QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY OF KUWAIT UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE
WITH TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT APPROACH:
A PANACEA OR A PLACEBO?

By

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Abstract

This study explores the new quality assurance policy in Kuwait University. It aims to portray its positive development with the constraints and even the dysfunctions. A case study method is employed to focus on the new policy as it has been experienced in the science and education colleges.

The QA policy at KU is an all-embracing approach that encompasses many aspects of institutional life. This study attempts to reflect the breadth of the strategy.

The early chapters review the literature about quality assurance in higher education. This indicates that quality issues are of high priority worldwide. In this sense KU's policy reflects an international trend but naturally the specific approach reflects the national context.

Data were primarily taken from KU audiences, which include; academic administrators, faculty and students. Documents and questionnaires are also primary sources, which support the numerous interviews with KU informants. This diverse material provides for the triangulation of methods.

After reporting the findings from the empirical investigations, an attempt is made to interpret the data through the employment of organisational metaphors. Four main metaphors were employed: KU as a system; KU as a political organisation; KU as an unstable changing organisation and KU as an organisational culture: an academic community. Metaphors as such provide an open-ended approach to the reader to perceive the new policy from different angles and perspectives relevant to the institution at large.

The generalisations reached in the conclusions chapter support the fact that the institutionalisation of the new policy is influenced by external as well as internal factors that need to be considered by the various stakeholders of KU. These are the political and socio-economic local and international climate, the organisational structure of the institution and the cultural aspects of the academic community. Educational implications/recommendations are provided to further guide the ultimate development and success of the QA programme. Nonetheless, the new policy is still in its early stages of development to make confident judgements of its success or failure, as this study is exploratory rather than judgmental.

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Chapter One: Why is there a concern for quality?

1.1. Introduction:

The focus of this chapter is the question of why quality issues have received such intense worldwide attention particularly in the 1990s. The chapter deals with emergent themes from this international concern with quality. One of these themes is the factors behind such concern. I explore the concrete reasons such as mass education, cuts in education funding and others; reasons which are explained and interpreted in numbers and figures. I then establish that these concerns about quality are not new. Vught (1993), in fact, traced them back to medieval times. Neave (1988), on the other hand, argues that they demonstrate the 'Rise of the Evaluative State'.

Furthermore, I argue that concepts such as autonomy and accountability are crucial issues in this heightened concern for quality. These are difficult to pin down because they can be interpreted in different ways. A main thrust of my argument will be the tension that exists between the two concepts using the views of Albornoz (1993), Neave (1988) and Giddens (1986). The chapter then reviews how accountability is interpreted according to the different stakeholders' interests in higher education. I then examine these two concepts within two contexts, British higher education system versus the American in order to demonstrate different types of accountability.

The argument in this chapter also draws upon issues concerning change, since mechanisms for the evaluation of quality involve structural or cultural changes or both in higher education institutions. However we perceive it, it is part of an academic culture to encourage changes, which promote quality. I suggest that developing such a culture in an academic community requires both efficient leadership and effective management. The former is essential to achieve change in organisations, while the latter is required to cope with the complexity of modern organisations. More important is the fact that the presence of these two factors is essential to manage the resistance that may arise in the academic community in response to change. Moreover, the direction of change is difficult to specify due to the multiplicity of

stakeholders in higher education, who cannot agree on the goals of any change which may occur. The chapter concludes with a general discussion of all these issues.

Quality assurance and quality assessment are equally high on the worldwide agenda. In the West, for example, the emphasis is on high standards in parallel with greater access and opportunity. Less developed countries, whose higher education systems are still in the beginning stages, are anxious to reach minimal international standards, with far less resources. Countries with a history of political centralization are trying to find ways to promote more academic freedom and institutional self-evaluation. However, within these contrasting contexts, quality assurance bodies such as accreditation agencies, quality audit units and others, which are external to the institutions, are viewed as useful mechanisms to guarantee standards, to provide a public account of the educational service and to promote quality through the interchange of ideas and practices (Craft,1994). There are various factors to explain this heightened attention to quality. The first is the expansion of higher education systems. The rapid growth of the student body, accompanied by an increase in the number of fields of study, departments and even whole institutions, has raised many questions about the amount and direction of public expenditure for higher education. Quality assurance procedures thus attempt to maintain a balance between quality and quantity within this move towards mass education.

A second factor is that the limits of public expenditure have been reached in many countries. In other countries, budget cuts have triggered questions about the relative quality of processes and products. A third reason is the fact that we live a transitional period for technology-based economies, so that many countries have introduced policies that can guide student demand towards fields perceived to be significant for further economic development. These developments have fostered a concern for the instrumental values of higher education, which has encouraged many governments to adopt policies of quality control.

A fourth reason is the great openness of many sectors in modern societies to internationalization. This recent trend facilitates the international mobility of students, teachers and researchers. Added to this is the internationalization of the labour market which

increasingly puts heightened emphasis on academic standards and the standing of degrees. Craft (1994) views the acceptance of this international trend for quality assurance as inevitable. She argues that 'academic and professional qualifications need to be portable across national borders, and so both institutions and nation states are keen to learn about each other's procedures for assuring the quality of tertiary education provision' (Craft,1994:viii). These and other reasons have triggered the remarkable concern for quality. However, there are always variations between one context and another. Hence the list of causes is inexhaustive. Analysing the cause/effect relationship reveals that 'in any cause and effect analysis, identifying the cause is an ascription of responsibility' (House, 1982:210).

This international trend to assure quality has a great impact on the changing role of higher education institutions. The new role expected of higher education is to help develop a nationally competitive economy with international status. Governments put pressure on their institutions to produce graduates who can adapt to the challenges of an economy based on knowledge and technology, and who are able to utilize their skills beyond their home country, especially since many professions now have international quality standards. Evidence for this is the standardization of certain entry requirements in certain fields of study among universities that follow the same educational system.

1.2. Is all this concern new in the higher education systems?

The answer to this question is definitely no. It seems that assessment concerns were and still are present as one of the priorities in higher education systems. Their forms may vary between past and present practices, nonetheless the existing mechanisms representing some kind of control were inevitably there.

Vught (1994) argues that since medieval times, higher education has always had quality as in one of two forms: extrinsic and intrinsic. These relate to their historical background. The first is called the French model of delegating control to an external authority, such as in the Bishop of Paris. He had the right to decide about the content of studies and also to withhold the teaching licence of the masters. This represents external jurisdiction in higher education in France. The other is the English model of self-governing fellows. Examples of this model

are the Cambridge and Oxford colleges. They were completely independent of external interference. The masters had the freedom to hire and fire and to assess the quality of their colleagues.

'The intrinsic qualities refer to the ideals of the search for truth and disinterested pursuit of knowledge' (Vught,1994:3), while the extrinsic qualities are represented in the services which higher education institutions provide to society. Higher education institutions have often shown great flexibility in the way they adapt to recurrent changes in the needs of the society. Vught argues that their historical persistence is due to their flexible ability to combine both the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities (Vught,1994).

Neave (1988) argues that the tension between internal and external control was tightened and resolved during the 80s in favour of external authorities; he accounts for this by reference to the emergence of the 'evaluative state'. In such a state policies are developed by the government to overcome financial difficulties on a long term basis. They are demonstrated in two forms. The first form involves the relationship between the government and higher education institutions. The other form concerns a change in the relationship between higher education and society caused by 'an attempt to insert a particular form of externally defined competitive ethic as the prime driving force for institutional, and thus system, development inside higher education' (Neave,1988:7).

Neave, however, attributes 'the Evaluative State's rapid emergence to two main reasons; the first is economic and the second is ideological. The first concerns multi-factor structural change affecting both economy and demography which in turn requires the development of a technology- based economy coupled with a need to increase the skill levels in the population at large (Neave,1988). The second involves a redefinition of social ethics to accommodate the demands of the market. This is demonstrated in the way governments seek to direct students into hard sciences and technology instead of humanities. A shift in numbers of students from 48% to 52% enrolled in science courses in the British universities is an example of this policy. He argues that humanities are as important as hard sciences 'in creating responsible and aware citizens on whose sense of social obligation and solidarity the

political stability of nations rests and more particularly so when, as a result of industrial change, disparities in income between top and bottom are growing' (Neave,1988:20).

Evaluation has been significant for the evaluative state, ever since it took over control of the finance of higher education as well as the responsibility to define the legal and administrative framework within which the institution operates. Neave proposes two forms of evaluation within the state's exercise of its evaluative function in relation to higher education. The first is strategic evaluation. This involves a process of planning long- term goals for the higher education system. It estimates the resources, in terms of finance, equipment and personnel required to realize these goals. The primary function of strategic evaluation is to assess past performance in relation to any aspect of national policy that may require change. It usually addresses broad issues like national staffing policy, student access and the distribution of higher education. A constant revision of the goals in order to reform the system is what strategic evaluation aims at.

Routine evaluation, on the other hand, is a process concerned with system maintenance, which is not limited to the Ministry of Education; it goes beyond that to include the Treasury. The mechanism of the evaluative state is not confined to the central administration of higher education but also covers other agencies, such as the funding agencies e.g. the Treasury in the UK, together with the Higher Education Funding Council to whom the task of distributing the funds is delegated; or the audit bureau in Sweden, such agencies undertake evaluations from their own specialist viewpoint (Neave,1988).

With the advent of the evaluative state, two major shifts occur in the timing, location and purpose of evaluation, in both processes of policy making and ensuring adherence to that policy. The first is related to linking the routine evaluation with the strategic evaluation. The second is the shift towards a posteriori evaluation, and concerns the extent to which an institution has reached its targeted goals when the allocation of resources is made subsequent to and dependent on the fulfilment of specified criteria (Neave,1988). Hence, a posteriori evaluation is about controlling product rather than process. Controlling product is an important development in the history of higher education, whereby national priorities

determine the steering of higher education policy as it moves towards mass education. It is demonstrated in the shift of focus from input factors, such as provision of access, social equality and equity, to output factors.

What Neave's argument seems to imply is that the sharpened focus on the quality of output indicates that the purpose of higher education has shifted from the satisfaction of individual demands to the perceived needs of the market in the light of the requirements of the national economy. Strategic evaluation represents an effective means to regulate individual institutional responses to the changing environment.

A parallel evaluation process evolves from the 'bottom-up' to support strategic planning. This process involves such institutions in the development of a strategic plan, which each establishment puts forward to the grant- giving body. These developments are indicative of the push towards refining higher education systems management, just like the shift from 'process' and 'input' assessment towards 'product' evaluation, a notion which underlies the 'evaluative state' (Neave,1988).

The debate about who is to determine national policy in higher education remains controversial. The tension between the academics and the professional 'servants' of the evaluative state is extremely complex. It results in relocating the area of negotiation around semi-independent agencies by the academics and placing it inside administration by the 'servants'. The focus of tension thus changes 'from the political to the evaluatory process itself, and by so doing, runs the risk, unless the process of evaluation is seen as legitimate by those evaluated, of transforming a system of technical intelligence- gathering into one of renewed strife, turmoil and blockage' (Neave,1988:16).

Neave's argument emphasizes that the multiplicity of evaluatory mechnaisms in higher education requires corresponding changes at the institutional level. The rise of the evaluative state is not only about the relationship between higher education and external society; it also involves making demands for new types of information , which lead to the creation of new structures and patterns of authority through which the individual institution seeks that

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information and acts upon it.

Neave's article, in fact, pins down the nature of the relationship between higher education institutions and the government on the one hand, and between higher education institutions and society on the other. It brings to the fore two crucial issues, which are the main focus in this chapter; the first is the autonomy of higher education as an independent institution and the second is its accountability to the government and society at large. In the higher education there is a close link between autonomy and accountability and this link remains a long-standing concern of the evaluative state.

However, there are other pertinent concepts related to autonomy and accountability, such as economic and social development, academic freedom, and the specific political role of the university. It is an interesting fact that the interest in accountability issues seems to heighten while autonomy decreases when a country reaches a high level of development (Albornoz,1993).

Albornoz relates a university's autonomy to the prevailing political system; a democratic system normally promotes autonomy, whereas authoritarian forms of political organization deny it. In the latter, the government centralizes all the activities of the state, including the university, which is viewed as a part of the government. Hence, the university cannot manage its affairs without external interference.

Autonomy, to Albornoz, should strike a balance between responding to societal requirements and satisfying the specific needs of the institution, e.g. academic freedom, simultaneously. House (1982), on the other hand takes somewhat a different view: he defines accountability as a social movement. Like democracy, it is the result of more than one cause. It manifests a shift in power relations among different stakeholders in higher education, all aiming towards the modern nation state.

The literature tends to reflect a commonly held view that the balance between accountability and autonomy is not stable. To begin with, the university cannot accommodate all the demands made by society, such as the training of human resources or the generation and

dissemination of knowledge. Also it cannot allow its members to work independently, ignoring the needs of society. 'Autonomy presupposes a strong component of moral responsibility and a close relationship between autonomy and liberty' (Albornoz,1993:38). Albornoz asserts that autonomy is essential for the university but it must also demonstrate some kind of moral responsibility which should define the limits of the exercise of its liberty. The concreteness of the term 'autonomy' can be demonstrated in the way the university responds to the demands and expectations of society. The university in fact will seek to maximize its autonomy. Society, on the other hand, has the right to restrict that autonomy when it conflicts with the rights of society (Albornoz,1993). Giddens' theory of structuration seems to support Albornoz's view, in that autonomy is defined within the framework of the structural features of a society which govern both stability and change (Giddens,1984).

Accountability, on the other hand, has direct implications for practice. The concept is new in the modern academic world. However, from a historical perspective, there has always been some kind of control over higher education institutions, (the French and English models of quality control in middle ages was discussed above). At present, there is a demand to demonstrate that public funds are being used efficiently. Also, private universities are not exempted from meeting the needs of society rather than the few power groups that promote them. Accountability is thus about evaluation and the measurement of performance. It involves scrutinizing all the functions of a university. In other words, it is there to ensure that there is a relationship between the objectives and the means which should be demonstrated in the way the university conforms to the needs of society as well as of the university itself (Albornoz,1993).

Albornoz refers to two types of accountability; external and internal. External accountability is demanded by society at large. Internal accountability, on the other hand, is defined as the measurement of academic activities in relation to the actual performance of the members within an institution. Society, in effect, exercises some form of control over universities, since the notion of education as a privilege is not accepted any longer, as it becomes 'an established right in our mass society' (Albornoz,1993:43). In societies where democracy and an adequate level of pluralism are prevalent, control is exercised equally by the ruling power

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of that country and professional associations in such a way that higher education responds to the needs of society and not to a minority power group within that society. In other societies, where pluralism is less explicit, control is retained by small power groups.

In pluralistic societies, universities are influenced by accreditation and institutional authorizations as forms of control so that they function efficiently. The public demand for accountability exerts social pressure on academic institutions to align with the needs of society. However, the societal demands are often of an innovative nature which do not fit with the wishes of the university, as Neave points out (1988). This is a typical characteristic of any society which has the mechanisms for change 'that generally precede changes within the university' (Albornoz,1993:43).

Giddens has proposed a number of theories relevant to this argument about power and control relations between the different systems in a society. To Giddens 'all societies both are social systems and at the same time are constituted by the intersection of multiple systems which may be wholly 'internal' to societies, or they may cross-cut the 'inside and the 'outside', forming a diversity of possible modes of connection between societal totalities and intersocietal systems' (Giddens,1984:164). Intersocietal systems, in turn, are parts of a whole which have some forms of relation between them, or in other words, they constitute different types of societies. These societies represent forms of domination which refer to the relations of autonomy and dependence which pertain between them. Giddens refers to the interconnections between these societal entities as 'time-space edges' which are representations of differentials of power.

