes in the political and economic ideologies of the government and the influence of global forces.

As discussed in Chapter 4, after the fall of the military government in 1991, the past two decades and more saw comprehensive political, economic and social changes in Ethiopia. In this period, which was characterised by massive waves of reforms and a new breed of civil servants, the need for public sector efficiency, great institutional capacity and wider democratisation became the prime issues of the incumbent government (Mengesha & Common, 2007). Moreover, some evidence showed that international organisations such as the World Bank had a strong role in forcing the government to carry out wide-ranging structural reforms in both the public and private sectors. The case in point is the SAP that focused on transforming the country's command economy to a market economy.

Therefore, due to the above major reasons and forces that underlie the BMTs, MU and its BAUs have been suffering from constant waves of pressure to balance the requirements of the government as part of its effort to ensure legitimacy and secure critical resources for its survival, and to maintain and uphold the fundamental values and beliefs of the academic community. Two points are worth considering here. On one hand, studies show that the level of dependence an implementing organisation has with its constituents, either for legitimacy or economic reasons, determines the effectiveness of the policy tools (Oliver,

1991; Gorntizka, 1999). On the other hand, the extent to which the values of the new reform tools are considered appropriate or profitable for the implementing organisation also determines the type(s) of response(s) and the success of the reform tools (Levine, 1980). MU, as part of the global community of knowledge-producing institutions, tried to maintain its academic standards and traditions.

However, the pressures from the external environment, especially from the government, to adopt business oriented values, such as effectiveness and efficiency, highly influenced MU and its BAUs' responses to these pressures. Some scholars argue that such external pressures from business values are inclined to circumvent academic units' autonomy (Levin, 2006; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 2007), which is widely considered the hallmark of academia (Brint, 1994). To sum up, despite the belief that a university and its professionals always want to be in a position to exercise and control the conditions and definition of their work (Scott, 1995), the adoption of BMTs by MU and its BAUs was largely dictated by legitimacy and economic viability concerns, as MU and its BAUs were highly dependent on government regulations and funding. However, the way forward should be to let the university and its BAUs discover their own models of management which are compatible with academic values (Hölttä, 1995).

7.2.2 Content and context

In this section, two aspects of the organisational arrangement are worth considering. These are the requirements and expectations of the new institutional environment, and the nature of the institutional context (i.e., the particular characteristics of the university and its BAUs), where many contradictions were observed, and which most of the informants in this study dubbed as the main reason for much of the resistance to BMTs at MU and its BAUs occurring during the adoption process. The expectations and requirements of the new institutional environment can be understood through both global developments and national contexts (see Section 7.2.1). The change in the political and socio-economic environments of HEIs, such as the quests for massification, decentralisation, accountability, and reduced or increased budget constraints (Bryson, 2004), have forced universities to adopt organisational strategies, structures, technologies, management tools, and values that were originally considered part of the business sector (Aucion, 1990; Deem, 1998). Scholars in the field of higher education use various terms to refer to the ever-growing intrusion of the rhetoric and management practices of the business sector into universities, but they seem to agree on the basic characteristics of the business values. In general, in relation to business management practices, the nature of institutional pressures to which universities have been asked to submit are in one way or another related to a focus on efficiency, effectiveness and excellence (Deem, 1998), the quest for explicit standards of performance and measurement (Hood, 1995), the inclination to the disproportionate growth of administration (Hackett, 1990), and demands for more accountability (Trow, 1994).

MU, as part of the move from the traditional collegial governance approach to a more managerial approach, adopted various BMTs, including BPR and BSC, over the past seven years. As explained in Chapters 5 and 6, BMTs at MU focused on fundamentally changing the current business processes, jobs and structures, and management and measurement system, and introducing new values and beliefs that aim to increase quality and productivity by focusing on customer satisfaction and increased competitiveness within the dynamically changing global environment (MU, 2009). In the context of BPR, the government expected MU “to [start] all over, starting from the scratch, [in the sense that] old job titles and old organisational arrangements, such as departments, divisions, groups, and so on cease to matter” (Hammer & Champy, 1993, p. 2-3). This meant MU was expected to go beyond the traditional functional departments and focus instead on processes and activities that produce value for customers (Birnbaum, 2001). As a result, BPR at MU mainly focused on questioning, challenging, evaluating and redesigning every element of the university’s operational processes (MU, 2009), and targeted radical improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed (Hammer & Champy, 1993). However, BPR is not designed to facilitate widespread changes in the structure of the university, but it does require radical changes in the processes (MU, 2009) that shape people’s attitudes and associated behaviours (Carnall, 1995; Carr, Hard, & Trahan, 1996).

Moreover, once the new organisational structure and processes are created through BPR, “establishing integrated performance management is one of the requirements of BPR for which BSC is found to be the right fit for the kind of change that is being practiced in the country” (Tilaye, 2010, p. 26). The assumption is that BSC is an appropriate tool for academic institutes that aspire to build the academic community’s management and leadership skills and encourages their creativity, tacit knowledge and initiative (MU, 2009b). It was also indicated that by adopting BSC, MU was required to align its organisational objectives with the national objectives, and to create a shared vision and strategic planning (ITQAD, 2014). In addition to this, MU was expected to identify major strategic themes or performance areas that serve as pillars of excellence, such as academic excellence, research excellence, community service excellence, and dependable support services. Similarly, MU and its BAUs were forced to develop performance indicators or institutional perspectives, namely customer satisfaction, an internal perspective, a learning and growth perspective, and a financial perspective, which provided a framework for measuring its performance (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). It seemed that the motto behind adopting BSC at MU was inspired by the popular quote “what gets measured gets done”.

However, a closer look at the requirements of the BMTs and the nature of the university showed that their differences outweighed their similarities. The quest for fundamental and radical redesigning of business processes, efficiency and effectiveness, customer satisfaction, cost reduction, and performance management are highly criticised by the academia. Despite the BMTs seeming sound as they tend to argue, these interventions “have less resonance for

the governance process in higher education” (Kezar, 2005, p. 638). As a result, the common understanding of MU and its BAUs is that the values and practices of BMTs are not very relevant to the values, beliefs and practices of the university. First, for an institution like a university that is bound by templates; schema; and loosely-coupled, normatively embedded, underlying values and assumptions, bringing about radical changes is very unlikely (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Scott, 1995). Second, the adoption of BMTs at MU failed to recognise the differences in organisational structure and processes among academic units. Scholars argue that unlike business organisations, universities are loosely-coupled (Weick, 1976) which makes managerial coordination very difficult, because the interactions between academic units are very limited. In universities, controls are normally deliberated through the “routines and culture of the institution, the professional training and socialisation of the participants” (Birnbaum, 2001, p. 150).

Third, BPR and BSC emphasise institutional missions over disciplinary values and goals to achieve their goals (Birnbaum, 2001). However, such focus on institutional missions proved to contradict the nature of academic units that are always loyal and committed to their disciplinary affiliations rather than to organisational goals (Birnbaum, 2001). In addition to this, the adoption of BMTs at MU failed to recognise the fact that universities have wide, and at times fluid, goals, employ complex technologies to conduct their teaching and research, and are largely characterised by difficult to measure products; therefore, the over-emphasis of efficiency and effectiveness as the prime objectives of the reform tools was not appropriate for the university context.