According to structuration theory, structure is defined as rules and resources. The structure, however, 'is implicated in the generation of action but it is not so apparent where constraints enter in' (Giddens,1984:169). The implication of Giddens' theory of structuration for the accountability versus autonomy debate in higher education comes from his view of the interface between the two. Thus accountability restricts autonomy, as it is a form of constraint imposed on the institutional structure and specifically on the autonomy of the establishment. Nonetheless, Giddens argues that structure is both enabling as well as constraining; these

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elements merge in the socialization process. Constraint represents a form of asymmetrical power, 'in conjunction with which a range of normative sanctions may be deployed against those whose conduct is condemned, or disapproved of, by others' (Giddens,1984:173).

Power, on the other hand, is not just a constraint; it is inherent in the abilities of agents to bring about predetermined outcomes of action. Aspects of power, involving various forms of constraint, are in effect forms of enablement. They create certain possibilities of action while restricting others at the same time. If we accept Giddens' theory, then, accountability is about innovation, while autonomy represents a feature of the traditional concept of the university. Reconciling these two concepts to promote the welfare of universities and to achieve substantial national and international development, remains a challenge to the contemporary academic world. It is worth noting Halstead's (1994) view on how a reconciliation may occur. He argues that 'an adequate account of educational accountability must therefore steer a middle path between control and autonomy. The autonomy of educators will be tempered by the fact that they are answerable to those they serve, and that those they serve have legitimate expectations and requirements which should be satisfied' (P.148).

1.3. Accountability to stakeholders in higher education

The initial question posed in this chapter as to why there is a concern for quality assurance mechanisms in higher education today is answered by the word 'accountability'. In simple terms, it is about 'rendering some kind of account that an activity is being carried out effectively and efficiently'(Williams and Loder,1990:2). This answer instantly triggers another question: accountability to whom? 'Those who are affected by it are entitled to demand that it be carried out effectively and those who provide the resources have a right to see that they are used efficiently' (Williams and Loder,1990:3). Such a response is valid at the level of individual teachers as well as whole universities. This concept of accountability, in fact, needs to recognise the legitimate interest of at least three different groups: society, clients, including students, and the academic community; in other words to a whole host of stakeholders in the educational institution. Along the lines of Giddens' and Albornoz's arguments on the nature of accountability, it is evident that accountability is driven by the

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pressure from the public, represented by the government, which in most countries is the paymaster, as well as by the citizens who pay taxes to government. The demand for more higher education entails increasing costs since many countries have tried to meet the demand by increasing the number of places available. From a governmental point of view, more does not necessarily mean worse, but those who pay, and those who study, want evidence to support this affirmation, and those who teach and run universities have a responsibility to provide the evidence. 'Governments have a responsibility to society to ensure that what they buy from higher education is acceptable and provides value for money' (Frazer,1992:16). Hence the primary concern is a financial one, that is, value for money. The government's responsibility is further demonstrated in allocating resources to higher education, as is the case in the UK. This act of distribution is subject to various criteria that some institutions are able to meet while others are not.

The same is also true about departments within the same institution in terms of their research funding. Thus allocation of funds will always remain a long-standing concern to both departments of both higher and lower quality, as the former are rewarded so as to do better while the latter are deprived of funds, 'possibly driving quality even lower' (Frazer,1992:17). Such developments require the creation of agencies which assess the different departments in higher education, and whose opinion later determines where and to whom the government money should go. The current 'Research Assessment Exercise' in British universities illustrates this point.

Obviously, governments establish those agencies to ensure quality and efficiency in higher education. Britain is a case in point. Nevertheless, it seems that the predominant reason behind establishing these agencies is to do with the division of power, a point raised earlier by Giddens as a characteristic of social systems. Skilbeck supports that point by defining power as the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. He argues that 'there is commonly a sharing of roles and responsibilities between a mixture of agencies and institutions both public and private. This reflects the historical legacy as much as it does a formal division of power' ((Skilbeck,1989:16).

The concept of the division of power is relative and dependent on the structure of the educational institution as well as on other factors such as the prevailing political system, economic and social systems. This question of power relates to all stakeholders in the educational process. Employers of the graduates comprise a major group of stakeholders or clients who require that their employees have sufficient skills to contribute to their enterprises. In some of the developing countries, employers complain about innumerate and illiterate graduates with high expectations but minds filled with knowledge that cannot be used. Such complaints have led to a demand from those outside higher education for the quality of courses to be exposed, and from those within for an urgency to check, change if necessary and demonstrate the value of their courses (Frazer,1994).

Students and their parents also constitute significant clients of higher education. Yet their impact on higher education policies is minimal. Treating students as clients is something educational institutions are not used to doing. Students as clients tend to rely completely on the professional expertise of the academics. Such dependence is attributed to an inability on their part to judge the quality of education they are receiving and thus, students cannot make adequate choices in terms of a college or even courses. This is due to the fact that it is difficult to place a monetary value on professional services. In a client relationship much is made of the professional relationship with the client, but the reality is that the relationship matters little as long as the professionals stick together, as fellows in the same trade. The power remains fixed in the professionals' hands (Phillips,1992).

Parents, on the other hand, where they have choice available to them, can always opt to transfer their children to other universities if they are dissatisfied with the educational provision at one university. In other words, parents have some power over an educational system; a point that has some bearing on the radical redistribution of power and authority in educational matters.

Another dimension to the accountability of a teacher, a school or a system concerns their ability to meet the prime objective of education, which is learning. Students are expected, when they leave a college, to have mastered the structures of knowledge in their disciplines.

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The teacher's responsibility, on the other hand, is to be competent in his/her area and to be able to transmit knowledge and skills to his/her students. Also he/she is expected to follow recent development in his/her field and above all to communicate to students the truth criteria of that discipline as well as its disputes. Truth criteria refer to the standards that a teacher has to sustain, which are the major imperative of the teaching responsibility (Taylor,1982). More precisely, accountability is the guarantee that all students irrespective of race, income or social class, will be given an equal opportunity to acquire the skills, knowledge and positive attitudes of their discipline that enable them to make optimal use of them in society (Frazer,1992).

Internal accountability of an institution also involves accountability to the discipline or subject. Many academics believe that their prime loyalty is to their academic discipline and that accountability to peers within the discipline ought to be the chief consideration. Moreover, for many academics the main concern is research productivity, and their chief incentive is to contribute effectively to the growth of knowledge. It is a knowledge that transcends the boundary between enquiry in one discipline and another and other forms of knowledge. The boundaries between the discipline and other disciplines 'consist of a respect for the evidence, for the logic, both internal and external, of a position and for its demonstrability in a forum where it can be criticised on both logic and evidence' (Kogan,1994:62).

In fact, some academics' views on the research issue tend to be extreme. They tend to view teaching as necessary but not sufficient; they care about the quality of their teaching but research is always waiting to be done. However, Kogan (1994) views the issue from a different angle: 'good teaching is essential and taxing but its audiences are less universal and exacting than those of research' (Kogan,1994:62). What he provides as a justification for such an opinion is that the main criterion for academic professionalism that one's work is demonstrable and testable by a larger audience; certainly not simply by one's students or peers. 'It then has the kind of moral authority which even the most implausible politician gains by being legitimized by virtue of election' (Kogan,1994:62).

Frazer (1992) supports Kogan's view stating that accountability to society is not about quality as a matter of return on investment, it is about safeguarding and transmitting a cultural heritage. It involves preserving the epistemological as well as the social values, which are broad and varied within the different higher educational systems. Particular types of authority and accountability in higher education, to a certain extent, reflect the social organisation of higher education which has been dependent on individual work by securely tenured academics (Kogan,1986). However with an increased rate of change in the disciplinary balance, in students' numbers and in teachers'contracts, a move toward more managerial and hierarchical administration of higher education is inevitable and this has been actively promoted by central authorities.

From a governmental and societal view, the external accountability of the discipline requires some kind of justification. Accountability, in the present, involves the measurement of aspects such as: teaching and research staff activities; students performance; and the performance of administrative and other related personnel. Other functions of the university such as scientific research, relations with industry and with the community are as essential to measure as the above aspects.

To conclude this part, it is useful to reiterate that accountability is a form of constraint as well as a form of power imposed by government as well as society on educational institutions. Yet, as discussed earlier, it is an enabling constraint that brings about predetermined outcomes of action. It is associated with innovation and change in general. Accountability is expressed at the level of practice through a range of evaluative procedures to ensure quality.

1.4. Types of accountability

As has been observed above, accountability takes different forms. However, they have been described in very general terms. To develop a closer focus we need to look at two settings with different types of accountability, namely those operating in British and American higher education systems. Kogan (1986) contends that accountability in higher education in the UK is exercised in a self-governing manner i.e. the higher education sector itself regulates its

institutions. The government does not directly interfere in the management of the institutions but has used intermediary bodies such as The National Advisory Body For Public Sector Higher Education (NAB), Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the University Grants Committee (UGC) in the case of public institutions (all now replaced by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC). Those bodies had a responsibility to assess the performance of institutions in respect to meet national objectives. The evaluations then are interpreted into operational decisions about institutional configuration and resources. NAB and UGC supervised the academic evaluations that determined which institutions received funds and what student places should be funded. Their evaluations were thus normative judgements translated into operational decisions. Evaluations thus became authoritative.

'Evaluations feed into authoritative decisions and if the accountability of institutions to the centre is not clear, it is certain that their behaviour is affected by these decisions' (Kogan,1986:79). In a managerial system, accountability is about a superordinate and a subordinate relationship. This is illustrated in the relationship between the sponsors or the validating body and the institution. The institution is required to meet the terms of trade or the standards being imposed by the sponsors for survival.

From a comparative perspective, House (1982), an American educator, suggests that accountability within the British higher education context is an attempt to realign the institutions with a modern industrial society. He argues that there is a noticeable shift in values from individualist towards societal goals and values. This, in effect, renders education into an instrument of national policy (House,1982).

In the American higher education system accountability seems to function rather differently. The influence of the government is less explicit when compared, for instance, with continental Europe. The power resides in the institution itself, represented by its president and board. Competition between institutions is legitimate and acceptable, as they operate in exactly the same manner as do private corporations. Institutions are expected to regulate themselves in order not to lose resources, namely the students and the scholars, to their

competitors. American universities are much less dependent on public funding - especially the more prestigious colleges and universities.

US institutions took the initiative to develop two processes of quality assessment: accreditation, and the intra-institutional process of systematic review of study programmes. Accreditation is based on peer review and is essentially a non-governmental, voluntary, and self-regulatory approach. It is an internalized activity, which is a direct creation of the academic and professional educational communities. The intra-institutional process, on the other hand, is undertaken by universities to assess programme quality, to enhance institutional decision-making, and in some cases, to provide a basis for the redistribution of marginal resources within the institution. Such internal reviews may be integrated in the broader accreditation process.

However, the American accreditation system is not without flaws. Crow (1994) argues that institutional accreditation is highly regional in character, as each regional organization has its own structure, approaches, and organisational strengths that impede the adoption of stronger national approaches. Further, as private membership associations, accrediting agencies are dealing with their own business in a highly confidential manner, and by doing so they are in fact covering for any institution with low standards rather than holding it up to public view.

US higher education has been under attack mainly directed at the process of assessment, namely self-regulation, which has proven to be incompetent and too self-serving to be a reliable instrument. In response to such attack, accrediting agencies are in the process of following certain procedures to regain the confidence of the critics of higher education. The most highlighted issues are: 'revising and strengthening standards; re-emphasizing the centrality of teaching and learning; rethinking public disclosure; finding new and better ways to tell the story of accreditation and lastly regrouping and restructuring'(Crow, 1994:122-123). Crow stresses that the demand for change must be urgent if these accrediting associations are willing to participate with federal and state agencies in defining what constitutes quality in higher education.

From what has been said above, it seems obvious that accountability and autonomy issues lack clarity. 'The meaning of a vague notion like accountability is clarified in its uses, which

are varied. The same concept may have different meanings within different belief systems' (House, 1982:212). Wide variations exist between the British educational system and the American system, and equally between those two and the Kuwaiti system. Each system is driven by distinct forces to demonstrate its accountability, be they political, economical or social.

House (1982) suggests that the merit of using such vague concepts is that they encourage a continuation of dialogue among all stakeholders in higher education. Sometimes their views converge leading to certain norms of behaviour and action. However, it often happens that people agree on action without agreeing on common definitions of the basic concepts. Disagreement can be resolved by reference to specific situations. New situations can be absorbed even when they are not expected. 'Formal systems of thought are neater but informal ones reflect life better. Informal discourse reflects the complexity of life by adjusting to concrete situations. Life is ultimately too complicated to be captured by technical reasoning. A shrewder, more elastic judgement is needed' (House, 1982:212).

As has been argued above for both educational systems, forms of quality assurance mechanisms are established to assess the performance of educational institutions. If their performance does not meet national objectives, then there is a greater possibility for the institutions concerned to align their purposes, functions and roles with those of society. By this alignment, institutions in fact demonstrate their openness to their environment. Their adaptation is necessary for purposes of their prosperity and survival. Since adaptive behaviour, i.e. change, is a constant in higher education institutions, we need to explore it further in the subsequent section.

1.5. Evaluation and change

The mode of evaluation, as mentioned earlier, differs depending on the motives driving it. Generally, it involves the notion of change. Institutions seek or are subjected to evaluation for different reasons. As we have seen, modes of assessment also vary between routine evaluation versus strategic evaluation (Neave,1988). Evaluation might simply be intended

to assess whether changes are needed in the first place. The nature of evaluation will vary according to its purpose; for example whether it is directed to improvement in quality, or reduction in cost. It also varies in terms of the identity of its seekers or sponsors; 'whether they be managers, political leaders, client groups, or the workers who are subject to the evaluation' (Kogan, 1989:12).

Change may be drastic, involving the whole structure of the institution or it may be only incremental, aimed at certain aspects of an institution. Price (1994) argues that the most effective way to transform a university is to begin with its structure. However changes in organisational structures are not sufficient. They need to be guided by an academic, professional or economic rationale. The reasons Price provides for such a rationale are to do with changes in the culture of the university. Culture is more important than structure. He states, ' all your major mistakes will be people mistakes; all your major successes will be people successes. Creating the right informal atmosphere of teamwork, co-operation and purpose is immensely more important than the formal structural framework within which it purports to take place' (Price,1994:37).

It is of crucial importance, if change is to occur with a sense of commitment, that there is 'enough dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs to mobilise energy toward change' (Nightingale,1994:120). Seekers after change ought to have a clear conception of its direction and consequences in order to make it successful. Sometimes stakeholders exert pressure on educational institutions for different reasons. However, such pressure in itself is insufficient to cause a noticeable dissatisfaction with the status quo. Academics in an institution may be so confident about their work that they do not want to see their institution change at all. If we consider the academics' stance towards change, it seems that there is always a tendency to resist it. Schon (1971) refers to this tendency to remain the same as 'dynamic conservatism'. Giddens (1984) proposes that the main reason for persistent social systems is the time span, 'in general it is true that the greater the time-space distanciation of social systems- the more their institutions bite into time and space- the more resistant they are to manipulation or change by any individual agent (P:171).

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The management of change requires creating new organizational paradigms. These paradigms help to recognise the presence of resistance, the motives behind it, its origins, as well as its outcomes in the life of the organization. Resisting change in ideology and practice of an academic organisation takes different forms. Resistance is portrayed in various strategies: by ignoring its presence, counter-attacking the intended change before it is materialised, carrying out the smallest portions of the imposed change, or absorbing and appropriating it to fit within the existing culture (Schon,1971).

Nightingale (1994) emphasizes the role of leadership in managing resistance. This she contextualises in the managerial approaches implemented recently in many higher education institutions. The literature with regard to these new models stresses the close link between leadership and quality, in creating the appropriate context within universities and colleges for the new changes to emerge. The link between leadership and quality can make a considerable contribution to managing change and fostering a culture of quality in higher education.