7.2.3 Control

As the discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated, the institutionalisation processes for the new institutional environment pressures, requirements and expectations were characterised by more coercive processes instead of normative and cognitive processes. It is indicated that control is one of the institutional factors by which universities are pressured or expected to conform to institutional environment norms (Oliver, 1991). This study has shown that coercive rules were found to be a primary tool of control for the government to pressuring the university to adopt the reform tools, and surprisingly MU’s management body also followed a very similar approach to force the BAUs to implement BMTs in their units. In this context, coercion denoted the use of the forces of law, such as legislative and government mandates, and it is also explained in terms of administrative directives, such as a university-wide mandate that involves incentives for conformity and sanctions for not complying with the stated requirements (Siegel, 2003). However, normative processes usually emanate from professional associations and related organisations, and memetic processes that are undertaken to address uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), had significantly smaller roles in forcing MU and its BAUs to adopt the reform tools.

The discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 revealed that there have been many changes in the policy environment of the Ethiopian higher education system over the past two decades. It has been argued that governments' imposed regulatory environments are characterised by coercive processes that create external pressures for conformity or compliance with new institutional requirements (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). This is evidenced in MU's case where the government became the major, if not the only, force behind all of the reform initiatives that were implemented in the public universities of Ethiopia, and used mainly coercive approaches to instil BMTs as major tools of organisational change. The coercive pressures of the government in the adoption process of BMTs are typified by its insistent imposition of formal and informal processes, and explicit and implicit rules that prescribe acceptable organisational responses (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). The use of formal rules as coercive processes was indicated by the multiple policy documents and guidelines produced by the MoE and MSC that directly demanded and dictated the BMTs' implementation processes for the university. But in informal processes mostly implicit pressures are exhibited, for example, during interactions such as the budgeting process. In general, the adoption of the BMTs in MU largely failed to embrace the academic culture and the views of the academic community. However, it is argued that "without fully engaged and enthused academic community, building academic excellence, a strong culture of scholarship and professional commitment may remain elusive" (Teferra, 2014, p. 3).

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, one of the main tools that the government used to influence public universities in Ethiopia was the budgeting instruments it adapted. Ethiopian public universities are funded by the federal government through a block-grant system based on strategic plan agreements (HEP, No. 650/2009, article, 62) and negotiations. Even though the block-grant budgeting system does not clearly specify the performance improvements of universities as a criterion for budgeting (Kahsay, 2012), informants indicated that universities who have shown good improvements in all aspects in general (at least in the eyes of the government), and in implementing government-initiated reforms in particular, are more likely to have influence or gain favour during the budget negotiation processes. Like any other public university in the country, MU is almost totally dependent on government funding to carry out its missions and goals. The role of other funding sources is still quite insignificant despite showing some improvements in the recent years. Therefore, it seemed evident that the government was implicitly using the funding as a bargaining chip to influence and facilitate the adoption of the reform tools.

However, some informants indicated that as a move to loosen the financial dependency of the university on the government, MU has tried to diversify its funding sources over the past few years. Apart from the traditional summer and extension programmes, where self-paying students register, the university has tried to open some revenue-generating enterprises and activities, such as dairy farming, consultancy services, working with international universities and opening a university and industry linkage office. However, as many of the initiatives have only started recently, it can be said that the university is nowhere near reaching the capacity to solve the over-dependency on government funding.

The other implicit method the government uses to pressure universities to adopt BMTs is to highly politicise the reform agendas and tools. The overall reform processes are largely more influenced by national and international phenomena than the organisational context of HEIs. The Ethiopian government has been keen to transform the social, economic and political atmosphere of the country as part of the abrupt shift from a command economy (1974-01991) to a more market-based and free economy (1991 to present). However, evidence showed that the government had less tolerance for accommodating any deviant moves from any public sector entities that in one way or another slowed or deterred the reform process. MU, as one of the public institutions of Ethiopia, cannot escape from any coercive measures if it tries to avoid and/or slow down the reform process. Some informants noted that rejecting and/or modifying reforms have not been options for the university management, as such actions would have political repercussions. This shows that the government's decision to introduce BMTs was more motivated by political and economic motives than the actual context of universities, and thus the means of controlling the reform process is largely dictated by economic and political sanctions. As a result, the later process of organisational adaptation is a response to guarantee social legitimacy (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983).

7.3 Responses of the university and its BAUs

7.3.1 Nature of the response

The responses of MU and its BAUs were interpreted based on four interrelated dimensions, namely the nature of the response, the response strategies used, their levels of structural integration with the existing values, norms, practices, and policies of the university and its BAUs and the institutionalisation process of the reform tools. As discussed in Chapter 2 and also in this chapter, the nature of the response refers to the activities, initiatives, interventions and programmes undertaken by MU and its BAUs when confronted with the pressures, expectations and requirements (Siegel, 2006) related to the BMTs. In this context, the organisational responses of MU and its BAUs, which emphasised effectiveness and efficiency, were directed towards creating new organisational structures, reengineering the core and sub-processes of the university, introducing a decentralised management system, establishing internal quality assurance units at both the university and BAU levels, introducing a modularised curriculum, and implementing a new planning and measurement system (MU, 2009).

In contrast to the ideal concept of universities traditionally being governed by the values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and collective professionalism (Clark, 1983), the adoption of BMTs at MU can be understood as a shift from a collegial model of governance to a managerial model, which is mainly led by values commonly found in the private sector (Aucoin, 1990; Deem, 1998) and dictated by market-like coordination

(Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). As a result, as part of the radical organisational change initiative, new terms like efficiency, effectiveness, customer service, transparency and accountability suddenly became fashionable words for MU and its BAUs. In general, the whole processes of reforming MU was aimed at optimising efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery and fundamentally changing the core and sub-work processes of the university and its BAUs (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008).

The results of the study showed that unlike the purpose of BPR, which primarily focuses on radically restructuring the processes of an organisation, not on the organisation's structure (Hammer & Champy, 1994), MU tried to reform both the structure and the processes of the university simultaneously. Of course, the university management started by identifying the core and sub-processes that needed radical restructuring, followed by creating a new organisational structure (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008). When the pressure from the government to implement the BMTs increased, the university management identified key performance areas, such as excellence in academics, research and community service, and customer-focused service excellence that in turn served as the basis for the identification of new core and sub-processes. This initially seemed to imply that the university management targeted three core processes of the university, namely academics, research, and community service. However, due to the perceived similarity of their work processes, latter two were treated and grouped together as one RCS core process.

The academic core process refers to excellence in teaching and learning as expressed in terms of applying learner-centred instruction, designing curricula that accentuate students' active participation in their learning, and developing assessments that lead to students' mastery of the learning outcomes (MU, 2013). In addition to this, in a move to support the academic core processes, MU introduced a modularised curriculum and continuous assessment system in all BAUs. The RCS core process refers to conducting high-quality and relevant research that effectively address socio-economic problems of the community and qualify to be published in peer-reviewed journals (MU, 2013).

The restructuring of the core processes of the university led to changes in the overall organisational structure of the university's and BAUs' governing bodies. The change covers setting up a new governing board as the supreme governing body of MU, redefining the power of the university president as chief executive officer of the university, restructuring the senate which is designated as the leading body of the university for academic matters, establishing a new MC and UC as special advisory bodies for the president on strategic issues that need collective leadership. The new structure also addresses the restructuring of the roles of the vice presidents. Following the identification of the core and sub-processes, unlike the former organisational structure that only had two vice presidents for academics (i.e., the three core processes all were under the VPA) and administrative, with these reforms MU established three vice presidential offices, namely VPA, VPRCS and VPSS (see Chapters 5 and 6). The separation of teaching and RCS as independent core processes and their location under two different vice presidents was done on the premise that the

vision of the university to become a full-fledged research university cannot be achieved without giving due emphasis to RCS (APRT, 2008; RCSPT, 2008).