This concern with leadership in higher education as a concept and a practice is borrowed from the business sector. In management theory quality is closely related to notions of leadership and management. Leadership is vital at the strategic and operational levels so that collective commitment to the quality programme can be reached, driving it forward. At the group and individual levels, leadership plays an essential role in guiding the work of task forces and projects. This is one of the main principles of the Total Quality Management approach implemented in many industrial settings. Middlehurst and Gordon (1995) refer to two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. The former is about leaders buying their followers' compliance by providing them with a variety of benefits. The latter, on the other hand, is linked with envisaging actions that lead to changes in the attitudes and performance of the individuals working in an organisation who collaboratively aim to achieve a community of quality.

It is the transformational leadership that is of interest to us as educators. Leadership of that kind promotes effective changes in the community culture as well as in organisational structure. However, leadership in general cannot be separated from changes occurring in the

external environment of organisations. 'Economic recession, rapid developments in information technology, and shifts in social attitudes towards formal authority and towards individual freedom and self-determination have played their part in changing the context of leadership thought as practitioners and researchers have grappled with new situations' (Middlehurst,1995:26). Middlehurst in fact directs attention to the strong connection between higher education institutions and their external environment. The impact of the environment on these institutions demonstrates that they are open systems.

It is needless to say that leadership cannot be dissociated from management. They are two complementary systems of action. Leadership is required to drive change in an institution, while management is vital for coping with the increasing complexity of modern organisations.

To round off the discussion in this chapter, it seems that educational systems are only one element within the multiple systems within a society. It is the society that has the mechanisms for the change that generally precedes changes within any of its institutions. Change occurs when agents in the different social systems are capable of releasing their objectives for a particular institution. Those agents are represented by the different stakeholders in any educational system. A balance between the different notions of autonomy and accountability, power and control is maintained if smooth relationships obtain among the various stakeholders in the educational system. Kogan asserts that 'there are multiple purposes, multiple stakeholders, and multiple criteria. One must face the problem of establishing priorities and resolving conflicts among groups' ((Kogan,1986:88).

Furthermore, change seems to be an inevitable process in the survival of any educational system. However, change has different meanings in the various educational contexts. Disputes about its direction vary according to the people involved whether insiders or outsiders. In effect, these disputes reflect the conflicting notions of accountability at work in any institution. Change does not have to come from people immediately involved in the educational process, such as the academic staff. Sometimes, it is a political decision made by the government, which may be resisted by the academic community, whether that change

concerns the organisational structure or the organisational culture. The latter, however, is a prerequisite if change in general is to occur. It is also necessary to manage resistance. The whole process is primarily dependent on two main factors: effective leadership and efficient management.

However, within a process of change perceived as an attempt to improve quality, the evaluative approaches presently in use are mainly borrowed from industry and the business sector. Their appropriateness is still in question especially in the view of the academic community. Nonetheless, stakeholders in education advocate the adoption of such approaches on the basis that since they have met success in industry, they may also be effective in education.

Chapter Two: What is quality in higher education?

2.1. Introduction:

In chapter one I argued that there are different reasons for the heightened concern at the international level about quality in higher education. I therefore indicated the factors such as the changing relationships between higher education and the state, which are increasingly pushing higher education institutions to change their role and function in accordance with the needs of society. I then suggested that evaluative procedures are implemented for different purposes. However, one of these is to ensure quality in higher education institutions. I therefore now turn to explore what quality means for the different stakeholders in higher education. This chapter will provide a descriptive as well as a critical account of the various concepts of quality. It begins with an overview of the taxonomy proposed in Harvey and Green's article (1993). Their analysis will prove useful in clarifying the perceptions of the various stakeholders and as will be shown in later chapters, this will be relevant to the study of quality issues at KU.

However, under each of Harvey and Green's models, the views of different writers are reviewed, with a brief critique of each. An overall discussion follows. The second part of the chapter considers specifically how quality is measured in higher education institutions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the merits and limitations of each method.

Harvey and Green's analysis demonstrates the problem of reaching a consensus about quality in an attempt to reconcile the views of many different stakeholders. Thus quality depends on the view of each interest group, be they employers, administrators, faculty, students, government or assessors. There is also a need to explore how other researchers define quality. Barnett (1992), for example, classifies the views of stakeholders in higher education into three distinct groups: the objectivists, the relativists and the developmental (these will be discussed later in this chapter). His interest seems to lie in maintaining a balance between the theoretical, quantitative, practical and academic aspects. His main focus is on educational processes.

What all these views demonstrate is that the various definitions overlap in their use of terminology, and this illustrates that there is a sense of uncertainty about what constitutes quality. However, what they have in common is the fact that each is defined within the context of specific stakeholders. Thus our approach in reviewing the theoretical frameworks of how quality is defined is varied and diverse, reflecting the variety of notions of quality of the different stakeholders in higher education. The extensive literature on quality has considered quality control, assurance, management, audit, assessment, policy and funding. However, little has been written about the concept itself. The problem underlying this scarcity is a lack of a theory of quality, or in other words a unified theory of quality, and an absence of agreement on the concept itself. The reason for the absence of universal agreement on the concept is attributed to the fact that quality is seen as multifaceted and people perceive it in different ways (Tan,1986). Thus, it is suggested rather than equating quality with a single measure, what is needed is a quality profile. Further, this variety is also reflected in the approaches to conceptualising quality in the higher education sector particularly because of its various purposes. That being so, 'then what counts as quality must vary too' (Barnett,1992:45).

What constitutes quality and how it is measured differs with the perspectives of different interest groups who in a democratic society seek to impose their own perception of quality. This contest reflects the social, political, and economic interplay between contesting interest groups. Thus quality is a relative concept. It is relative in two senses: firstly, it is relative in terms of the user of the term and the context in which it is used. Hence its meaning differs for different people in different situations. This, in fact, leads us to raise the question, 'whose' quality? The stakeholders in higher education constitute a tremendous variety, including students, employers, faculty, support staff and the government. Each perceives quality in a different way. This, however, does not mean that their perceptions of the same notion are different; rather, they have 'different perspectives and different things with the same label' (Harvey and Green,1993:10).

Secondly, there is the relativism involved in benchmarking quality, although quality is seen by

some as of an absolute nature, like truth and beauty. Others view quality in terms of absolute thresholds that are to be exceeded if quality is to be attained, as in the case of output that has to meet predetermined national standards. In other contexts, quality is relative to the processes resulting in desired outcomes.

2.2. Taxonomy of quality definitions:

In their very useful paper, Harvey and Green propose five distinct conceptions of quality and these are discussed below.

2.2.1. Quality as exceptional performance

Harvey and Green argue that quality as exceptional performance has three variations. The first is a traditional one, in which quality is seen as distinctive and of high class. It implies the exclusive status of, for example, an Oxbridge type of education which is assumed to have quality, with no explicit assessment measures, as it is not judged against a set of criteria. A traditional view in higher education is that quality is inherent in universities which are not required to make it explicit to the public. This attitude is exemplified in the following statement by the British Universities Funding Council: 'the panels would recognise quality when they saw it' (1991, in Harvey and Green,1993:11). This traditional notion of quality is elusive when we consider assessing quality in higher education. Because quality is not determined by some definable means, it is consistent with any usage of the term and this 'has the potential to obscure its meaning and the political realities' (Harvey and Green,1993:11).

The second variation is excellence, which means exceeding high standards. According to Ball (1985), quality and excellence are employed interchangeably. Excellence, however, is connected either with elitism which is the privilege of a minority, or with zero defects. The former is about excellence in input as well as output, irrespective of the process; i.e. no matter what goes on between the input and output stages, it still embodies excellence. Quality in this notion is not judged against a set of criteria, but rather based on the belief that quality is embodied in these elite institutions. Quality thus is separate and unattainable for most people. An example of such a view is apparent in the German higher education system. Its quality

assurance is self-evident, as there are no external bodies to inspect the quality of a service, the system's values are internalised by the academic staff and followed through in all procedures. The third notion of quality as exceptional is that of passing a whole set of quality checks. The criteria that these checks are based on are designed to identify defective practice. In conforming to certain standards, quality is seen as the result of scientific quality control. That means that the relationship between quality and standards is interdependent in that if standards are raised then quality is enhanced. Theoretically, most higher education systems seem to adopt such an approach to quality in maintaining and improving standards. However, this approach suggests that standards are objective and static, when in fact they often go through negotiation processes in response to the changing circumstances.

However, the notion of conforming to standards differs in some respects from the 'traditional' and 'excellence' notions, in that it looks at standards in higher education as non-universal, a fact that makes every institution capable of attaining quality in terms of the standards it sets itself. Thus various standards can be set for different types of institution. What a community college sets as standards is inevitably different from the standards set by a university or a polytechnic.

In reviewing the notion of quality as exceptional with its three significant variations, we find that the first no longer has much currency; the new tendency of higher education systems is to scrutinize every single aspect of educational processes for accountability purposes. So what was valid in the past is not seen as such any more. The second notion, however, does not differ from the first in connecting excellence with elitist schools that are never questioned about their input nor their output. All their controls are operated by the people working within that institution, usually represented by the academic staff. Whatever the process followed by which students learn, the excellence is assumed to be there. Quality is seen to be implied at the input stage and this automatically transfers to the output.

However, the third notion, conforming to standards, sees a quality product as passing a number of quality checks, this can be contested on the grounds that quality means something above the

ordinary level. Frazer (1992) suggests that standards are only part of a whole in defining quality. He defines standards as the objectives of a programme and the extent to which graduates achieve these. Quality, however, is more inclusive since it involves standards as well as processes of teaching and learning. It also involves the activities of departments and institutions, and the fit between the intentions of a programme and the proficiencies of its graduates. Hence quality encompasses the outcome of all these factors.

Pring (1992), on the other hand, emphasizes the identification of the purpose and values of any quality activity. He argues that every activity has its own standards or attributes which differ from other activities. However, as the values and purposes of an activity change, so will the standards by which we assess that activity. Hence 'standards have neither gone up nor come down. They have simply changed. And it makes it logically impossible to make sensible comparisons of standards across the generations, or across cultures unless those cultures and those generations share a common set of values with regard to that activity' (Pring,1992:12).

The relative standards used to assess institutions invoke comparability issues. The criteria used to set standards are often not clear in conforming to any standard concept of quality. This undermines the notion that quality is something above the ordinary, while the concept of conforming to standards implies rather ordinary unexceptional standards. The implication of this notion for measuring quality is that standards may be high or merely minimal but both are easy to quantify and measure. Therefore, the value of implementing this kind of measurement in higher education is questionable if we are seriously considering improving and raising standards.

It is clear that the traditional notion of quality as exceptional is no longer acceptable to define what quality means, especially in the context of new approaches to quality assurance procedures. Quality is different from excellence, since the former is an attribute while the latter is a reference point. However, the notion of quality as meeting a set of standards or quality checks is also inadequate. Standards are distinct from quality. The distinction is demonstrated in the existence of two audits of British higher education; Higher Education Quality Council

is concerned with universities meeting their set objectives, while Higher Education Funding Council inspects the levels of the set standards and their attainment (McCulloch,1993). Furthermore, in the late 20th century quality concerns are focused on a whole range of factors including process: traditional assertions of elite status and exceptional standards are no longer adequate.

2.2.2. Quality as perfection or consistency

This approach focuses on processes, with set specifications to meet. Unlike the traditional notion, this approach turns quality into something every institution can attain. Excellence in this case means conforming to specifications but not necessarily exceeding high standards. It is characterised by two corresponding dictums: zero defects and getting things right first time.

The zero defect notion lays more emphasis on output rather than input. It draws a distinction between quality and standards. Quality is defined as conforming to a certain specification relating only indirectly to the standards set within that specification. It is the product or the service, which is judged to be conforming to predefined and measurable specifications, rather than the specification standing for standards or against any standards. Thus,'conformance to specification takes the place of meeting (external) benchmark standards' (Harvey and Green,1993:15). Perfection and excellence are achieved when everything is correctly done and no faults occur. This should happen in a consistent manner and at each stage. Thus, preventing defects is a crucial principle within this notion. It is connected with the notion of a quality culture, in which everyone in the organization is responsible for quality

The structure of the organization within this notion consists of interrelated nodes in which each node has inputs and outputs. They are known as quality interfaces. Therefore, quality is not only related to the customer's requirements but is also checked at the stage of production as well as in the delivery stages (Oakland,1993). So the principle of prevention is embodied in the quality culture, creating thereby a democratic atmosphere for ensuring quality in both processes and products at each stage. It is democratic in the sense that it involves everyone in the organisation, even in decision making.

It is obvious that the emphasis is on the processes rather than the standards of inputs or outputs. The zero defect notion does not identify absolutes to assess the output against, nor universal benchmarks. However, in the context of higher education, quality is viewed in terms of establishing, maintaining and checking standards. Thus the 'zero defects' or 'getting it right first time' conception is not readily in accordance with the values of educational institutions. Higher education is not about conforming to specifications; rather it is about promoting the analytical and critical development of the student which in itself indicates continuous evolution in the way things are done, 'a process of reworking and reconceptualisation' (Harvey and Green,1993:16).

2.2.3. Quality as fitness for purpose

Quality in this notion is seen in terms of the purpose of the product or the service, whether it fits its purpose or not (Ball,1985). The term is functional in the sense that if a product serves the purpose it is designed for, then it is of quality. Also it is not exclusive, like the exceptional; it is inclusive in the sense that 'every product has the potential to fit its purpose and thus be a quality product' (Harvey and Green,1993:17). However, this notion is quite elusive in the sense that it does not identify whose purpose or fitness is to be measured (Moodie,1986).

The specification of purpose may be left to either the customer or the provider. In the former case, the customer determines the quality of a product by providing some specifications of what a quality product ought to be. But as purposes change over time, continuous re-evaluation of the adequacy of the specification is required. Hence the model is developmental.

In theory, this notion assumes that the customer is capable of specifying his/her requirement as well as judging quality in terms of the extent to which the product fits his/ her purpose. It also assumes that the customer always knows what he wants in advance. However, his requirements may be influenced by factors such as cost, available technology, time, and marketing. Indeed, what the customer thinks of as his/her requirement may be seriously affected by marketing strategies (such as advertising) which have a direct impact on the

consumer's choices and expectations.

In practice however, producers normally pre-judge what the consumer wants to buy within the limits of their capital investment and cost limitations. In so doing they shape the consumer's perception of what he needs or wants. The producers detect the consumers' wishes through market research and assessment of sales; based on these, they aim their product at the consumer. Therefore, the consumer rarely specifies his/her individual needs.

The emphasis of this approach is on output, not process. In commercial products, for example, advertisements tend to appeal to desires rather than requirements. By appealing to desires, often represented as needs, the producer attempts to assure the consumer that the specifications of the product have been met and it is what the consumer needs.

The fundamental question that is likely to be raised is, who is the customer in the context of higher education? There is a host of customers; the students, the employers, the government and others. The customer, in general, is not the one to specify the requirements. In higher education students accept what is offered to them. They rarely determine what they need. Their choices are restricted by the entry requirements, shortage of spaces on some courses, unfamiliarity with the full range of courses, and so on. 'At best they may have some influence on determining the shape of the product once they are in the system' (Harvey and Green, 1993:18). It is what the provider assumes to be the needs of the students that frames the requirements of those students. It is easy to identify the physical needs of the student, but certainly not the educational needs, which involve intangible services such as the relationship between the lecturer and the student in the teaching and learning process. What is even more difficult is to evaluate these services. The student is not in a position to determine what quality is or whether it is there. Thus this definition raises yet again the difficulty of who is to define quality in higher education and how it should be measured. The definition of quality as fitness for purpose transcends meeting customer requirements to include delighting customers which is even harder to measure.