Following the restructuring of the core processes and governing bodies of the university, as a response to the growing discontent of the academic community due to the lack of institutional autonomy (APRT, 2008), a more visible change was the decentralisation of power to the BAUs. This was epitomised by changing the former faculty-based structure to one based on colleges, institutes and schools. This was done by merging academic units that have similar work processes and disciplinary backgrounds, and by creating new academic units. At the time the data for this study was collected, MU had managed to establish seven colleges, eight institutes, and two schools across its five campus, all of which are led by deans or directors (MU, 2014). A highly visible change in the new structures of the BAUs is the creation of team structures below the department level. Three teams, namely teaching, research and community service, were established below the departments, making the teams the smallest academic units of the university (see Figure 8). This is done to integrate the core missions of the university and to insure excellence in all aspects (MU, 2010).

The study also showed that in a bid to transform the core missions of the university and its BAUs as part of the reform process, the university introduced an internal quality assurance system at both the university and academic unit levels, and implemented a modularised curriculum approach in all BAUs. However, similar to the reorganisation of the governing bodies of the university, the introduction of the quality assurance system and modularised curriculum were largely dictated by the HEP and by the decision of MoE respectively.

Last but not least, as part of BPR reform initiative, which demanded the establishment of an integrated performance management system, MU introduced BSC in all levels of the university as a planning, measurement and management tool in 2010. The results of this study showed that BSC, as one of the more powerful models for strategic management, is considered an important tool for aligning the organisational objectives of different levels of MU with national objectives. It is also considered as essential in creating shared vision and implementing strategic plans (ITQAD, 2014).

In general, evidence showed that the decision to introduce BSC at MU as a complement for BPR, was made on the assumption that the former performance management system relies heavily on traditional indicators, which are less related to performance, such as enrolment ratio, number of graduates, number of academic programmes, and number of teaching hours among others. However, BSC as an integrated management approach is believed to employ comprehensive performance indicators. As a result, MU's management body identified four performance areas—teaching excellence, research excellence, community service excellence and dependable support service—and four major perspectives or performance indicators—customer satisfaction, an internal perspective, a learning and growth perspective, and a financial perspective—that provided a framework for measuring MU's and its BAUs' performances (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). It was also clear that BSC

was chosen as a tool to implement the strategic plan of the university (ITQAD, 2014; MU, 2010b).

Moreover, the results of the study showed that MU has also tried to conduct benchmarking activities and has hired consultancies to facilitate the adoption of these reform tools in the university and its BAUs. Furthermore, training and workshops were also organised and provided as part of the institutionalisation process for the reform tools despite some concerns among the faculty about the quantity and quality of the trainings provided.

7.3.2 Response strategies

The study results showed that MU made extensive studies to analyse the situation of the university and produced study results that demanded comprehensive changes and improvements in many areas of the university few years before the implementation of the BMTs. However, in none of these earlier documents was the need for BMTs as tools for radical change indicated nor implied. This demonstrated that even though the need for change and reform were on the university's agenda, the adoption of BMTs as radical organisational change tools at MU was largely dictated by the interest of the government, which is the sole funder of the public HEIs of Ethiopia. The results of this study further showed that there was no evidence to support the claim that the adoption of BMTs brought a radical organisational change to the university or its academic units. Rather, the evidence showed that in many instances of the reform process MU and its BAUs employed compliance and symbolic compliance response strategies with the new institutional rules, requirements, pressures and expectations. In general, the strategic responses of acquiescence (Oliver, 1991) are largely observed in response to the adoption of the BMTs at MU.

Despite the fact that the compliance of MU in adopting BMTs as tools of radical organisational change was largely influenced by the strong pressures of the government, the university management's desire to look legitimate in the eye of the government and other strong stakeholders also plays important role in the adoption of the reform tools. This corroborates the position that the conformity of an organisation to institutional rules and requirements is affected by both coercive, normative and mimetic processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and compliance by pragmatic reasons or active agency of the organisation (Kondra & Hinings, 1998; Oliver, 1991). This means that organisations' strategies to comply with new institutional rules and requirements are not necessarily selected or undertaken only for issues of efficiency, but also for increasing their legitimacy, resources and capacity for survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and to protect the university's inside core (Diogo, Carvalho, & Amaral, 2015). This implies that the values, norms and requirements of the external environment significantly determined the adoption of BMTs by MU and its BAUs rather than the internal factors of the university. Therefore, it is important for the university to guarantee a normative match

between the pressures and requirements of the reform tools and the basic characteristics of the university (Pietilä, 2014).

However, the over-reliance of the government on coercive processes to force universities to adopt BMTs as antidotes for poor organisational performance was found to be counterproductive in some ways. This meant the high legal coercions and lower voluntary diffusion resulted in a high level of resistance among the academic staff with regard to adopting the BMTs. Therefore, to balance the tension between the requirements of the institutional rules and the needs of the university, MU and its BAUs at times used “disguising nonconformity” (Oliver, 1991, p. 154) by designing several structures and programmes on paper that were never made operatives, and they also attempted to buffer or protect some of their core processes from external regulation and control (see Oliver, 1991; Siegel, 2006). In other words, MU and its BAUs at times used mixed strategies to respond to the requirements, expectations and pressures of the new institutional environment.

However, conformity to institutional pressures was not only conditioned by coercive processes but also by mimetic and normative processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The process of adopting the BMTs at MU also saw the use of some mimetic process. It was mentioned by informants that both BPR and BSC are alien to MU and its BAUs, which largely functioned under a collegial governance model for years. Therefore, when push came to shove, the university management was not certain about how to tie together the requirements of the BMTs and the processes, values, norms and structures of the university. The university management thus decided to carry out benchmarking activities with local and international organisations and universities that had already implemented BMTs. The strategy of benchmarking, which is considered as memetic process, thus can be understood as a move to circumvent any risk related to the BMTs and increase the certainty of the outcomes of the implementation process. This memetic process, or risk-averting strategy, would increase the certainty of organisational outcome (Kondra & Hinings, 1998).

As discussed in Section 7.3.1, MU started by identifying the integrated core work processes of the university to ensure academic and RCS excellence. The restructuring of the core processes thus created organisational implications for the formation of new structures, jobs and positions (APRT, 2008) and in the emergence of new values, norms and practices in contrast to the values and norms of the BAUs. Structures were set up, new jobs and positions were designed to accomplish the objectives, and the academic staff was pressured to focus on efficiency, effectiveness and measurable products. Moreover, BAUs were required to realign their goals with the overall missions and goals of the university regardless of their disciplinary differences and foci. However, the majority of the informants noted that the changes were more structural than functional. In other words, the much-anticipated vision of becoming a research university and effectively integrating the RCS with the teaching core mission of the university failed to come to fruition. For example, the results of this study showed that the quality of research and productivity have not shown any significant improvement since the implementation of the BMTs, and

the newly-established offices (i.e., both the VPRCS role and various positions at the BAU level) failed to live up to expectations. Also, the newly-established teaching and research teams below the department level that were intended to integrate teaching and research were left in disarray. In short, the changes in names were not followed by substantive and meaningful changes as per the designed goals.

This situation can be interpreted into two ways. On one hand, the reform tools are external to the university, which are initiated and pushed by the government as obligatory reform tools. As a result, MU was forced to adopt the reform tools as a move to get the approval of the government and to ensure its survival. This condition is related with the argument that the survival of an institution is largely dictated by its ability to conform to external social legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). On the other hand, the over-emphasis on institutional mission at the expense of disciplinary differences, which was the typical feature of BPR (Penrod & Dolence, 1992) affected the institutionalisation process, and more importantly the over focus on efficiency, effectiveness and measurable products seemed to be contradictory to the values, norms and goals of the BAUs. As Levin (1980) points out, the more the new values, norms and practices are incompatible with an organisation's original values and norms, the stronger the resistance of the employees will be.

Right after the identification of new core and sub-processes, the university management began to restructure the governing bodies and BAUs of the university. However, evidence showed that the change in the organisational structure of the university was not entirely the result of the new reform tools as MU's management body tried to depict it. It was rather deliberately designed to fit in with the new higher education law of the country, to avoid any risk of conflict with the government. For example, the formation of the governing and advisory bodies of the university—the board of the university, the senate, appointment of the president and vice presidents, and the establishment of the UC and MC—were guided by the new HEP. This meant that the MU management body tried to carefully adapt the new structure to fit the HEP.

As was discussed in Chapter 4, the new HEP was ratified in September of 2009, but BPR was implemented few months after the ratification of the new proclamation. Some informants thus reported that the reform processes cannot be called radical changes because the central elements of the changes were dictated by the proclamation, not by the reengineering teams' study results. This is because MU, as part of the Ethiopian public higher education system, is totally dependent on government funding and regulations. This means any response of the university cannot significantly deviate from government laws and requirements, as that would have financial and legal repercussions. Therefore, as was mentioned before, the responses of the university and its BAUs regarding adjusts to bring MU into line with the principles of the new HEP can be interpreted as strategic choices and adaptive capabilities to guarantee a sufficient flow of resources to the university (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), and to gain external legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1992).

This study also showed that despite the changes in the structure of academic units, the processes of teaching, research and community service remained largely untouched. In other words, even though the BAUs conformed to the changes in structure, such as the formation of colleges, departments, teaching and research teams, and related sub-processes under the teaching, and the RCS core-processes, many of the core activities of the BAUs remained unchanged from the old practices. Despite the faculty's negative perceptions of the BMTs, they were not well informed about the new core and sub-processes and the way they were restructured. This means MU's management body failed to provide systematic training to improve the awareness of the academic community. As a result, a huge amount of resistance to almost all of the new initiatives and programmes that were associated with the BMTs was observed within the academic community.

Evidence showed that the resistance of the academia become more visible when the new processes were put into practice. Despite the changes in structures intended to transform the academic and RCS functions of the university and its BAUs, academics preferred to continue to follow the old system under the guise of adopting the new structures and processes. This corroborated the idea that organisations respond ceremonially to externally-driven pressures, and protect their core missions by separating the formal structures from their core work activities (Meyer & Rowan, 1992).

On the other hand, MU has come far in terms of empowering its BAUs to administer their human, financial and physical resources, which had been considered to be major obstacles in the former organisational arrangement. BAUs are now in a relatively better position to recruit and administer their human resources, to allocate their budget to their priorities and to purchase educational materials and facilities that help them achieve their goals. In this aspect, MU and its BAUs conform to the new requirements by reorganising the structures and positions.

Moreover, the institutional autonomy of BAUs is also analysed in terms of the power academic units possess to restructure their academic and RCS activities. In this context, the results of this study showed two contradictory patterns. On one hand, MU and its BAUs were given the autonomy to "develop and implement relevant curricula and research programmes; create new or close existing programmes; set up its organizational structure and enact and implement its internal rules and procedures" (HEP, No. 650/2009, article 17, sub article 2a). As a result, following the new institutional rules, MU's BAUs enjoyed their relative autonomy to develop and implement curricula and research programmes, and became more active in opening new or closing existing programmes. On the other hand, a closer look at the related issues show that the government still interfered in the academic activities of the university. This is largely evidenced by the newly-introduced modular curriculum and continuous assessment programme at MU. Both the modular curriculum and continuous assessment programme were initiated by the government without the full consent of the universities. As a result, it indicated that the level of readiness and knowhow of the university and its BAUs for such kinds of programmes were too low.

Therefore, when the pressures to adopt a modular curriculum and continuous assessment programme increased, the BAUs tried to balance the requirements of the government and the actual conditions of the university by opting for symbolic compliance strategies. This meant that the structures and programmes that were necessary for adopting the modular curriculum were set up by BAUs as per the requirements of the government; however, when courses were grouped to form the curriculum modules, it was not done based on the real principles of a modular curriculum, but simply according to the interests of the academic units.

The results of this study also revealed that compliance and symbolic compliance strategies were also to be found in the decisions MU and its BAUs made to align themselves with the pressures from the government to adopt an internal quality assurance system and BSC in their day-to-day activities. For example, documents found in the university show that the establishment of internal QAUs was identified by the BPR study result as one of the sub-processes of the academic core. However, a closer look at the data indicate that the need for introducing internal quality assurance activities in universities' is clearly indicated in the higher education proclamation years before the reform tools adopted. Therefore, MU's decision to identify and include QAUs as a sub-process of the academic core, irrespective of the effectiveness of the newly established internal QAUs, can be interpreted as conforming to the government pressures.

One of the changes in the institutional environment of MU and its BAUs was the adoption of BSC as a tool for strategic goal alignment and planning and performance measurement. This was also a reform tool that elicited confusion and strong resistance in the BAUs. The confusion and resistance were not only aggravated by the fact that BSC was pushed from the government, but also there was a widespread understanding perception in the BAUs that the values, norms and practices of universities are not compatible with the requirements of BSC. However, BSC, similar to BPR, came to MU and its BAUs as an obligatory reform tool that had to be adopted at any cost regardless of any perceived incompatibilities or the resistance of the academic community. Therefore, MU and its BAUs had no other option than to comply with the government's requirements and pressures. However, at the academic unit levels, especially at the department, team and individual levels, a defiance strategy was observed. In a sense, they challenged and contested the rules and requirements. This is evidenced by the fact that the university-level BSC plan, which was cascaded to colleges, failed to be integrated at the department, team or individual levels.

Last but not least, as discussed in the theoretical framework of this study (see Chapter 2), both the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories predict that organisations respond to changes in their institutional environments to ensure their survival. This study revealed that MU and its BAUs totally depend on government resources to pursue their missions and visions. However, it seems that in a bid to reduce the level of dependency MU and its BAUs have on the government and to increase its negotiating capacities with external forces, MU started to diversify its funding sources (i.e., regardless of its outcome)

by opening some business enterprise initiatives, providing a wide range of consultancy services to the government and other stakeholders, and by revisiting its collaboration with local and international funding agencies and universities. This corroborates with the central position of resource dependence theory that organisations act to reduce their dependence on organisations that control vital resources, and they do so by exercising power, control and negotiation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

7.3.3 Levels of structural integration

As discussed in Section 7.3.2, in almost all cases MU and its BAUs responded to the pressures and requirements of the BMTs by focusing more on changing the structure of the university and its BAUs than on the actual results of the changes on the ground. The organisational structure of MU was changed from the top governing entity to the lowest academic unit level. New structures, jobs, and positions were created, new core and sub-processes were identified, new planning and measurement tools were introduced, and curriculum reform tools were adopted. Despite some positive changes occurring with the decentralised management system and the increased amount of power academic units were given to administer their own resources, most of the new interventions and programmes were not structurally integrated with the values, norms, practices and policies of the university and its BAUs. For example, the issues of team structure below the department level could be taken as one of the good examples here. Course and research teams were established below the department level to integrate the teaching and RCS missions of the university and to encourage academics work in groups based on their disciplinary specialisations. However, practically speaking it these teams were much less functional than they were expected to be. The team structures only work when there is a department council (DC) meeting or other related legal procedure, not as institutionalised elements that are accepted by the faculty as part and parcel of its job. In other words, this team structure fails to function in a coordinated and systematic fashion.