A mission-driven notion is the other alternative to the 'fitness for purpose' concept. Quality

in this context can be defined in terms of the institution achieving its own specified mission. The problem of customer specifications is partly resolved when the institution takes on the responsibility of identifying and fulfilling its mission. The problem remains for the institution of discovering whether it achieves its set purposes indicated in the mission statement or not. This in fact is left to the quality assurance mechanisms to monitor.

The trend for governments to focus on quality assurance is growing worldwide. For example, the British White Paper (Ziman,1994), focuses mainly on quality assurance mechanisms in higher education institutions. It emphasizes that if there are mechanisms, procedures and processes to ensure quality, then quality is delivered regardless of how it is defined or measured. Quality hence is seen in terms of the existence of appropriate mechanisms to provide for quality assurance. Although these mechanisms do not provide an appropriate definition of quality, they are in fact indicators that quality is being monitored within the institution. They may serve to define the standards set for the system, but not the standards that the institution is attempting to achieve. In other words, these mechanisms are not neutral: to some extent they determine how quality is defined.

The fitness for purpose notion leaves us with many unresolved issues such as whether the requirements of the students are met, whether they have the knowledge of what is offered to them, and whether they are satisfied with the educational service even when the institution meets its objectives. In fact students have limited knowledge on which to make quality comparisons and to draw the connection between satisfaction and quality. The institution, in fact, mediates students' expectations and thus influences their satisfaction when it achieves the requirements it sets itself. Students are incapable of judging whether their demands are met; they may be able to identify their short-term needs but certainly not the long-term ones as they lack experience and knowledge.

The 'fitness for purpose' definition of quality in higher education is vague in terms of identifying what the purposes of higher education should be. The views of stakeholders in higher education vary, so institutions may emphasize one purpose at the expense of another.

These stakeholders assume that there is some way of assessing fitness for different purposes (Harvey and Green,1993).

The quality debate casts some doubts on the 'fitness for purpose' definition. This can be attributed to the fact that we must consider the purpose of the stakeholder/ customer as well as of the professional /provider. Beyond that, it may be insufficient, in that it fails to capture the element of delight as a requirement for quality. Lewis and Smith (1994) define the element of delight as striving for quality in some way, which delivers results effectively. It is usually guided by market demands.

Doherty (1994) looks at the same notion from a social and cultural perspective. He defines fitness for purpose as 'not an a priori desired or aspired-to state of something that exists in some intangible, metaphysically 'real' way, but it exists (like beauty) in the eye of beholder. It is both a personal and a social construct because perceptions must be partially dependent upon the individual's social and cultural context and experiences' (P.242).

Doherty seems to attribute the elusiveness of the concept of quality to a mix of subjective, emotional and rational elements. He views quality as the outcome of a psychological state, resulting from an experience of expectations exceeded. It is the subjective experience of satisfaction which makes something valuable. Doherty argues that humans have so much in common in their social and emotional backgrounds that they can easily agree on what constitutes the experience of good quality in different ways. Thus some try to persuade others that a shared consensus is in a way inevitable. They attempt to be arbiters of standards, which results in mixing quality with power and control. 'The quality experience, therefore, is amoral. The subjective experience is a necessary but not sufficient element of a general theory' ((Doherty,1994:251).

2.2.4. Quality as value for money

Value for money is another competing notion of quality. It is linked to cost. However, quality

needs to be measured in relation to other criteria such as, standards, levels of specification or reliability. The British government has exploited this populist view of quality by stressing the link between the quality of education and value for money, exemplified in the efficiency and effectiveness approach in the 80s. 'It is axiomatic in the proposed annual 5% increase in student numbers with no comparable increase in the resources' (Harvey and Green, 1993:22).

Accountability is also a pertinent notion in the 'value for money' concept. Public services are to be transparent to the funders as well as to the consumers. Effectiveness is viewed in terms of the existence of control mechanisms such as quantifiable outcomes, research and teaching assessment exercises. As a result, performance indicators have been devised for monitoring efficiency, in terms of relatively crude measures such as staff-student ratios, ratios of public to private funds etc...

Accountability to the customers, on the other hand, is demonstrated by devices such as customer charters. These indicate the services a customer can expect for his money. They in a way protect the customer from inadequacies in the operation of the market. They enable the monitoring bodies to provide the customers with some recompense if the service fails and inform them of what other alternatives are available. However, how much impact charters exert on higher education is not very clear. Although they provide the criteria by which students can judge satisfaction, they in fact represent minimum standards which are not sufficient to maintain quality. The control remains with the producer or provider.

2.2.5. Quality as transformation

This concept implies a substantial qualitative change. Transformation in this context is not only crucially about cognitive development of the clients. The provider of the service in this notion is doing something for as well as to the customer. The new knowledge acquired by the customer is meant for use for specific purposes. 'This transformation is a unique negotiated process in each case. Again, this transformation is not unidirectional: a dialectical process is taking place, with a negotiated outcome' (Harvey and Green, 1993:24).

Education is a continuous process for the participant, that is for both the student and the researcher. This concept of quality involves two notions: enhancing the performance of the participant, and empowering the participant. The former notion refers to changes that affect the participant through exposure to quality education. It is known as value-addedness. Value-added measurement aims to assess the extent to which educational experience has enhanced the performance of students over and above what might have been expected. Quantifying such measurement, however, 'depends on the methodology and what is defined as being of value in the first place' (Harvey and Green,1993:25).

Quantifiable indicators of input and output are necessary for the measurement of 'value-added'. However, they do not reveal much about the nature of the qualitative transformation. In the transformation notion, learners are expected to be the focus of both the learning and evaluation process.Their feedback is of crucial importance. By focusing on the learner, the transformative process shifts from enhancement to empowerment (Harvey and Green,1993).

Empowering the participant, is the second element of the transformative process. It is about passing the power to participants to control their own transformation. This notion develops two things in the participant. First, the participants become involved in making decisions that influence their transformation by enabling them to take ownership of both the learning process and a responsibility for determining the style and the mode of delivery of learning itself. Second, the transformation process itself promotes self-empowerment, and this has a notable impact upon decision-making processes, which affect the participant.

Harvey and Green define four means for empowering students; student evaluation tools, student charters, passing the responsibility of learning to students, and developing their critical thinking. Empowerment of students obtains when students views are taken into account on standards setting, curricular content and other matters with direct influence on their leaning processes. In this sense, 'quality is judged in terms of the democratisation of the process, not just the outcome' (Harvey and Green,1993:27).

2.3. Discussion

A review of the contesting notions of quality suggests that some of these may be dismissed as unrealistic in the changing contexts of higher education institutions. As shown earlier, the 'exceptional' concept does not have currency any longer. The 'meeting standards' notion, on the other hand, is unacceptable on the ground that standards are subjective. They tend to change and vary over time. The 'fitness for purpose' concept does not specify whose purpose and how it is measured. The customer and provider relationship is not very clear within that notion, especially in the context of educational institutions. The 'transformation' concept is admirable, but not very practical in view of the changes that the higher education sector has been going through recently. Students do not seem to be granted most of the freedom associated with transformation. In fact, some institutions are adopting a compliance culture in order to reduce increasing external pressures. Because of these insurmountable problems in defining quality, the authors seem to settle on what is called a stakeholder approach, as proposed in chapter one.

The problem of these tremendous variations in these definitions of quality lies in the fact that in the absence of a unified theory about quality in higher education, there are many different concepts in existence. However, looked at from another perspective, the dominant purposes in any higher education institution may act as the constituents of quality such as: 'the production of qualified manpower, a training for a research career, the efficient management of teaching provision and the process of extending life chances' (Barnett,1992:18:19). Doherty's comment on Barnett's purposes is relevant here. He argues that 'each of these underpins a different definition of quality with different sets of attendant performance indicators and equally, of course, different sets of implied customers'(1994:246). Approaching the purposes of higher education as the constituents of quality puts the emphasis on the consumer or the customer; a point which Barnett says reflects an external view of what is expected of higher education. He perceives quality within a unified theory based on the development of the mind in the self-critical student. His view in fact reflects a normative judgement based on a utopian model of the development of the mind. In principle, it advocates

a notion of quality similar to Harvey and Green's concept of transformation.

Barnett (1992) classifies the various existing notions of quality into two distinct categories, namely objectivist and relativist. He does this in an attempt to maintain a balance between the theoretical, the quantitative, the practical and the academic, all crucial factors in establishing quality. In the objectivist's position, the emphasis is on identifying and quantifying certain features of higher education. This view implies the possibility of using the same assessment methods across all courses or all institutions. The underlying assumption is that a common methodology across the system, looking at the same aspects of performance and quantifying them in the same way, will result in an objective measure of quality. But Barnett argues that the figures may reveal something about each institution in relation to others but not about the institution itself. This approach focuses mainly on input and output as the basic features of the institution. The input includes features such as teaching staff, their qualifications, and their research activities. In addition, vital resources such as the library and the buildings count as input measures. Student entrants are another key input measure. The dominant means of evaluating the quality of the intake is through arithmetical valuation of prior examination performance. However, Barnett (1992) states that 'a student's performance at one moment in time cannot be an indicator of the quality of the educational processes that the student will experience subsequently'(p:47). In the objectivist approach figures are quantifiable and promote a ranking of institutions by their numerical scores on any of the indicators. The value-added concept appeared within the language of performance indicators to give weight to and to support individual indicators. To Barnett, 'value-added measures, being relational, cast doubt on the legitimacy of absolute measures of performance'(p:47).

Barnett emphasizes that the relativists' approach must be examined in terms of both public policy and theoretical backing. The former is reflected in the way decisions about funding are made in allocating cost in relation to performance. In other words, funding is determined according to the institutions' strategic and relational functions in the system, rather than to what an institution is entitled to obtain as a legitimate right. The theoretical backing, however, is derived from the relativism of social theory. 'Its central claim is that there are no absolute

criteria to hand by which we can assess either thought or action. Relativism does not imply that no sense can be given to the notion of truth, but it does suggest that there are different ways of slicing up reality and gaining a valid insight into it. In this way, there can be no absolute claims to validity' (Barnett,1992:48).

The two perspectives of the relativists and the objectivists can be seen combined together in the notion of fitness for purpose. Fitness for purpose has two interpretations. One is ideological, manifesting democratic concerns, and the other promotes a hierarchical view of higher education. Based on the limitations of these two notions of quality, Barnett (1992) develops his own definition of quality, which he terms the developmental approach. This has many aspects. While the relativist and the objectivist conceptions represent external viewpoints, the developmental perspective is that of internal members of an institution scrutinizing their goals and achievements. They aim to promote the quality of their work within their institution. They also take account of the needs of external interests and of society at large as part of the process of defining institutional goals. While the other approaches to quality assessment are summative, the developmental approach to quality assessment is formative. Further, the evolution of quality approaches within both the relativist and the objectivist approach is an outcome of the methods of assessing the performance of the institution. However, in the developmental approach the emphasis is on the activities related to the delivery of programmes of study. Its effectiveness lies in its relatedness to courses modules. Cross-institutional comparison is irrelevant in this approach (Barnett,1992).

To conclude this section, it is clear that these theoretical conceptions of quality are in a sense overlapping as they share many characteristics, such as criteria, standards, benchmarking, meeting requirements and so forth; a terminology frequently centred around the educational process. They are basically judgements which are arbitrary and subjective. In fact they reflect the various different perceptions of the interest groups associated with the higher education sector. They are required only in the absence of certainty. Therefore there is a wide gap between academic and governmental approaches to quality. From a governmental view, quality is achieved when a proper balance between quality, opportunity and cost is maintained. The

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academic bias, on the other hand, sees quality in non-instrumental terms, as residing in certain values intrinsic in academic work but not necessarily related to extrinsic ends (Newman, 1982). Thus a definition of quality is determined in the light of the purposes set by the higher education systems and by the mechanisms used to assess quality. There are broad and general purposes that all educational systems attempt to achieve. But at the same time each institution has its own specific purposes, goals, and objectives that distinguish it from other and similar establishments.

The various theories and approaches to defining quality suggest that the different interests in higher education are unable to find an agreed definition. However, what is said about autonomy and accountability in chapter one relates to this argument. The vagueness and obscurity of the these notions call for a dialogue to resolve their ambiguity. Indeed the notion of quality in higher education may remain elusive. Barnett (1992) argues that, 'the contemporary debate over quality is a vivid exemplar of the post-modern society, in which rival definitions of large issues are defended without any obvious way of either arbitrating between them or erecting a supra-cultural definition' (P.45). However, the different conceptions of quality reviewed so far in this chapter are acceptable as long as they can be justified in the specific situations.

2.4. How is quality measured?

There are other dimensions to quality that we need to further explore. A review of the salient methods used to measure quality in higher education institutions will contribute to our understanding of what quality means. Hence this section will look into these measures and consider their appropriateness as well as their limitations. Measurement of quality seems to vary in exactly the same way the conception of quality itself. These variations essentially reflect the views of the multiple stakeholders in the higher education institutions. Tan's (1992) review of past and present methods of quality measurement will be examined followed by a mention of performance indicators. The section concludes with a critique of the limitations and advantages of these various methods.

It appears that stakeholders in higher education consider quality is assured by the use of appropriate measures. This implies that quality assurance mechanisms must be transparent, vigorous, reliable, credible and demonstrably effective. However, the pressures imposed on higher education institutions suggest that the available measures are not effective enough to ensure quality. Tan (1992) attributes this failure to the complexity of the measurement methodology. Further, the instruments used are liable to abuse, and most importantly, they are not cost effective. There is an acute lack of evidence that these complex procedures have had any impact on the quality of input.

The traditional assessment practices within educational institutions are self-assessment, performance indicators and peer review. The self-assessment exercise is highly regarded by academic audiences as they see themselves as the 'guardians of quality', a self-critical academic community. However, a major limitation of this method is that it is highly subjective which raises some doubts about its reliability.

Another method is peer review. Despite the fact that this incorporates demonstrable elements of objectivity such as performance indicators and external reviewers, it is still open to the charge of subjectivity. Also its questionable reliability is attributed to the biases of the reviewers, be they external or internal. The inconsistency of different peer teams' judgements is a product of their educational, social and institutional backgrounds. Biased judgements are also noted in peer review visits which to some appear to be self-serving when the presence of subject specialists dominates the panel. The main purpose of peer review, however, is to ensure threshold quality, rather than to make comparative judgements between institutions or course modules. Its qualitative nature seems to cast some doubts on its effectiveness. However, it still remains the most extensively used measure in research proposals and academic publishing (de Vries,1997).

The extensive research and scholarly publications on quality assessment methodologies reflect the complexity and variations involved, as with the concept of quality itself. Knowledge of the attributes of quality seems to be the focus of this literature. The attributes may not be of wide

applicability to all institutions; nonetheless they may be applicable to all institutions of the same type, such as community colleges or research universities. Such knowledge may be relevant to institutions trying to enhance quality.

In an attempt to highlight the most notable research on quality assessment methods, Tan's review (1986) of prominent studies is used below. His article categorizes these into three general types: reputational studies, objective indicator studies which are further grouped into five types, and quantitative correlate studies.

2.4.1. Reputational studies:

Reputational studies pioneered inquiry into quality in higher education. These studies use subjective evaluations from faculty, department heads, or deans as bases for rating programs. The first pioneer to investigate quality through reputational studies was Hughes (1925). His contribution as a pioneer is evident in the emphasis on reviewing graduate programs, advocating academics as assessors, and using faculty quality as a major criterion for evaluating program quality. His study had its limitations in the choice of the small expert panel biased to specific areas in the USA, which influenced the geographical balance of the expert representation. Nonetheless, his findings guided many subsequent studies for comparative purposes.

In general, reputational studies are criticised for a number of reasons. First, these studies measured reputation rather than quality. Measuring reputation is normally influenced by department size and name familiarity from faculty publications. Second, reputational ratings have many methodological drawbacks and may establish a misleading 'pecking order'. Third, it is likely that bias occurs when the raters are mainly internal members of the department such as the alumni and faculty staff. Fourth, most of these studies looked mainly at graduate programs and the top 20 to 150 institutions in the country (USA). Fifth, some reputational studies have been criticised for not considering the institutional environment, such as institutional size and student cultural mix, which can affect reputational ratings tremendously.

Despite all that criticism, reputational studies are still useful. In particular, they have been very informative about the excellence of academic programs, especially at the doctoral level.

2.4.2. Objective Indicator Studies

Objective indicator studies have been used to measure quality by implementing objective measures. Theorists have identified different variables that they assume are linked to quality since knowledge about these is very scarce. Consequently, various variables have been deployed. Researchers have categorized these into five general types: those related to faculty, students, outcomes, institutional or departmental resources, and multiple criteria (Tan, 1986).

Before looking at these, a definition of an objective indicator needs to be provided at this point. An indicator is defined as 'a numerical value used to measure something which is difficult to quantify' (Cave et al,1991:21). A distinction can be drawn between simple indicators, performance indicators and general indicators. Simple indicators are used to describe a situation or a process in absolute figures which reflect their neutral nature. A performance indicator is a measure to assess the quantitative and qualitative performance of a system, e.g. the ratio between output and input. They indicate a point of reference such as an assessment or a standard. They are of relative character. A general rule for performance indicators states that they should have the following property: 'when the indicator shows a difference in one direction this means that the situation is better, whereas, if it shows a difference in the opposite direction, then this means that the situation is less favourable. This is the way in which the data are interpreted' (Cave et al,1991:21). Further, performance indicators are used mainly in management and organisations to obtain simplified information for decision-making purposes. Their merit lies in turning complex subjective judgements into a single objective measure. The major strength of objective indicator studies lies in the objectivity of the measurements (Cave et al,1991).

There are three distinct categories of performance indicators, namely; external, internal and operating indicators. External indicators of an institution are related to the market, these are the recruitment of its graduates or acceptance of its publications. The internal indicators

include aspects that relate to the productivity ratios, e.g. unit cost, workload, library resources and computing facilities. The operating indicators involve variables characterised in the institution's inputs such as undergraduate or graduate courses and research, or in the internal valuations, illustrated in the award of degrees and teaching quality. Further discussion of performance indicators is presented in the interpretation chapters.

2.4.2.1. Studies based on faculty

Studies on the faculty indicate that there is a high correlation between departmental quality and the overall quality of the faculty. They propose that if the faculty is of high quality, it follows that the departments within it will also be of high quality too. However, there is a lack of agreement on how the quality of faculty can best be measured. Researchers tend to diverge on this issue as some have used faculty research productivity to measure quality, while others have used faculty awards or the academic credentials of faculty. Departmental quality is also measured in terms of faculty publication records: the higher the number the better the quality. Tan (1986) argues that lower publication records in lower-ranking institutions are attributed to heavy teaching loads and a lack of library resources, and do not mean that they are inefficient in preparing their students for research productivity.

Nonetheless, these studies are not without methodological flaws. Firstly, most studies have relied on faculty research productivity as the only dependent variable in measuring quality, and criticism has been directed at equating faculty quality to program quality. Another limitation is the emphasis of these studies on highly visible institutions only. A third limitation is the failure of these studies to generate a consistent set of objective measurements that can be used for a variety of institutions, not just the highly-rated ones. Lastly, these studies have not considered other variables beside faculty.

2.4.2.2. Studies based on students

These have been used to measure quality through an analysis of student characteristics. In

these studies institutions were rated on the proportions of their alumni in post-graduate and undergraduate programs. However beyond this, researchers could not agree on the type of variable that could be used to indicate student quality. The use of student characteristics as indicators of program quality is not without flaws. Most researchers have used surrogate indices of the students experience instead of direct measurements. Tan (1986) argues that there is little empirical evidence supporting a direct linkage between student excellence and program quality.

2.4.2.3. Studies based on outcomes

These indicate that the quality of the departments or programs depends more on outputs than inputs. Outcome variables comprise the products of students and alumni. There is a lack of agreement on outcomes as a useful measure of quality. Further, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that highly productive students and successful alumni correlate with high quality departments. Tan (1986) contends that most student learning outcomes are more dependent on the quality of students than on the quality of the program.

2.4.2.4. Studies based on resources:

These studies have focused on departmental, institutional, and human resources as variables linked to quality. Measures thus include the human and physical resources. These are the numbers of the faculty, staff and students and physical facilities such as libraries, laboratories, office and computer facilities. Other values such as expenditures per student and per faculty, faculty salaries, research funds, departmental program services and the diversity of programs also count as essential resources. Although many studies have emphasized the effect of resources in enhancing quality, very few studies have provided evidence of the direct linkage between the two. However, these studies have revealed very little about the extent to which resources can be utilized as indicators.

This discussion of the first four types of indicator studies makes it plain that the use of a univariate approach is not without limitations. Firstly, there is uncertainty about whether the variable chosen to indicate quality will adequately represent it. For example, if research

productivity is considered a good indicator of faculty quality, faculty quality is still only one element of departmental quality. More information is required before we can reach the conclusion that the department is excelling. Relevant information on other variables is essential, such as, the extent of student learning, instructional effectiveness and financial resources. Another limitation of the univariate approach is the difficulty in measuring one variable when it fluctuates across time, rendering the whole process meaningless. For example, the fluctuation of students' achievement from year to year in a given department does not mean that the department concerned has varied in its overall general excellence. A third limitation is that there is very limited knowledge about the interrelationship of variables linked to quality, e.g. between faculty instructional effectiveness and student learning; and between library resources and faculty research. The same also holds for the intermediary effects, such as the way in which financial resources could affect faculty research and student learning.

2.4.2.5. Studies based on multiple criteria

An alternative approach starts from the assumption that since quality is multidimensional, its measurement should include multiple variables to indicate quality. The use of multiple variables should prove more effective since it would not be susceptible to fluctuations in just one or two variables. Unfortunately this approach has had limited success due to the fact that since this approach assumes a multidimensional concept of quality then it is susceptible to different interpretations. Also, most multivariate research is based on readily available data from previous studies. In the absence of a unified theory of quality, the problem lies in the difficulty in selecting the 'right' variables or combinations of variables for measuring quality (Tan,1992).

2.4.3. Quantitative correlate studies

Quantitative correlate studies have been aimed to identify variables that exhibit correlations with highly reputed programs. Many researchers have found that a good deal of correlation exists between two correlates of quality: for example, faculty compensations and library resources were linked to highly reputed programs. However, in such correlations it was not

possible to infer a cause and effect relationship. The quantitative correlate studies' strength lies in identifying major correlates of reputation, especially in graduate programs in highly reputed institutions (Tan,1986).

Notwithstanding their advantages, these studies have their weaknesses. Their first limitation is that they are an extension of reputational ratings, and therefore are subject to all the criticism that other reputational studies receive. The second limitation is that researchers relied on their intuitive perception of what might be linked empirically to quality. Thus the approach was atheoretical in the sense that it was not able to identify potential correlates of quality based on a theory of quality. A last limitation is that the focus of the researchers in these studies was on programs at the graduate level only, disregarding other influential variables.

2.5. Discussion

From what has been said about approaches to quality measurement, it is clear that the univariate approach has contributed to the understanding of quality assessment, especially in the absence of a theory of quality. However, the use of a multivariate approach seems more consistent with the definition of quality as a multidimensional construct. Multidimensional studies have empirically demonstrated the possibility of an in-depth study of the interrelationships of variables potentially linked to quality. However, it is necessary to differentiate between this multiple criteria approach and past quality assessment studies.

To begin with, reputational studies have chiefly focused on the ratings of the programs based on the raters' familiarity with the programs they were expected to assess. Other significant variables related to quality were rarely studied and almost never included in the computation of program ranks. The objective indicator studies appear to have the same problem in that they relied on a single variable for rating programs. There must be some doubts on the adequacy of using one variable as the best indicator of quality.

In contrast, quantitative correlate studies have examined the interrelationship of variables more adequately. The Hagstrom (1971) study used a series of product-moment correlations and

multiple linear regression analyses to investigate the correlates of quality. The study found, for example, a significant correlation between faculty research productivity and the number of faculty in a program. The notable limitation of this study was treating reputational ratings as the dependent variable.

Other quantitative correlate studies, by comparison with Hagstrom's, were adequately implemented in identifying the correlates of quality (usually reputation) and their interaction, which consequently provided explanations of the variance in the dependent variable. Second, the Hagstrom study (1971) was an attempt to overcome many of the limitations of previous studies. One of its significant strengths was that it permitted the measurement of departmental excellence to be objective and also allowed for the study of the interrelationship of variables. The variables are: 'department size; research productivity; research opportunity; faculty background; student characteristics; and faculty awards and offices' as best correlates of departmental excellence (Hagstrom,1971:375). That was not confined to just one cluster of highly correlated variables within one department but across clusters in 125 departments of mathematics, biology, chemistry and biology. The limitation of this study, according to Hagstrom, is the fact that it is within the domain of the department chairperson to enhance the status of his department through the selection of the faculty staff; the selection of the department students; and the promotion of research activity. However, the biggest advantage of this study was its multivariate approach. A ranking system implementing such an approach would not be influenced by fluctuations in just one or two variables; a problem which many univariate approaches suffer from.

Yet, the problem of quality measures remains unresolved over two issues. The first involves the extent to which the measurement of quality is applicable to all institutions of higher education or just course programs in one discipline. The second issue is about the relationship between quality and the value-added development of students; that is, whether students in highly rated institutions develop differently from students in institutions with lower ratings. In fact, studies of value-added issue need to be supported by a sound definition of quality. Tan (1992) suggests that it requires an identification of the competitiveness of each institution or

program in relation to others, according to certain criteria in addition to student development. This should be followed by a longitudinal study to investigate whether students develop differently in different types of institutions.

Previous studies on quality assessment methodology have contributed to a certain extent to our understanding. However, they are still preliminary. There remains a need in the multivariate approach to look into the identified clusters of quality variables for departmental excellence, for instance, in other disciplines to investigate if the same clusters as correlates appear. This in fact should reveal something about the relationships of variables within and across clusters. It will contribute to our understanding 'how different types of variables interact with each other in other disciplines and how all affect the overall picture of what we are trying to understand' (Tan,1992:219).

To sum up this chapter, it seems that in the absence of a unified theory of quality a wide range of definitions and measures of quality have been generated, indicating uncertainty as well as an attempt to reach an agreement on what constitutes quality and how it is measured. Harvey and Green's taxonomy of quality (1993) shows how quality is a contested concept. Barnett (1992) also develops his own conception of quality based on the same taxonomy. Tan (1986) and (1992) provides a taxonomy of the studies made on the methods for measuring quality. Research on quality is valuable as it provides various insights for higher education institutions to use in their specific situations and contexts. In practice many higher education institutions have chosen to adopt particular approaches to quality assurance without much concern for the theoretical and methodological complexities explored in this chapter. Faced with such issues, an apparently trustworthy strategy such as that offered by the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach has proven popular. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The TQM approach to quality assurance

3.1. Introduction:

The discussions in the previous chapters have revealed something about the approaches adopted to assure quality. Just like the rhetoric and logic of the conceptualisations of quality, the methods, strategies and approaches to quality assurance markedly vary and differ according to context. Even when an approach to quality begins with a specific philosophy, its application and interpretation become varied, once adopted by different stakeholders in education to fit their own local settings. This chapter reviews some of the business-oriented approaches to assure quality. A special emphasis is placed on the Total Quality Management approach as the most powerful model, and with particular relevance to this research. The routes via which TQM found its way into higher education will be considered. I also discuss the origins, philosophy and rationale of the approach. Methods of measurement within this approach are also reviewed. Special attention is given to Deming's fourteen principles, which seem to have significance for higher education institutions. In conclusion it is argued that the implementation of TQM in its totality is a controversial issue in colleges and universities. Hence, versions employed in higher education show considerable variation.

Although the origins of TQM were in industry, it has attracted many higher education institutions. TQM addresses the demand for quality assurance in a world of increasing competition for resources and customers. The increasingly unstable and uncertain environment means that higher education institutions need to be able to manage change positively and constructively, and the TQM approach is geared to fostering flexible attitudes towards change processes. Investment in people is the major financial commitment of higher education institutions, and people are their most expensive and valuable resource; TQM focuses on the work of organisational members.

TQM as a management system has a long history, dating back to 1924. Many 'gurus' have contributed to the many versions implemented today. What they all have in common is that their original ideas started in the fields of science, engineering and statistics. Names like Taylor, Shewhart, Deming, Juran, Ishikawa, Feigenbaum and Crosby have in fact laid the

foundation for all total quality practices used worldwide. In particular, it is Deming whose ideas have introduced TQM into educational settings.

An early approach ISO9000 (International Strategic Opportunity for the 90s), was first implemented in 1978; it preceded TQM, but has not gained the same success in higher education. It was based on the British Quality Standard BS 5750, and other European and North American countries' quality standards for manufacturing companies. The prime purpose was to develop quality control methods, not only to control product quality, but to maintain uniformity and predictability. Basically, it addresses management practices. Its success in training and education is relatively limited due to the fact that its language and approach are alien to these fields. Out of the twenty 'standards' specified, only twelve seem to be relevant to the teaching process (Lewis and Smith,1994). However, these are difficult to apply to the teaching/ learning processes. For example, the product of teaching is both the quality of what the student experiences (the teaching) and the outcome (what has been learned). It is easy to monitor the outcome, but very difficult for a quality measurement system to monitor the process. Further, this approach ignores cost or money in any form and focuses on customers' needs; a difference that distinguishes ISO 9000 from TQM. Added to this is the fact that TQM principles have implications that challenge current practice in both administration and curriculum, as is manifested in Deming's fourteen points for quality management.

Hence, Total Quality Management is one of the approaches many institutions opted for to achieve change in the direction of fostering high quality learning through the shared efforts of various stakeholders in higher education. In fact, some colleges and universities recognize that TQM values are more compatible with higher education than many previously existing management systems. A growing number of institutions are adopting the TQM approach, as is evident in surveys conducted of USA institutions. For example, in 1991, at least 92 institutions implemented TQM. The figure rose to 220 in 1992, indicating a heightened interest in that approach as a management scheme. Districts and schools also experienced successful results from their TQM initiative (Smith and Lewis,1994).

3.2. The entry of TQM into higher education institutions

Williams (1993) argues that the entry of TQM practice into higher education has been driven by four factors. The first was through recommendations from business people who are members of the university governing bodies and whose experience with TQM brought many benefits to their business. The second is through academics in engineering and business departments in universities who teach TQM to their students making TQM part of the higher education vocabulary. Thirdly, governments, whose main concern is control of funding, put increasing pressure on institutions to implement new management approaches. Finally, the fierce competition between institutions in a market-driven world makes TQM appear to be the most effective approach in such an environment.

3.3. What can TQM models offer to current academic practice?

It is essential to begin with a definition of what Total Quality is before we can discuss its merits and demerits in an educational setting. The literature published on TQM reviews different ways defining the TQM approach. This section will review Lewis and Smith's definition, together with those of Sherr and Lozier's and McKinsey's. Each writer uses a different rhetoric for the same philosophy underlying this approach, in the same way as they differ over defining the concept of quality.