The study also showed that programmes like BSC, quality assurance practices, and the modularised curriculum were not adopted in the real sense of the word. There was a shared understanding in the university community that these new programmes were not functioning at the operational level (i.e., department and teams) of the university. Especially, it was reported that the new planning and performance measurement tool was not well integrated at the department, team or individual levels of MU. The centrally-designed BSC plan was cascaded to colleges, institutes and schools, and these units in turn developed their BSC plan according the requirements of the university. However, the colleges failed to cascade plans down to the respective departments, teams and individual academic staff due to the perceived view that BSC is not compatible with the culture and practice of the university, the strong resistance of the faculty, and other technical problems. In general, there was enough evidence to conclude that MU and its BAUs address the major

interventions and programmes introduced by BMTs only episodically or in an ad hoc fashion. In other words, these new interventions and programmes were largely detached from the university's day-to-day activities, procedures and programmes (Dass & Parker, 1996 in Siegel, 2006).

7.3.4 Institutionalisation process

As discussed in the aforementioned sections, both BPR and BSC were pushed to the university by the government without consulting with the implementing universities. In addition to this, it was indicated that the approaches chosen by the government and the university administration to implementing the BMTs were more of forcing (i.e., regulative processes) by setting rules, monitoring, and sanctioning activities than convincing (i.e., normative or cognitive processes) by involving the academia to feel as socially responsible to honour the new practices and structures. In other words, the institutionalisation process of the BMTs in MU and its BAUs was guided as the university and its BAUs find it expedient to comply with the new rules, practices and programmes, not as taken for granted that accepting the new procedures would bring the best outcome for the university (Scott, 1995). This, however, brought strong resistance from the academic community in the process of adopting the reform tools. As a result, evidence showed that the resistances of the academia affected the effective institutionalisation process in which the significant new structures, practices, programmes, and activities were failed to be well incorporated into a system of existing structures and practices.

Moreover, evidence showed that the effective institutionalisation process of the BMTs in MU and its BAUs was further affected by the trial-and-error decision making approach taken by the university. Despite the university management has set various goals, objectives and strategies to adopt the reform tools, there was no ample evidence to suggest that the goals and objectives were decisively shared or understood by the university management and academic community of the university. This shows the fact that universities have unclear technologies and problematic preferences, which most members of the university and the decision makers often do not know the complicated process of HEIs, nor do they make decisions on consistent and shared goals but based on a loose collection of preferences (March & Olsen, 1984; Real & Primeri, 2015).

7.4 Implications for government-initiated reform tools

The analysis of the perceptions and responses of MU and its BAUs to the implementation of BMTs indicated three important issues, which are not necessarily independent. First, the reform tools were imposed on the university without creating any normative consensus about their relevance or appropriateness among MU, its BAUs and the government.

This shows that MU and its BAUs were forced to adopt BMTs as radical organisational change tools irrespective of their institutional context and needs. Second, the readiness and experiences of MU to adopt BMTs as radical solutions for its poor performance in its core missions (i.e., teaching, research and community service) was far too low. Third, the impulsive approach of the government to introducing the BMTs at any cost affected the institutionalisation process. As a result, this analysis showed that the institutionalisation process was largely characterised by resistance and confusion among the academic staff and at times in the leadership of MU.

Despite the fact that MU and its BAUs tried to respond by designing new work processes, reorganising the organisational structure of the university and various academic units, and introducing several programmes and interventions, due to the aforementioned issues MU and its BAUs mainly used compliance and symbolic compliance strategies to respond to the requirements, pressures and expectations of the government. Most of the programmes and interventions were far from structurally integrated with the core values, beliefs, norms, practices and policies of MU and its BAUs. In general, the increasing pressures to adopt government objectives resulted in tensions, “control versus autonomy, modernisation versus ‘government knows best’” (Ashcroft, 2010b, p. 1).

It may not be easy to provide readymade solutions to the problem of how to implement externally-initiated reform tools in knowledge-producing institutions, where they are widely considered to be alien to university values, norms and practices. However, there are some possible ways to ease the burden and difficulties that are associated with the readiness of the university to accommodate such BMTs, the nature of the reform tools vis-à-vis the institutional context, and the implementation approach the government chooses to use to compel the university to adopt the BMTs. In other words, the suggestions, which are based on the findings of this study and the results of previous studies, mainly focus on the relevance of the BMTs to the institutional context and the role of the government and the university should have in the reform process.

7.4.1 The appropriateness of BMTs

It seems that the common assumption behind adapting BMTs to universities is that business organisations and universities have more similarities than differences in the sense that both are organisations with mission statements, employees, management systems, and various resources. However, such assumptions tend to ignore the fact that these organisations behave quite differently from each other (Birnbaum, 2001, p. xiii). Despite significant differences in values, norms and practices between business organisations’ management practices and universities’ (Bleiklie et al., 2000), numerous BMTs have been transferred to HEIs under the umbrella of NPM (Tahar, Neimeyer, & Boutellier, 2011). Some scholars have identified these changes as the direct reflection of the ideological and pragmatic motivations of countries that are at different levels of development (de Boer,

Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008). These business-oriented reform tools urge universities to improve their efficiency, accountability and transparency as other profit-oriented organisations do (de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008). The increasing quest for and trend toward the ‘corporatization’ of higher education, however, has come under fierce criticism both from academia as a whole and from scholars in the field of higher education specifically (Frølich, 2005; Larsen & Gornitzka, 1995; Stensaker, 1998). Tefera (2014, p. 1) argues that such trends have the effect of “turning [higher education] institutions from an open space of ‘scholarship’ to a market place of ‘business-ship’.

At the forefront of the criticism are questions about the appropriateness or compatibility of BMTs to university contexts. The results of this study show that BMTs are not compatible with universities’ and BAUs’ values, norms and practices, and this in turn affects the institutionalisation process of the reform tools. Studies on public reform show that one of the biggest tests of BMT-related reforms is a compatibility test (Christensen & Lægried, 2009). This implies that reform tools that are believed to be incompatible with the organisation’s values and norms are likely to provoke resistance and be rejected (Christensen & Lægried, 2009; March & Olsen, 1989; March & Olsen, 1996). This means that the values, norms and cultures of a given implementing organisation determine the success of the reform tools (Christensen & Lægried, 2009). In this sense, as discussed before, a normative mismatch between the requirements of the BMTs and the nature of MU was observed and caused great difficulties for MU and its BAUs.

The Ethiopian government introduced BMTs to public HEIs to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in teaching and RCS activities, so they would in turn be able to play a decisive and leading role in solving societal problems (MoE, 2008). However, as was discussed in the previous chapters, the quest for efficiency and effectiveness failed to recognise the particular characteristics of HEIs in general and MU in particular. This means the government, out of ignorance or arrogance, had not taken into account the complexities of the university that have a make-or-break effect on the response of the university and its BAUs to the implemented BMTs. In other words, the government should understand and recognise the main ambiguities that depict the complexity of university as an organisation (Pinheiro, 2012, p. 38-40) that in one way or another are believed to affect the responsive capacity of the university and its BAUs to the new institutional environment. These understanding or knowhow might support the decision makers to pass an informed decision on policy issues related to HEIs.

This is not, however, to suggest that the government of Ethiopia should not have any role in the reform processes of public universities, but rather to show that the rational organisational perspective, which largely guides the reform process in the Ethiopian higher education system and views organisations as instruments designed to achieve specific goals, efficiency and effectiveness (Scott, 1987), does not help to achieve effective institutionalisation of reform tools in universities and their BAUs. However, as discussed

above, the over-emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, “clearly goes against universities’ traditional disciplinary governance” (Larsen & Gornitzka, 2001, p. 356) that work solely on knowledge as their substantive element (Clark, 1983). This implies that the rational view of organisations and their change processes, does not work in loosely-coupled and normatively-embedded organisations like universities (Kezar, 2005). The solutions, therefore, largely lay in identifying appropriate reform tools and creating normative consensus about their use and appropriateness inside a university and its BAUs.