Lewis and Smith (1994), for instance, provide a holistic concept of TQM within any organisational context. They define it as a 'set of philosophies by which management systems can direct the efficient achievement of the objectives of the organization to ensure customer satisfaction and maximize stakeholder value. This is accomplished through the continuous improvement of the quality system, which consists of the social system, the technical system, and the management system. Thus it becomes a way of life for doing business for the entire organization' (P.29). The systems referred to can be defined as follows. The first, the social system, includes the formal and informal features of the organisation: the organisational culture which involves values, norms and expectations ; the quality of the relationships between organisational members and among groups, which is affected by the reward structures and symbols of power; and behavioural patterns between members which include roles and

communication. The social system exerts a notable influence on the activities of the organisation in terms of motivation, creativity, innovative behaviour and teamwork.

Second, the technical system, comprises the tools and machinery, the practice and the quantitative aspects of quality. This system monitors the flow of work through the organisation. It is based on two principles: fulfilling the organisation's mission statement and satisfying the customer.

Third, the managerial system concerns the organisational structure (formal design, policies, division of responsibilities, and patterns of power and authority; the mission, vision, and goals of the institution; and administrative activities (planning, organising, directing, co-ordinating, and controlling organisational activities). 'Management provides the framework for the policies, procedures, practices, and leadership of the organisation. The management system is deployed at four levels: strategy, process, project, and personal management' (Lewis and Smith, 1994:90).

Sherr and Lozier's (1992) perspectives on TQM seem to focus on certain aspects that they define as quality dimensions. Their view, in effect, overlaps with that of Lewis and Smith about what TQM comprises. However their main emphasis is on processes, as these form the most critical dimensions of quality. Their approach emphasizes that design, process, and output as the constituents of quality organisations. Design seeks to define the intended features of the output. It ought to reflect the consumer's need. It is concerned with the specifications of the output, be they materials, human resources, or the time frame for the delivery. Output refers to the actual product or service and it usually has measurable aspects. The process or the flow of work activities is the most substantial aspect of quality. It involves defining who the customer is and whom to involve in the design. They suggest that the mission statement of an organisation is a good source for identifying the customer. However, Sherr and Lozier find that mission statements often do not recognise the customer sufficiently because they may identify the services offered like teaching and research but neglect the customer.

Since a process is clearly at the heart of the TQM approach, a more expanded definition is

needed here. Ewell (1993) states that a process is 'the basic unit of analysis of a production line consisting, in essence, of an ordered sequence of defined operations resulting in a specified product or service; critical features of a process are that it is replicable and can be documented. If it cannot be described, it by definition cannot be improved; hence a major preoccupation of TQ practitioners lies in identifying core processes and determining exactly how they work' (Ewell,1993:52). The definition, in fact, is consistent with TQM's industrial origins. Its implication for educational settings is discussed later in this chapter.

McKinsey (1982) provides a framework for the different components of a TQM organisation, named 'The McKinsey Seven-S's Framework'. Within this framework, he identifies two broad categories in TQM: the hard 'S's'; the organisational structures and the soft 'S's'; the human structures. The 'hard 'S's'comprise the strategies, structures and systems. Strategies refer to the overall plan of action that leads to the allocation of the organisation's resources in order to meet pre-set plans; structures refer to the organisational management structure in terms of functions, the nature of the organisational structure whether centralised or decentralised, and lines of accountability; and systems include the procedures and processes implemented to ensure efficient and effective processes. The 'soft S's', on the other hand, include staff, style, skills and shared values. Here 'staff' refers to all categories of personnel, be they managers, specialists, etc. 'Style' is the features of organisational management behaviour in achieving the organisation's goals and its cultural style. Skills involve the special features of the key personnel of the organisation. Lastly, the shared values are the guiding principles that the organisation invokes in its members. These values should call for a focus on organisational clients or customers. Such a focus generally reflects more outward- looking attitudes. It is of crucial importance to foster understanding of the people the organisation is interacting with, be they internal or external to the organisation. Commitment to both is essential.

In an attempt to demonstrate the relationship between the two broad categories that McKinsey identified in his classification of the TQM components, and Lewis and Smith grouped under three systems, Doidge and Whitchurch (1993) illustrate this relationship more vividly in the quality pyramid, which is the basic structure of the TQM approach, shown below. It originated with the founders of the approach. The TQM organisational structure comprises a quality

council, which is constituted of the leaders of the organization who are responsible for deciding on key issues. They set and agree on the vision and mission, the message is subsequently delivered to everyone else. Thus management and commitment are created from the top, while making sure that everyone is aiming at reaching the same ends. The second level comprises the improvement teams, which work together using problem-solving techniques on the key issues identified by the quality council. The third level is represented by the quality circles. Groups in these circles aim at continuous incremental improvement processes to enhance quality performance.

Figure 1: **Quality Pyramid** (Whitchurch and Doidge,1993).

Thus what this structure aims at is creating a chain of relationships between the different stakeholders in the organisation, working towards the same goal in their different positions. Their common goal is to assure quality at every step of the processes undertaken in the organisation. Such management seems to overrule the traditional hierarchical structures, which give priority to regularity and power. It is based on the concept that the success of that approach depends on the involvement of everybody. They linked the structure of an organisation to the relationships that exist between the people in it in order to achieve quality. The process ought to be applied in such a way that it is responsive to the needs of individuals for independence and involvement. Further, it is vital that the participation of everyone must

occur in the most beneficial area where they can contribute most. People in a TQ system also expect to see commitment that meets theirs at all levels. This eventually facilitates communication and the co-ordination of everybody's effort.

After introducing this account on the TQM approach in organisations in general, it is important at this point to provide a brief description on how this approach measures the different processes within an organisation, using Oakland (1993) mainly as one of the designers of TQM measurement.

3.4. TQM Measurement

Since TQM has an industrial origin, its measurement appears to rely on business-oriented standards. Hence the commercial language used for measuring processes is mainly focused on key industrial terms such as direct input or output figures, the cost of poor quality, economic data, comments and complaints from customers, and information from customer or employee surveys. However, despite the original focus on business, it has some potential principles in its measures that could be adapted to fields other than industry. Its adaptation is feasible in terms of its leading motive, which is continuous improvement. Improvements can be applied to all types of processes, be they in the academy, business or research. The measures are guided by the overall philosophy of the TQM, that learning appropriate concepts, processes, and skills and applying these skills to appropriate problems and projects will lead to assuring quality (Oakland,1993).

The idea of measurement is based on two components, namely the process and the workteam in a TQM context. Oakland (1993) argues that improvement is targeted at processes, since the basic rationale of TQM advocates the inspection of faults before they occur in the end product. In order to ensure that processes are tackled effectively, an efficient well-trained workteam is required. To guarantee that these two factors are present, some form of measurement is required to inspect them.

According to Oakland (1993), the measurement of quality in the TQM approach plays an important role in 'identifying opportunities for improvement (quality costing)'. It also

compares 'performance against internal standards (process control and improvement)' as well as against 'external standards (benchmarking)' (P.163). The internal standard methods for inspecting processes are designed by the Japanese quality guru Ishikawa, one of Deming's students.

Oakland refers to seven major tools to measure internal processes, these are: cause-and-effect diagrams,; checklists; pareto charts; control charts; flowcharts; histograms and scattergrams. The application of these tools is accomplished by the people who are involved in the processes, and are encouraged by the managers of the organisation. There are seven extensions to these tools. These form the systems and documentation methods, which are implemented to achieve success in design by identifying objectives and intermediate steps in the finest detail (Oakland,1993).

Workteams, on the other hand, are at the heart of the success of the processes. It is their awareness of the factors of success, and the mission of the organisation as well as the key processes that should lead to quality organisation. The driving motive for these teams should be serving the customer, continuous improvement, processes and facts and respect for people (Lewis and Smith,1994). The actual execution of processes in TQM follows the Deming cycle, based on Shewhart's cycle of continuous improvement: plan-do-check-act:
'Plan: establish performance objectives and standards.
Do: measure actual performance.
Check: compare actual performance with the objectives and standards- determine the gap.
Act: take the necessary actions to close the gap and make the necessary improvement'
(Oakland,1993:165). These four steps, in fact, form the improvement cycle of TQM, and each step has its own performance measurement.

Oakland (1993) argues that the main objectives for measurement in this approach focus on the customer's satisfaction; the objectives of the organisation; the standards for comparison purposes; the quality problems that need to be highlighted; a justification of the use of resources and lastly the provision of feedback. They, in effect, answer the question as to why measurement is needed in TQM. The priority, however, is given to the customer, which reflects

the basic concept of the whole approach: that satisfying the consumer is the most prominent indicator of quality achievement. In order to satisfy the customer, inspection of the above factors follows so that the end product will give optimum satisfaction.

Performance measurement attempts to convert the strategic objectives of the organization into desired standards of performance. This results in developing the metrics that will be used to compare the desired with the actually achieved standards. Once the gaps are identified, effective performance is attained by improving the practices and operation of the processes. The assessment of process performance is separated from process management because the former is about quantifying- showing how often, how many, how big/small. Process management, on the other hand, is concerned with the what, why, where, when, who and how.

To measure performance in relation to external standards, benchmarking is used to assess products, services and processes against other leading and competitive organisations. This results in a search for best practices, which will lead to superior performance (Oakland,1992). The appeal of such organisational structures to the academy lies in the notion of decentralizing management and empowerment; a point that is emphasized by the existence of workteams rather than individual entitlements. Decisions in this case cannot be made at the higher level of administration; rather it is the workteam, which decides what is best for academic activities.

3.5. Discussion

The previous account of the TQM approach provides a general overview of the components, namely, the structures and how these structures determine the chain of relationships between the workers. However, a particular focus on TQM use in higher education is needed here. Winchip (1996), has analysed the views of 25 experts on the adaptability of TQM in higher education institutions. These experts came mainly from colleges and universities in the USA, who are familiar with the philosophy and the implementation of TQM in higher education. Based on these responses, she argues that TQM can be quite successful in particular areas, such as: 'curricula; academic programmes; the quality of students; collegiality; and productivity' (Winchip,1996:232). However, she identified other areas where TQM has limitations. These

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are: 'institutional mission; faculty autonomy; traditional values; learning process; diversity of people; organisational structures; the use of power for control; change processes; lack of leadership; political forces; and government agencies' (Winchip,1996:233) These will be discussed in the data interpretation chapters.

Nevertheless, the impact of the TQM approach on and in higher education remains controversial. The advocates of TQM find this approach a way of resolving many problems that higher education (mostly American universities) faces in these difficult times. On the other hand, adversaries, appear to have a high degree of confidence in the work they do and a strong desire not to see higher education change very much at all. Many British universities have found it too business-oriented to deal with processes like teaching/learning. A third group feels that it is possible to strike a middle path by adopting the most appropriate principles of TQM for their own local settings. This in fact violates what TQM is about, since basically it means a total approach rather than fragments of it. The experiences of the different institutions thus seem to reflect disparate reactions and outcomes.

The advocates' stance is based more or less on the conviction that the challenge of the 21st century requires a new approach to resolve institutional issues. Difficulties such as high competition between institutions, dramatic changes in higher education related to student enrolment numbers, the influence of market forces associated with employment and career growth, and limited economic growth are some of the motives that have driven a good number of institutions to adopt TQM. These institutions also view TQM as building on traditional concerns for quality. It recognizes the need for continuous development of the people who are part of the higher education system, be they students, faculty, or administrators. Further, it involves principles applicable to institutional administration and classroom teaching, thus providing a bridge between traditionally separated parts of the system (Lewis and Smith,1994).

The adversaries' view, on the other hand, emerge from their uncertainties as to how quality can be defined. They believe that TQM, like many other approaches, is unable to provide a precise definition of what constitutes quality. For instance, Shore and Roberts (1995) think that quality in the TQM approach is equated with the existence of a monitoring system and providing

value-added. This is particularly true within the British educational system. To them, it demonstrates a modern bureaucratic form of power and control, as it promotes 'a chain of command, a system of line-managers receding towards the summit of an organisational pyramid' (Shore and Roberts, 1995:12). Such a system is supported by the state authorities, which aim at economy and coercion, which the authors see as displaying the purposes of higher education.

The adversaries concern about TQM methods focuses on the impact of such a system on the individual lecturer, 'who is impelled toward an endless and relentless quest to improve performance and to achieve what is in effect the unattainable goal of 'total quality' in all duties'. It leads in the end to 'destructive internal rivalries and the fragmentation of solidarity' (Shore and Roberts,1995:13).

TQM is also criticised because it attempts to equate institutions of higher education with businesses, exemplified in the use of the terminology and techniques of management. It also tends to emphasize the use of market metaphors, such as; making the system more cost effective, improving efficiency, enhancing productivity and performance, providing value for money, and giving customers more choice. To TQM advocates who accept these slogans, quality is guaranteed through careful monitoring and measurement of performance and productivity (Shore and Roberts,1995).

To reconcile these conflicting views, a focus on Deming's philosophy will be useful here. As one of the founders of TQM, Deming felt that this approach can be effectively deployed in the field of education, though, he made no specific reference to higher education. Deming is particularly concerned about the human element in organisations and this is clearly expressed in his 'fourteen principles', which he sees as integral to the 'House Of Quality'. This concern may be attributed to his career background, where he noticed the effect of poor working conditions on the quality and quantity of the product (Lewis and Smith,1994).

To summarize these principles, Deming (1986) emphasizes the importance of creating constancy of purpose in improving the programs and administrative services of an institution

to improve performance. To achieve that, institutions need to rule out the old practices of inspection, testing and rating people. Supervision, to Deming, should aim to help people use procedures, techniques, machines, and materials to do a better job. People in an organisation can be more productive, when they work in teams rather than as individuals, so that the quality of the service becomes the responsibility of everyone in the institution. Relationships among workers in an institution are vital, and this should include students as important members of the academic community. Such relationships create 'quality students capable of entering meaningful positions in society and improving all forms of processes and practices' (Lewis and Smith,1994:90). Education and training are not confined to students; faculty, staff, and administrators are also learners. For such growth to occur, fear must be driven out, so that everyone in the organisation is encouraged to give his/her opinion freely (Deming,1986).

As for performance standards, Deming believes that they are to be eliminated; instead faculty, students, staff and administrators must be given the opportunity to enjoy their individual and personal performance and productivity. Thus a shift from quantity to quality takes place. Such a transformation in the system requires effective leadership. However, the transformation that Deming suggests does not happen through massive changes, but rather through day-to-day acts; it is incremental.

Deming finds the power and control issues irrelevant to quality achievement. His stance is different from that described by Shore and Roberts'. Thus he rejects the use of staff appraisal and merit system on the grounds that people working in an organisation should feel secure in their jobs. He argues that 'trust is a much better motivator than fear' (Deming,1986: 64-65) and cooperation is more important than competition. When improvement is required then the whole organisation should work together to reach a solution. Blame should not be directed at any specific individual; rather faults must bring the people in the organisation together in the effort to achieve better results. In fact that is the point where Shore and Roberts and Deming meet. Quality circles should not be implemented as a chain of command system, as the two authors describe it; rather quality circles are meant to create a formal but unthreatening setting for everyone in the organisation, including senior managers, to arrive at a credible solution when problems arise. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why Deming's fourteen points for quality

TQM are more attractive to some academics, in terms of expressing a humanistic attitude towards people working in an organisation. Deming's philosophy emphasizes management's roles in setting broad directions and facilitating processes, while decentralizing operational decisions to the level at which the work is done.

Deming's philosophy also rejects the MBO (management by objectives approach), as it equates education with business. This is inappropriate because the emphasis is on outputs which does not reveal much about the process; or as Deming states it 'measures of productivity do not lead to improvement in productivity' (Deming,1986:15). He called this process rearview driving. The resultant figures from inspecting processes, in his opinion, distort the activities of teaching and learning and provide only crude measures of accountability. In theory only, they offer an objective, rational and fair system for assessing and ensuring quality and excellence in teaching and research. But in practice, statistical indices, external inspectors, institutional appraisal and critical self-appraisal are inappropriate for measuring processes like learning and teaching. He asserts that VNO (visible numbers only) are poor surrogates for the actual judgements of teachers, and that test scores are the equivalent of short-term profits, not long-lasting quality (which would be evident in students' enhanced understanding). Thus what he advocates is an informal assessment, stemming from the normal processes of teaching and learning, which is invisible but necessary to promote quality.

According to Deming's philosophy, the concept of quality should embrace both theory as well as practice. Theory refers to the desired state to be reached, while practice involves the process that influences quality. Leaders in an educational organisation need to distinguish between stable processes that need no adjustments and those in which adjustment is desirable. Change thus should aim at improvements rather than innovation. It is the job of all the people in an organisation from the top managers to workers at the quality circles level to work towards that goal.

The variation in the implementation of TQM is due to the fact that higher education institutions do not function in the same way- what is functional and appropriate for one university is inappropriate for another. Thus the way to improve the quality of the teaching/learning process

is through taking each situation separately and dealing with it as different from other situations, i.e. each school has its own particular setting which requires an individualistic approach. Holt (1993) supports Deming's model on this issue. He argues 'reform is a matter of taking each individual case and developing its 'internal goods' (P:386). From Deming's reference to schools, one can deduce that it is even more difficult for higher education institutions to adapt TQM's industrial principles to their settings because of the nature, purpose, and culture of universities and colleges.

Viewed from the customer concept perspective, although TQM follows a business- oriented approach, it can be adapted to the educational context, since the characteristics of a customer apply to the student in higher education in a business-oriented age. The implication, however, is that more attention should be given to the student as he/she is the prime consumer and producer of the commodity higher education institutions offer. The student is entitled to determine the product, which is basically the course of study. Holt, in fact, suggests that the process should be given sufficient attention; attention should be paid to the student's response to new programs, 'of society's changing demands on students, and of our deepening professional understanding of education as the development of mind and character' (Holt,1993:386). This means focusing on the customer's needs in a never-ending search for quality. However, the problem which higher education institutions face in defining the customer is attributed to the fact that there are many customers: the student, the purchasers of research, the organisations that recruit the alumni and the state which pays the bills and sets the overall aims.

As has been observed above, there are different approaches to quality. Each represents a distinct set of concepts, emphasizing certain aspects rather than others. This is exemplified in the way TQM is implemented in different institutions. It reflects the way quality is perceived by the different institutions of higher education. However, measurement of quality seems to be as controversial as the definition of quality itself.

To conclude this chapter, it seems that the implementation of the TQM approach remains a controversial issue for educational institutions. It is not a simple matter, as it requires a

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substantial change. Change of any kind is difficult, especially when it involves organizational culture. It is essential to recognise and understand what seem to be the barriers affecting the implementation of TQM (Winter,1992). Special attention should be given to the authority relationships between faculty and administration and the changes expected in the role of the higher education institutions' leaders. More important is to define educational outputs in terms of customer satisfaction, which should be of prior concern to higher education institutions. Leaders and faculty in these institutions ought to develop the expertise, opportunity, and environment essential to pursue continuous quality improvement. TQM measurement, however, does not seem to have much to offer in terms of improving the assessment of processes. Its assessment is geared to outcomes, either during the process in the workshop, or, when the product reaches the customer - the resulting market reaction and customer satisfaction. This principle is not very different from what is practised in universities in the present time, in that the market is the final arbiter of what passes as quality and what is not. This situation leaves higher education institutions with very little choice about whether to accept TQM in its totality, or select the most attractive and appropriate parts of it. The former requires a considerable degree of transformation in the existing practices of the academics who do not seem to fully embrace imported business approaches, as will be shown in the interpretation chapters, especially in processes such as learning and teaching, or in matters such as academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The latter choice, however, violates what TQM philosophy is about, as it is a comprehensive approach that inspects quality in all aspects of an organisation.

Chapter Four: Quality concerns in Kuwait University

4.1. Introduction:

In the preceding three chapters, I reviewed the literature relevant to this study. I dealt with three broad issues: the international concern for quality; conceptualisations of quality, and approaches to quality assurance. In chapter one I provided the factors that highlight such concerns. I also argued that these concerns are not new to higher education institutions. The chapter lays special emphasis on accountability and autonomy, as particularly important in an academic environment. In chapter two, I reviewed the different concepts of quality and showed how they reflect the views of the various stakeholders in the higher education sector. I reached the conclusion that these varying and overlapping definitions are reflected in the assessment methods used to measure quality. Thus a review of the different methodologies is provided. In chapter three, I considered the different approaches to quality assurance with a special focus on TQM, as of interest to this research. I examined the philosophy, rationale and the practical aspects of TQM in the context of higher education institutions. I concluded that each institution has its own particular setting, which requires a distinctive approach. Thus what is functional and appropriate for one university is inappropriate for another.

The main purpose of reviewing the relevant literature was to prepare the ground for the specific focus of this study, which is Kuwait University. This chapter provides the background of KU. It describes briefly the higher education system in Kuwait in order to highlight the role of quality assurance in the Kuwaiti context. It draws on publicly available information. An attempt is made to link what is reviewed in the literature to practices already adopted. Therefore, the chapter is divided into six main sections. In section 4.2, I review some basic historical information about KU. I then discuss the organisational structure of the institution, in section 4.3, to show how this structure has a direct influence on the quality procedures. Section 4.4 describes the student population of KU. In section 4.5, I revisit some of the issues discussed in chapters one, two and three while reviewing the quality assurance procedures recently implemented in KU. These are: accountability,

power and control, and autonomy. Evaluation and change are addressed in the last two sections as the chapter concludes with a brief review of the QA procedures implemented from 1977 up to 1994, in section 4.6. This is followed by a discussion of the factors of change, which accelerated the emergence of the new QA policy in section 4.7.

4.2. Factual information on KU

KU was established in November 1966, five years after Kuwait became an independent state, and ceased to be a British protectorate. It started with only two main colleges, namely Arts and Education, and Science. At present, KU comprises10 colleges; they are: Arts, Science, Administrative Sciences, Law, Engineering and Petroleum, Medicine, Allied Health, Education, and Islamic Studies, in addition to the Graduate School. Added to these, there are the academic centres that provide supportive services, including the language centre, community service centre, computer centre, evaluation and measurement centre, medical sciences centre, academic development centre, research directorate, university libraries, admission and registration deanship, student affairs deanship and lastly the university press. The university administration, however, is an independent entity with many branching directorates. These various colleges and directorates are spread over five different campuses.

University education started with the Egyptian model itself originally based on the English one, with a four- year system. This lasted for 8 years, and was followed by a shift to the American credit system, which took place in 1975. The new system was applied incrementally, meaning that it was implemented only in the commerce and political science colleges for a couple of years, then it was followed in other colleges, except for the medical school which still follows the 7 year English/Swedish system, and the law school which follows the four-year system, based on the Egyptian/French model. The medium of instruction is Arabic for the following colleges; administrative sciences, arts, education, islamic studies and law (half French and half Arabic); the science colleges use English.

The higher education system in Kuwait is quite limited. It comprises only one university and a number of vocational colleges subsumed under the Public Authority for Applied Education. In public opinion, university education is more prestigious than its vocational

counterpart. Hence parents tend to encourage their children towards university education rather than vocational training, since they or their own parents came from families with little experience of higher education (Neave,1996). This tendency puts tremendous pressure on the university admission policy, which is currently becoming a major political issue. KU staff view the pressure as a serious problem which impedes the establishment of selection criteria for quality intake.

As the only higher education institution in the whole country, KU's credibility is always in question, as there is no other institution in the country against which to benchmark its performance. But the system is not as isolated as this suggests because the workforce in the institution comprises diverse and multinational individuals, be they students, teaching staff, support staff or administrators. The ratio of expatriates to Kuwaitis is more than 1:1 that is to say, they constitute 57% of the workforce in Kuwait University. Each contributes to the academic, cultural and political structure of the organization. They all participate in setting the current standards. Standards here are interpreted as the performance of students as measured by targets set at the outset, that is, what each department aims to achieve for its students during the four or five year period leading to qualification. Thus the department staff act as the guardians of quality in their departments. Judgements are made about the rise and fall in standards according to student performance.

Although this research is based on a case study of KU as a higher education institution in general, the colleges of science and education are to be given particular attention for reasons, which will be stated in chapter five.

4.3. Organisational structure

KU is a complex organisation, which comes under the overall control of the Rectorship of the university. However, decision-making processes seem to be shared between two entities; firstly, the Minister of Education and Higher Education who chairs the university council, from which derives many technical committees, and secondly, the Rector of the university who chairs the higher executive committee, the promotion committee and the deans' committee. The university council is constituted of people working in the university, both academics and administrators. The university council includes the Rector of KU, the

secretary general, the deputy Minister of Education, the deans of colleges, three representatives of the government, and lastly three members from the private sector (see KU organisation chart on the following page).

Crucial decisions are made by this council: about the university annual budget, admission policy, the academic year schedule, recruitment...etc. In other words, its duties encompass every activity that the organisation performs. Over the past years it seems that the external members seem to approve of the manner in which the academic administrators are running the university, thus they are on their side rather than against them.

The organisational structure of KU is arguably a blend of authoritarian as well as a collegial or democratic features. Power appears to be concentrated sharply at the peak of the structure in matters that deal with budget, admission policies, recruitment, promotion etc. Hence, the classification of levels of organization includes five levels, moving from bottom to top, these are the department, the college (constituted of a group of disciplines), the university, the state government, and the Amir. The first three are contained within the confines of the traditional university, the last two are placed above it (Kuwait University Organisational Structure Guide,1995).

The function of the first level, the department, is mainly teaching and research. Its chief purpose is to develop an academic discipline. And since KU's educational system follows both American and European models, the department is used in the American sense of an academic unit which comprises a number of faculty of different rank and status. The college is the next level. The traditional role of a college is to prepare students for learned professions. The colleges in KU are controlled by their own college council, which is formed of faculty members from the departments regardless of their rank or status. The council is chaired by the Dean of the college. Its members have the power to finalise decisions at the department level. Sometimes they go against the department's will in matters such as the recruitment or admission policy of the college. The university is the next level of organisation. At this level the Rector is assisted by five Vice-Rectors, each with a specific responsibility: these are the Vice-Rector for planning, the Vice-Rector for academic affairs, the Vice-Rector for research, the Vice-Rector for academic support

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Ministry Of Education
&
Higher Education  →  University Council  →  University Rector  →  Council For Academic Consultation

University Rector  →  Higher Executive Committee  ↔  Promotion Committee

University Rector  →  Secretary General

Secretary General  →  Deans' Committee  ↔  Administrative Office

Secretary General  →  Vice – Rector for Academic Support Services
Secretary General  →  Vice – Rector for Research
Secretary General  →  Vice – Rector for Planning
Secretary General  →  Vice – Rector for Academic Affairs
Secretary General  →  Vice – Rector for Medical Sciences
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services, and the Vice-Rector for medical sciences. The fourth level is the state government represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, which supervises KU as well as the vocational colleges. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the minister is the head of the university council through which significant issues are decided. Finally, at the fifth level is the Amir or the ruler. His Majesty's interventions seem to be restricted to the very highest level of the organisational hierarchy concerning decisions such as the appointment of a new Rector for the university. This in fact happened with the present Rector whose appointment needed an authoritative decision, since she is the first woman to occupy such a position in the Gulf area.

There are six policy areas where decision making can be analysed: overall planning and policy making, budget and finance, student admissions and access, curricula and examinations, appointment of senior and junior staff, and research. In the first two areas, the government usually intervenes directly. In the last four there is less government involvement. But its representatives are on the board, which decides matters of an academic nature. However, in the latter case the representatives tend to leave it to the academics to formulate feasible policies. They tend to restrict themselves to expressing an opinion.

With regard to the organisational structure in the colleges, the science college seems to differ from the education college in its allocation of positions along its hierarchical order. Science has a structure which reflects that of the senior administration; the Dean, the Vice-Dean for student affairs, the Vice-Dean for research and academic affairs, the Vice-Dean for planning and the Vice-Dean for academic support services (see college of science organisation on the following page). The education college structure, on the other hand, is confined to the dean, a Vice-Dean for student affairs, a Vice-Dean for teaching services and a council for the heads of departments (see college of education organisation chart on the following page). This in fact indicates that precise administrative structuring is left to the individual colleges to arrange as they deem appropriate.

4.4. Student intake

KU now has more than 20.000 students. They are the product of the public schools as well

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                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  Dean of College │
                          │   of Science     │
                          └─────────────────┘
                                   │
        ┌──────────────┬───────────┴───────────┬──────────────┐
        ▼              ▼                       ▼              ▼
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ Vice-Dean for│ │ Vice -Dean   │ │  Vice – Dean for │ │ Vice – Dean  │
│  Academic    │ │ for Student  │ │    Research &    │ │  for         │
│Support Services│ │  Affairs    │ │ Academic Affairs │ │  Planning    │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────────┘ └──────────────┘
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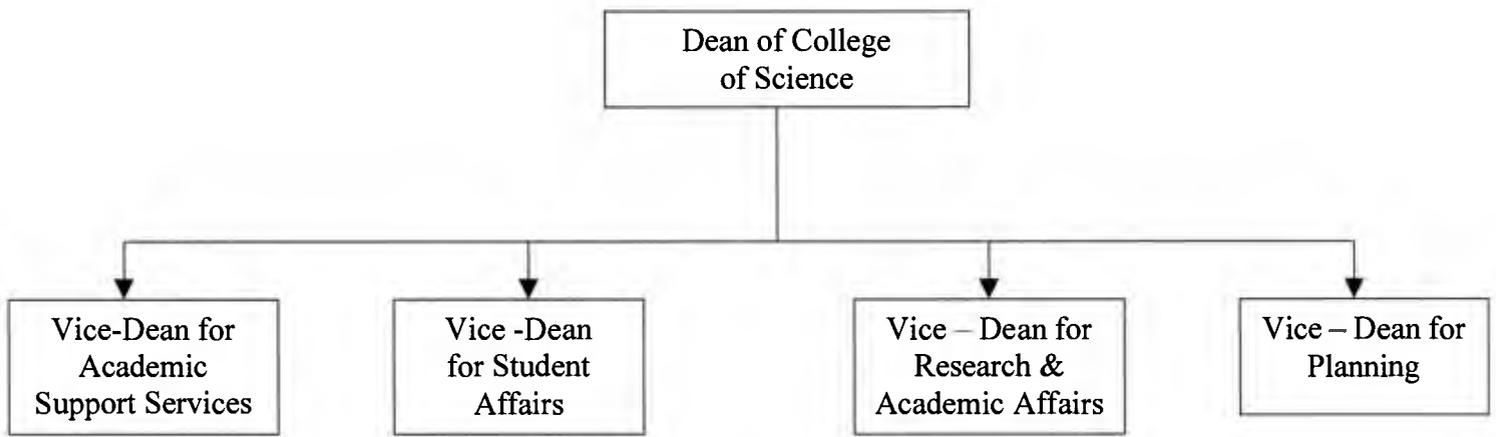
Figure 3:   College of Science Organisation Chart