Two points are worth considering here. On one hand, the government as sole funder of the public HEIs has every right to express its dissatisfaction with the poor performance of universities and to suggest possible reform initiatives that could be implemented by the universities. In this context, the government should encourage the university to initiate reform programmes that serve both the university and the country. On the other hand, however, the government should not go down to the level and prescribe solutions for every problem identified in the universities. In other words, MU should be free to come with its own solutions that appreciate the depth and complexity of the problems of the university. In this sense, the HEP of the country, which provides universities the necessary autonomy to pursue their missions, should be respected (HEP, No. 650/2009, article 17). In general, it should be possible to identify a win-win solution that satisfies both the government and the university.

7.4.2 Approach to implementation

The results of this study show that the adoption of BMTs by MU and its BAUs was characterised by a top-down approach. The government initiated the reform tools and sent them to public universities as obligatory tools to be adopted. Besides, in contrary to the expectation of the academia, MU management follows similar approach to force BAUs adopt the reform tools without creating normative consensus about the appropriateness of BMTs to the academic community. As discussed in Section 7.3.1, the choice of BMTs as radical organisational change tools for MU was largely dictated by the rational organisational perspective that asserts the idea that organisations are means to achieve goals which are clearly defined and designed in relation to the means to achieve them. This implies that the top decision-makers of a university have leading roles in designing the overall goals and objectives of the reform tools. The role of the academia is only limited to adopting the reform tools as per the design and interest of the decision-makers.

However, in HEIs that are normally characterised by normative embeddedness, loosely-coupled, high structural differentiation, and ambiguous goals and unclear technologies (see Birnbaum, 2001; Weick, 1976), the full participation of its employee in any reform initiative or intervention that envisages to build academic excellence creating normative consensus should be given a priority. Because, “without a fully engaged and enthused academic community, building academic excellence, a strong culture of scholarship and

professional commitment may remain elusive” (Teferra, 2014, p. 3) Informants of this study explained that the BAUs of MU are disengaged and do not have a sense of ownership in the overall reform process of the university. Therefore, the government should revisit its approach to handling any reform agendas vis-à-vis the interests of the university and its BAUs. The way forward for the government is, therefore, to have trust in the public HEIs of the country that they can initiate and develop reform agendas that will help them get out of the debacles they have been in for years. MU leaders should also have trust in the BAUs, and should invest in them to develop their awareness of the nature of any reform tools and create a university-wide understanding of the purpose of the overall reform process, because it is believed that the normative and cognitive elements of the institutional context shape organisational action (Scott, 1987; Oliver, 1997).

7.4.3 The need for leadership development and structural change

The results of the study showed that the reform processes have institutional and system level problems. At the institutional level, apart from the contradictions observed between values, requirements and demands of the BMTs and the particular characteristics of the university, MU and its BAUs lacked adequate knowledge and skill on leadership and management of HEIs that significantly crippled the adoption process of the BMTs. The University leaders are professors, lecturers and researchers who have specialised in their disciplines, but do not necessarily possess the basic knowledge and skills of managing knowledge and knowledge producing institutions. They occupy their positions by virtue of their service in the university. Therefore, many of the decisions they make were characterised by trial and error with limited strategic thinking and approach. However, if MU genuinely aspires to become a centre of excellence, and play its share ineffectively solving developmental challenges of the community, it is not late to invest on higher education leadership, management and capacity development programmes at university level.

One means of achieving this can be establishing a centre of higher education policy studies at university level the sole purpose of whom is specialise on undertaking researches on higher education issues. The establishment of such a unit would contribute to a scientific and informed decision making on the fate of the university and its missions. In addition to this, the policy study centre would actively work on organising and providing continuous short, medium and long term leadership and management trainings for the members of the academic community. Such capacity building activities would become instrumental in building knowledge on the dynamics of HEIs and the systems of managing them. Moreover, the university should engage in opening higher education study programmes at both Masters and Doctorate levels, and work closely with international universities that have experiences in higher education development programmes.

This study further recommends for comprehensive change on the governance system of HEIs at the system level. Ethiopian higher education system is characterised by strong

government control in every affair of universities. Even though the higher education law of the country grants full institutional autonomy and academic freedom to universities, in practice MU and its BAUs have not enjoyed these developments due to its internal (i.e., lack of effective leadership skills in the university) and external factors (i.e., intervention of the government). As mentioned in section 7.4.1, the results of the study showed that there are elements of 'arrogance and ignorance' in the policy framework of HEIs in Ethiopia. This means, on one hand, the decision of the policy makers to introduce multiple reform tools, without consulting and engaging universities, indicates that there is a tendency of leaning towards 'government knows best' approach. What is pervasive throughout the system is engaging with universities as simple implementers, which do not know that is good or bad in their own right, rather than as strategic partners. On the other hand, the adoption of BMTs as radical and appropriate reform tools and the subsequent understanding of 'one-size-fits-all' approach to all public organisations including universities shows the fact that there is a lack of knowledge about the distinctive features of universities that make them hard to change with such externally initiated BMTs.

The MoE is the responsible government office that guides and controls the education system of the country including the higher education system. However, informants of the study and the visits made by the researcher in the MoE during the data collection stage indicated that the Ministry and its subsidiary offices, such as HERQA and HESC are setup far from to provide strategic and professional leadership (i.e., in terms of having ample higher education professionals and organisational setups) that will enable to transform Ethiopia's higher education system to a globally acceptable level. Therefore, this study suggests the government to revisit its approach of micromanaging universities, and allow universities to exercise the freedom granted by the very proclamation it issued.

As discussed in this chapter, universities are special organisations that mainly produce and distribute knowledge, and whose management style significantly differ from business organisations. Moreover, the higher education system of the country has expanded massively over the past two decades and expected to continue its growth in the coming years. Therefore, these developments undoubtedly necessitate the need to revisit the governance approaches of HEIs. If Ethiopian universities are to contribute meaningfully to the growth and transformation of the political, economic and social conditions of the country, they should be autonomous from the direct hands of the government, yet with fairly established accountability instruments. To achieve this, first, universities should be free of the direct control of the MoE that does not have the required higher education professionals. At this level of development and putting into consideration the future scenarios, it would be an appropriate time to start the debate on the route towards organising Ethiopian universities under an autonomous Higher Education Council that is staffed with professional leaders who have the knowledge, experience, and expertise in the nature and work processes HEIs. Second, the government should meaningfully support capacity development programmes inside universities. This can be done by providing the necessary funding and creating

an environment suitable for diversifying their funding sources and utilising it freely for achieving their missions. Third, the government should reinforce the human, material and financial resources allocated HERQA and HESC in order to enhance their capacity in supporting universities solve their problems and shape their strategic directions.

7.5 Contributions of the study

This study is situated within the higher education research that focuses on the governance and management of HEIs. Similar studies with various foci have been conducted in industrialised countries, which are mostly found in the North America and Europe. Despite most of the studies being conducted in the most developed nations, with different political, economic and social contexts, they contributed greatly to the development of the conceptual framework for this study, and guided the analysis of its findings. Therefore, much effort has been made to contextualise the results of these studies to the Ethiopian context. It is also observed that the governance reform processes in Ethiopia have not been studied from the perspective of universities and their BAUs and the possible relationships they have with the external environment. The studies that have been made so far in the higher education system of Ethiopia were largely related to policy analysis and implementation problems. However, important issues like organisations' and academic units' perceptions of and responses to government-initiated reform tools through the lens of the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories have not received due attention.

The contribution of this study is thus to fill in some of the empirical gaps and affirm the previous studies that have been made in American and European contexts. Conducting this type of study in the Ethiopian higher education context, which is characterised by meagre resources and high government interference (as it is in other developing countries), might shed a light on the dynamics of the relationships between the key actors, such as the university, the academia and the government in shaping the perceptions and responses of universities that would not be possible to examine in other contexts. Therefore, the findings, observations and implications of this study are important to researchers (especially to those who have keen interest in African higher education system) in the field of higher education, university leaders, the academic community and the government.

7.6 Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations. First, most of the studies that focus on examining the organisational response of universities to externally-originated reform tools through the perspective of the resource dependence and neo-institutional theories have been conducted in the most industrialised countries in the world; countries that have very different political, social and economic backgrounds from Ethiopia. The literature that is used to substantiate

the findings of this study, its relevance notwithstanding, is all from the American and European contexts. This makes it difficult to strongly operationalise the conceptual frameworks and empirical literature to the Ethiopian context, which is characterised by scanty research in the area and different political, social and economic contexts.

7.7 Suggestions for further research

The organisational response of MU to the BMTs was analysed based on the university-environment relationships. The conceptual framework (i.e., resource dependence and neo-institutional theories) used in this study assume that organisational choice and actions are affected by external pressures, requirements and demands, and thus their survival depends on their responsive capacity. Therefore, the study results reveal that the adoption processes of BMTs by MU and its BAUs are influenced by the perceptions of the university and its academic units to the new institutional environment, and it also found that these perceptions affected the type of responses MU as a singular entity and its BAUs made to survive. As this research is purely qualitative research, it is difficult to find a direct connection between different variables that would clearly establish a causal relationship. Or show which variable (e.g., perception) affects the other variable (e.g., response). Therefore, the use of quantitative analysis or mixed methodology might help to broaden the findings of the study. On the other hand, these two theories are not conclusive enough to reveal the extent of the perceptions and responses of universities and their BAUs. Both conceptual frameworks emphasise organisation and environment relationships; however, the micro-foundation of organisations is at least somewhat neglected in both theories. Therefore, on one hand, the use of the new strands of institutional theory, such as institutional logic, institutional work and entrepreneurship or other organisational theories can help to shift the focus from environment and organisation relationships to the micro-foundation of the organisation. On the other hand, the use of other organisational and cultural theories might provide different perspectives to analyse the reform processes in Ethiopian universities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Themes of the interview

The interview themes are roughly categorised into four groups. The first group deals with the antecedents and rationale behind the adoption of business management tools the university. The second theme focuses on the content of the reforms and their impact on the core missions of the university. The third theme is primarily related to perception and responses of the university as organisational entity and its basic academic units towards these business management tools. Finally, the fourth theme is emphasises the peculiar characteristics of higher education institutions and their influence on the implementations of the reforms.

1. Why Mekelle University and its basic academic units are pressurised to adopt BMTs?
2. Who is pressuring Mekelle University and its basic academic units to adopt BMTs?
3. What is Mekelle University and its basic academic units are expected or expected to do?
4. How or by what means the pressures and demands of BMTs are exerted?
5. What are the environmental conditions in which the pressures and demands of BMTs are exerted?
6. How do Mekelle University and its basic academic units respond to these pressures of BMTs?
7. How do the responses of Mekelle University and its basis academic units structurally integrated with the basic values, norms and practices of the university?
8. What are the main challenges in adopting the reform tools?

I. Interview protocols with University management bodies

1. How do you describe the relationship you have with the government?
2. Who are your main funder other than the government?
3. What were your objectives and focuses when you decide to implement BMT reforms in your university?
4. In comparison to the situation before BMT reform, how would you describe the governance model of the university?
5. Are these business management tools are initiated by the university?
6. What are your impressions as leader of this organisation towards such kinds of initiatives?
7. What are the roles of your university in initiating and implementing these business management tools reform?

8. It seems that you introduced several BMT one after the other. If so have you evaluated the outcome or result of one initiative before the other implemented?
9. What strategies or approaches your university used to implement these reforms?
10. How did these reforms affect the core tasks (teaching, research and service to the community) of the university?
11. What are the challenges of implementing these reforms?
12. Did you have the power, the chance or the option to reject or modify these reforms?
13. How do you evaluate the pressures from external environment (e.g. government and other funders)
14. How do you evaluate the reaction of the academia in implementing these reforms?
15. Have you observed some notable differences on implementing these reforms among schools, colleges or disciplines? What possible explanations could be given?
16. In which area you think you are successful? And in which area you are not successful? What possible explanations could be given?

II. Interview with the heads and experts of Governance reform unit of the university

1. What are the main duties and responsibilities of your office?
2. Why, when and how did this office established?
3. What was your offices role in implementing various reforms'?
4. What are the focuses of BMT in your university?
5. Would you tell me the impact of BMT in the three core activities (Teaching, research and community service) of the university?
6. Would you explain to me the whole process of implementing BMT in your university?
7. What were the reactions of the different schools and colleges in implementing BMT?
8. Would you please tell me the difficulties you have faced in implementing BMT in your university?
9. Do you personally believe that BMT would bring organisational change in your university? if so in what way?
10. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the BMT in your university?
11. Have you observed a meaningful differences in implementing BMT between schools and faculties? If so, would you tell me these disciplines and why do they have such differences?
12. What are the real changes that you have observed after implementing BMT in your university?
13. Are you satisfied with the whole changes that have brought by BMT reforms?
14. Do you think universities are special organisations? If so why?

III. Interview with Basic academic units

A: Interview with Deans

1. Would you tell me the current structure of your school or college, please?
2. Since when do you have such kinds of structure?
3. Has this new structure brought something new for your school?
4. In comparison to the previous system, how would you characterise the practice of governance at your school?
5. Would you please tell me the kinds of business management tools that you have implemented for the past few years?
6. Would you please tell me how your school have implemented various business management tools over the past few years?

7. In comparison to the situation before BMT reform, how would you describe the governance model of the university?
8. How do you describe the feelings of the member of the academia towards these business management tools?
9. How do you describe the participation of the members of the academia on the implementation process of Business management tools?
10. What were the main challenges that you think affect the implementation of these business management tools?
11. What is your view about the emergence of business management tools in higher education institutions?
12. Do you think the power of your office in decision making is increasing or decreasing after BMT? Why?
13. How do you describe the interactions between different units or departments in your school?
14. How do you describe the relationship you have with university administration?
15. What is your relationship with the outside environment other than the government? Do you get funding from your stakeholders?
16. How do you finance your research?
17. Compared to the previous system, what have been changed after the adoption of BMTs?
18. Compared to the previous system do you believe that BMT has provided you the opportunity to exercise competent leadership

B. Interview with the department heads or program heads

1. Would you elaborate to me the main focuses of BMT in your unit?
2. How do you reorganise the teaching, research and community service of your unit after BMT?
3. Would you explain to me the main changes in your unit after implementing BMT?
4. What is the decision making process before and after implementing BMT?
5. What was your department's organisational structure before BMT and does it have any difference with current structure you have now?
6. Is the current structure you have now the result of these BMT?
7. How would you characterise the autonomy of your department before and after BMT?
8. Where do the main academic decisions made in your university? What is the chance of your department to influence these important decisions?
9. What were your unit's role during the planning and implementation stage of BMT?
10. Would you explain to me the reaction of your department towards BMT?
11. What would you say about the relationship you have with your college after and before BMT?
12. Would you please explain to me the level of participation you have had in the process of implementing BMT?
13. What is your view about using BMT in universities? Do you really think they are good and relevant enough to bring effective organisational change in your university?
14. What were the main challenges in implementing BMT in your departments?
15. Are you satisfied with the changes that have brought by BMT in your departments?
16. Compared to the previous system, what have been changed on the basic functioning of your unit after the adoption of BMTs?
17. Interview with members of the academia
18. Would you tell me your feelings towards BMT reforms in your university?

C. *What were your first reactions towards BMT?*

1. Do you think they are the appropriate tools to significantly reform the university?
2. Would you please tell me the level of your participation as a member of the academia in the process of implementing BMT reforms?
3. In comparison to the previous system, how would you characterise the practice of governance at the university's institutional level?
4. In comparison to the situation before BMT reform, how would you describe the governance model of the university?
5. In comparison to the situation before BMT, how would you characterise the role of the academia in the decision making process of the following issues?
6. How do you compare or describe the impact of BMT on the core activities of the university compared with the previous system?
7. Would you tell me the major challenges that you have faced in during and after the implementation of BMTs?
8. What factors do you think affect the use of BMTs in your university?
9. As compared to the past, what have really changed in your university in general and in your unit in particular?

Appendix 2: Informed consent

A: Information sheet

Research title: Governance reform in Ethiopian Higher Education system: organisational response to business management tools in the case of Mekelle University.

My name is Yohannes Hailu Mehari and I am a PhD student at the school of Management in a research unit called Higher Education Group (HEG) in the University of Tampere, Finland.

The main purpose of the study is to explore the governance reform in Ethiopian higher education system with particular emphasis to organisational response of MU to BMTs reforms. The study specifically focuses on interpreting the perceptions and responses of the universities as organisational entities and its basic academic units to the advent of managerialism in HEIs. This study will take Mekelle University as a case study. Organisational perceptions and responses in this study refer to the strategies universities use to adapt with the changing institutional and task environments-in this case to the introduction of business management tools such as BPR and BSC.

The results from this study will make it possible to provide relevant information about the unique organisational nature of higher education institutions and the relevant governance structures that universities need to achieve their mission and visions. It will mainly help the universities' leadership and the country's policy makers to design suitable management tools that help Ethiopian universities to position on national and international academic and research interests.

Data will be collected from university leaderships, Deans, Department heads, teachers and documents through individual interviews, and document reviews. You are selected to participate and provide relevant information that will help to achieve the purposes of this study. Your participation in the interviewing process is voluntary so that you are free to withdraw your consent at any time possible, at which time the information you provided will be destroyed. Similarly, your names, positions or other information that are directly or indirectly associated with you will not be used in written transcripts or any publications and documentation arising from the study. To have an in depth understanding of the topic under study and to properly use your views and opinions, the interviews will be tape recorded. The recorded data will be kept confidentially and will be erased after few times the transcription and analysis is completed, and the proper reviewing process of the dissertation is carried out.

The final copy of this study will be delivered to the Mekelle University's Research and Community Service office and you can access it from your university library or documentation center. Therefore, as a good will to participate in this study, please complete the consent form. However, if you do not feel comfortable filling the consent form for different reasons, you are not obliged to do so. If you have any questions or concerns about this research,

Please feel free to contact me (Email: Yohannes.mehari@uta.fi) or my supervisor, Professor Seppo Hölttä (Seppo.holtta@uta.fi).

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Yours faithfully,

B: Consent form

- I understand that the research on Governance reforms of higher education institutions in Ethiopia is being conducted by Yohannes Hailu Mehari, a PhD student at the University of Tampere for his doctoral dissertation.
- I understand that the study is mainly focused on examining the organisational and basic academic units' perceptions and responses with regard to issues of business management tools which help to provide a better understanding of the governance reform processes in Mekelle University.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- I understand that the data collection method which involves me is my participation in a 30–60 minute interview and providing relevant documents that helps the study.
- I grant permission for the interview to be tape recorded and transcribed.
- I also grant permission for the data generated from my interview and the provided documents to be published in the dissertation and future publication(s).
- I understand that every possible effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.
- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet and voluntarily agree to participate in the research.

Participant (Name and Signature)

Place and Date

Appendix 3: Registered students at Mekelle University (2014/2015)

| Colleges/Institutes | Number of students | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Undergraduate | Graduate | Total |
| College of Natural and Computational Science | 3313 | 586 | 3899 |
| College of Health Science | 2750 | 212 | 2962 |
| College of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources | 2240 | 88 | 2328 |
| College of Veterinary Medicine | 433 | 26 | 459 |
| College of Business and Economics | 3785 | 499 | 4284 |
| College of Law and Governance | 1361 | 119 | 1480 |
| College of Social Science and Linguistics | 3160 | 380 | 3540 |
| Institute of Pedagogical Science | 1690 | 124 | 1814 |
| Ethiopian Institute of Technology-Mekelle | 10118 | 558 | 10676 |
| Institute of Paleo-environment and Heritage Conservation Science | 249 | - | 249 |
| Institute of Geo-Information and Earth Observation Science | 14 | 71 | 85 |
| Institute of Climate and Society | - | 28 | 28 |
| Institute of Environment and Gender and Development Studies | - | 6 | 6 |
| Institute of Population Studies | - | 26 | 124 |
| Institute of Water and Environment | - | - | - |
| Total | 29113 | 2723 | 31836 |

Appendix 4: Full-time academic staff at Mekelle University (2014/2015)

| College/ Institute | PhD | Masters | BA/BSC Degree | Diploma | Total |
|--|-----|---------|------------------|---------|-------|
| College of Natural and Computational Science | 32 | 116 | 45 | 21 | 214 |
| College of Health Science | 38 | 216 | 132 | 16 | 402 |
| College of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources | 30 | 123 | 28 | 9 | 190 |
| College of Veterinary Medicine | 5 | 35 | 8 | 10 | 58 |
| College of Business and Economics | 12 | 108 | 38 | | 158 |
| College of Law and Governance | - | 75 | 10 | - | 85 |
| College of Social Science and Linguistics | 15 | 136 | 27 | 2 | 180 |
| Institute of Pedagogical Science | 3 | 24 | - | - | 27 |
| Ethiopian Institute of Technology-Mekelle | 24 | 160 | 74 | 26 | 284 |
| Institute of Paleo-environment and Heritage Conservation Science | 6 | 9 | 10 | 2 | 27 |
| Institute of Geo-Information and Earth Observation Science | 2 | 7 | - | - | 9 |
| Institute of Climate and Society | | | | | |
| Institute of Environment and Gender and Development Studies | - | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| Institute of Population Studies | - | - | - | - | - |
| Institute of Water and Environment | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 167 | 1012 | 372 | 86 | 1637 |

Appendix 5: List of the informants

| No | Informants | Discipline | Positions | Code |
|----|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 1 | University Management | - | University leadership | UM1 |
| 2 | University Management | - | University leadership | UM2 |
| 3 | University Management | - | University leadership | UM3 |
| 4 | University Management | - | University leadership | UM4 |
| 5 | University Management | - | University leadership | UM5 |
| 6 | University Management | - | University leadership | UM6 |
| 7 | Basic Academic Units | Hard Pure | Dean | ACU1 |
| 8 | Basic Academic Units | Hard Pure | Department head | ACU2 |
| 9 | Basic Academic Units | Hard Pure | Lecturer | ACU3 |
| 10 | Basic Academic Units | Hard Applied | Dean | ACU4 |
| 11 | Basic Academic Units | Hard Applied | Department Head | ACU5 |
| 12 | Basic Academic Units | Hard Applied | Lecturer | ACU6 |
| 13 | Basic Academic Units | Soft Pure | Dean | ACU7 |
| 14 | Basic Academic Units | Soft Pure | Department Head | ACU8 |
| 15 | Basic Academic Units | Soft Pure | Lecturer | ACU9 |
| 16 | Basic Academic Units | Soft Applied | Dean | ACU10 |
| 17 | Basic Academic Units | Soft Applied | Department Head | ACU11 |
| 18 | Basic Academic Units | Soft Applied | Lecturer | ACU12 |