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┌───────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────┐
│ Dean of College of Education│ ──────────▶ │ College Council │
└───────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────┘
              │
   ┌──────────┼──────────────────────────┐
   ▼          ▼                          ▼
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐
│Vice –Dean for│ │  Heads of    │ │  Vice – Dean for │
│  Student     │ │ Departments  │ │Educational Support│
│  Affairs     │ │  Council     │ │    Affairs       │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────────┘
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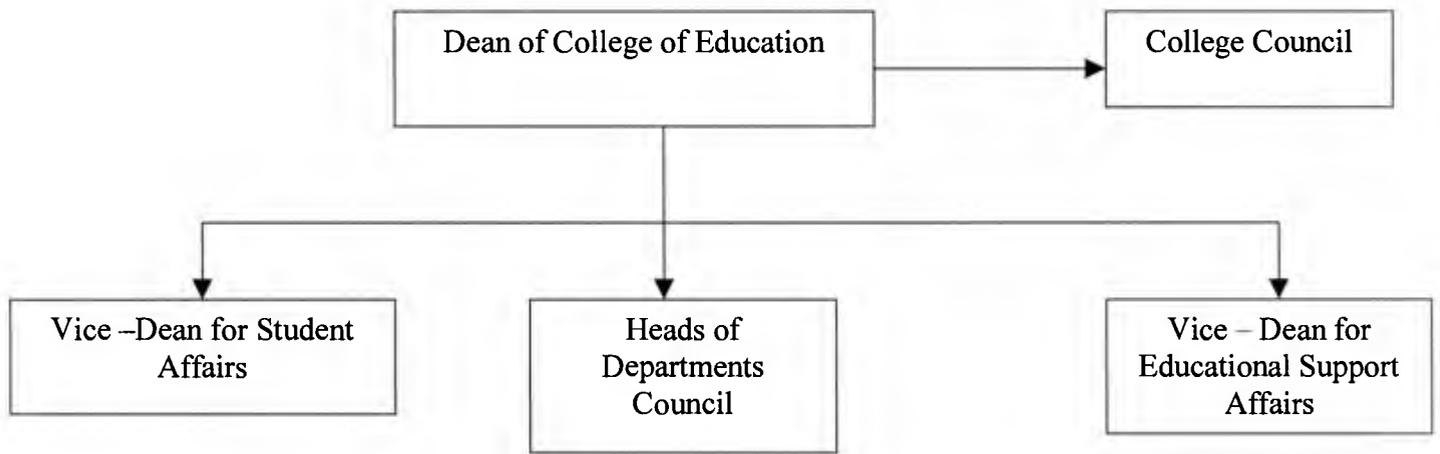
Figure 4:   College of Education Organisation Chart

as the private sectors. Their knowledge of higher education before they enrol is rather limited. Very little is revealed to them about the policy and the education service of the institution before their entry to higher education. University entrance is open to anyone who has completed secondary education with an acceptable GPA (grade point average) as specified in the admission policy. A small percentage of the intake comes from private sector schools including the 'foreign schools' which are American, English, French, Iranian and Indian. Their proficiency in foreign languages exceeds that of those from public schools, where Arabic is the medium of instruction. They are therefore at an advantage when enrolling in English-medium colleges. Another advantage is that they have experienced a wider spectrum of assessment and evaluation methods such as team projects, class presentations, class talks and debates which makes them more adaptable to university assessment methods than their counterparts from the public schools.

There are other differences in the educational background of the students, which reflect the fact that they are the product of two distinct educational systems: the traditional public education system and the credit-unit system. The latter is American. It has been implemented since 1979-1980, in 27% of the secondary schools in the country. The products of the two systems vary in their abilities. The products of the credit-system schools are more familiar with procedures of registration in courses and evaluation methods at the university than are those of the public schools. However, that does not mean that they are higher achievers. The KU intake thus is heterogeneous in its educational background, which means that their demands on higher education are diverse and sometimes conflicting. However, the extent to which their demands are met is still a sensitive issue for the university administration. Currently, KU's accountability to students as major stakeholders in the education process is not explicitly stated. In other words, students do not play a marked role in academic policies related to curriculum or teaching staff, nor in administrative decisions that concern their learning. In fact, their parents seem to be more entitled to intervene in the university's administrative affairs than the students themselves, but certainly not in academic business.

It is worth noting that there is a separate but a powerful entity which is not classified under the organisational hierarchy of KU, and that is the KU student union, which has branches

in many countries where Kuwaiti students pursue their studies. On many occasions, the union has had power to put pressure on the higher administration to change policies related to students in general but certainly not academic. Their accomplishment in this matter is insignificant. Further discussion of students' power is followed in chapter nine.

4.5. Quality concern issue

After this brief description of KU structure, it is imperative at this point to address the issues of accountability, power and control, and autonomy and relate these to what is reviewed in the literature.

Accountability

KU is a typical public institution, held accountable to society like other public establishments in the country. The government's control is manifested in the admission policy, as KU has yielded to government interference in determining the number of new entrants at different stages in its history. The decision to admit 35% of the total number of secondary school graduates for the year 1994-1995 is an example. The decision, however, was backed by the public, represented by the members of parliament, as well as by parents. This example indicates that different types of educational decisions may reasonably be considered the domain of different groups; the employer, the practitioner and the client in the field of education. It is a responsive accountability based on an acknowledgement of the complexity of the relationship between the three parties. Although the academic administrators, represented by the Rector and her assistants, make the decisions, they have to take into account the interests and requirements of other groups. The interest groups comprise the government, members of parliament, employers, parents, university council, deans and faculty members. It is basically a chain of relationships which is hierarchical 'in that each link can control, to a greater or less extent, the practice of subsequent links, and the autonomy of any given link is subject to the constraints which may be placed upon its freedom of action by the preceding links' (Halstead,1994:152). However, the disadvantage of this, 'chain of responsibility' is that it might lead both to the growth of bureaucracy and to power struggles between the different links in the chain.

Power and Control

The power struggle in the responsibility chain is manifested in the tension between the government and the university administration, which transcends institutional boundaries. The university has attempted on various occasions to reduce the intensity of government control over its admission policy by stipulating new regulations that might protect its integrity towards the academics and maintain its academic quality, stemming mainly from the fact that professionals stick together against outsiders to their trade (Phillips, 1989). Formulating a new requirement for entrants is one of these regulations. The new intake admission policy is modified by the requirement of an entrance exam. The exam tests ability in mathematics, computer skills and language (English). This has had a positive but temporary effect on the quality of entrants enrolling in the university. The examination requirements ensure that the institution does not have to waste its resources on developing the basic skills that are provided for in secondary school curriculum. Hence, the recent requirement aims at both maintaining the quality of entrants and also saving resources, which implies a notion of value for money.

Accountability to other stakeholders is even more pressing in relation to the private sector which recruits large numbers of KU alumni. Their concern about the quality of KU graduates is demonstrated by the progress reports that their local evaluators issue at the end of every year and send to the university. They tend to emphasize the fact that the graduate students of KU lack some basic skills that could help them to function adequately in their jobs. As a result, the private companies have to put these graduates into intensive training programs, either locally or abroad, to develop their skills. For example, in response to private sector employers, the academic administration of the commerce college surveyed the needs of the job market in an extensive study. Based upon the findings of that study, the college specified certain required skills for their entrants in an entrance exam. The college also merged certain departments to qualify its graduates with important skills in preparation for the market. The Vice-Rector for planning, who is a staff member there, believes that they provide their students with some of the skills to function adequately to 'globally acceptable standards'; as the university cannot prepare its graduates to be 100% qualified to the standards needed by the market (pilot interview on December 23,1996).

At KU there is a continuing struggle between centralization and decentralization. There is a growing trend towards the latter. The tension between the two notions is implicit. The real power tends to be in the hands of the people at the higher levels in the hierarchy, that is the positions of the Rector and her assistants. Authority is increasingly centralised in order to meet system-wide problems and maintain integration in major decision-making policies. Simultaneously, it is segmented and retained at lower levels in order to develop effective decision-making in specialized operations at the faculty level, related to internal department policies. However, that does not imply a contradiction; it is more or less a matter of division of power in terms of what Halstead (1994) defines as hierarchical chain of relationships.

This hierarchical structure at KU is part of the organizational form which was imported from elsewhere. This basically emulated British and Egyptian practice between 1966 and 1976, and thereafter American from 1976 until the present. Thus it was not independently invented. These transformed models have been adapted to survive in the Kuwaiti context, and with time they have become traditional, a focus of organized interests and the subject of a supporting ideology. The political, social and economic aspects of the Kuwaiti society had influenced it, by turning it into a hybrid system with emergent properties (Giddens,1984), so that flaws can always be attributed to a misapplication of the original form (Clark,1978).

Autonomy

As far as autonomy is concerned, there are four levels of autonomy in KU; autonomy of research, teaching autonomy, autonomy of financial expenditure and administrative autonomy. The scope for autonomous decision making varies between different issues and different levels of the organisation. For example, individual academics have a high degree of autonomy when it comes to determining their personal research agenda. Allocation of funding has to go through department committees that would judge the justification for requesting a certain amount of money to conduct research. No external bodies interfere with decisions made by the committees, unless the feasibility of the research project is questionable either financially or otherwise. Evaluation of the faculty research productivity is again an internal business of the university. Autonomy in research is valid within the walls of the department. However, beyond that boundary it seems that there are strict criteria for approval.

Decisions about teaching, syllabus, examinations, etc. are the province of individual departments within the general frameworks set by their college. The department hence decides within its own frame of reference, which knowledge should be transmitted and which techniques should be used for that purpose.

In terms of financial autonomy, the university is free to manage its own budget within the limit of the funds available. Budgets are delegated to colleges and they too delegate allocated amounts to the individual departments.

The university has control over matters to do with teaching and research staff. It confers academic degrees and establishes relations with other institutions abroad in interchange programs. But the picture is varied in relation to administrative autonomy. KU is not in a position yet to control its own admission policy due to reasons mentioned elsewhere. Furthermore, the appointment of the Rector is not totally an academic decision, because the government has a large say in it. The government is represented by the Council of Ministers, which participates in deciding which of the candidates recommended by the academic committee is most eligible for the position.

At this point, the emphasis of this chapter shifts from providing general background of KU to a more special focus on QA issues. The following section will deal, in the main, with how QA procedures had developed before the implementation of the new QA policy, from 1977 up to 1994. The issue of change is also addressed, providing thus the reasons, which accelerated the emergence of the new QA policy within KU. This in fact should prepare the ground for the following chapters, which concern the empirical work conducted on the development of the new QA policy.

4.6. QA procedures at KU from 1977 up to 1994

It seems that QA procedures were never defined in the KU context before 1994. That is to say, they were never explicitly stated in any of the documents that KU published in the past. In fact, there was no clear policy for such procedures. However, there was an awareness of the need to conduct assessment of the academic activities, which are carried out on KU campuses. Such an awareness was manifested in the establishment of an office, which carries the title of

'Evaluation and Measurement' in 1977. It was the first in the Arab world. The office started with very limited tasks performed on a very low scale, as a service unit for administering international exams such as the TOEFL, GRE and GMAT. The customers of this service were mainly secondary school students who intend to go abroad for their undergraduate education. They also included KU graduates who had been awarded government scholarship schemes to continue their postgraduate studies. At a later stage, the office extended its services to professionals such as doctors and psychologists who sit for qualification exams such as FMGEMS for doctors and MAT, CDPE for psychologists. Both are sponsored by American organisations. At this stage the office was thus mostly concerned with student assessment rather than any form of quality assurance.

In 1979/1980 a new activity was developed as an additional task for the office, and that was the student evaluation mechanism. The office introduced the student evaluation sheet as a mandatory procedure for all colleges. However, most of the colleges resented the idea of being compelled to do this. The administration reconsidered the proposed evaluation and suggested that it should remain optional to the different colleges. By 1988 there was only one standard student evaluation form that was used by all colleges. The sheet consisted of 38 items, 14 items to assess the course and 24 items to evaluate the instructor. Students were also allowed to produce a critical written account of the course and the instructor on the same form. A statistical study was made of the results of some colleges in 1983/1984 (Al-kandari, 1997).

A more democratic procedure was followed by the evaluation office in 1988, whereby the deans of colleges were given the opportunity with their own staff in the colleges to select 40 items from a total of 200 items for inclusion in these forms. They were also requested to formulate three items that were peculiar to their different colleges. Five of the 40 items were common to all colleges. These formed the university core items and were retained. It is worth noting that this form was issued by the University of Bordeux at Indiana State at the request of Kuwait University academic administrators. It was then translated into Arabic by KU faculty. The student evaluation form has been through many modifications at different stages and both faculty and students still express dissatisfaction with it as a tool for evaluation. This was evident in their responses to my questions on this issue. Student evaluation became compulsory in 1994. It is considered as one of the criteria for faculty promotion, along with

research and community service. This gives this process more weight at all levels (Al-kandari,1997).

In July1988 the office conducted a large-scale study of the university students' achievement. The study was intended to measure the achievement of the students from the traditional secondary education in the four-year degree system as compared with their counterparts from the new credit-system schools. The objective of the study was to find out if the type of educational system had a significant effect on the students'overall achievement in KU. The study was carried out by an American evaluation specialist from The University of Ann-Arbour in Michigan, who stayed for an extended period of time to complete the project (Khammash,1988). The results of the study were never made available to KU staff. Nor was it referred to when a similar study was conducted in 1995. This reflects the marginal role that the office for E&M played then, due to either a lack of evaluation specialists to manage the routine tasks more efficiently, or to the academic administrators' doubts about its actual role.

During these years some colleges and some departments did take measures of their own to assess the quality of their work. But self-assessment exercise carried out in some departments was never a concern of the Evaluation and Measurement office. It was treated as an internal affair within each department. Department evaluation activities were always documented in the department itself. They were never exposed to people outside, except for external reviewers who would visit the department and spend a week or so to get an overall impression of how things were going. At the end of their visits they would write a report of their views covering both the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the department. But in practice these procedures did not take place in all departments in the ten colleges.

There were instances of peer-evaluation and supervisory evaluation by the head of the department. Both activities were conducted at the department level, unless a crucial decision was to be made, at which point the college council would have a say in e.g. a termination of a staff contract. All kinds of evaluation documents were kept in the department's office; no one had access to those except the department head's successor. Thus the Evaluation and Measurement office was certainly not intervening in the internal businesses of the college's departments.

The role of the Evaluation and Measurement office was even played down when an exceptional evaluation activity was carried out in 1984, at the university level. With the appointment of a new Rector, it was proposed that an overall assessment of all departments in KU colleges was needed to identify the points of strength and weakness. Evaluation forms were provided by higher administration to the different departments; these covered teaching, students, research, libraries, support services and facilities. The project took some months, but it was never completed as the Rector stepped down from his position and went back to his teaching post in one of the colleges. However, massive data were collected which were never analysed or interpreted so as to be of use to KU staff.

When this project was in progress, the Evaluation and Measurement office was only responsible for the administration of the student evaluation forms and was totally isolated from other evaluative procedures. This may be attributed to the absence of a full-time specialist in evaluation who could specify what the tasks of the office could be in relation to such a significant evaluation project. Most of the people who headed that office took over on a part-time basis. Sometimes they are faculty from the college of education. At other times they were external recruits from abroad who had a short contract with the university and left after they had finished their projects.

During the Gulf War many documents were lost and destroyed at all levels in the university. Thus between 1991 and 1993 the university went through a reconstruction period in order to be able to open its doors again to students. Or put in other words, it was a survival period.

By 1993 KU had just begun to recover from the massive reconstruction process. Hence the immediate priority was to restore essential services: acquire teaching faculty and other staff; allocate classrooms, re-equip laboratories, libraries and above all recreate an environment that would facilitate and enhance the teaching-learning process. The office of Evaluation and Measurement then experienced a stagnant period until 1994 when more serious attempts were made to assign more demanding tasks to the office that it began to play a more effective role. This is evident at the initiation of the new QA policy.

4.7. The emergence of the new QA policy: an incremental change

The issues of accountability and autonomy have had a high priority on the agenda of KU after the Gulf War between 1991 and1992, as mentioned earlier. That can be attributed to political as well as economic reasons. Politically, more democracy has prevailed, since the Kuwaiti people have had their representatives in the parliament; previously the educational system had had absolute academic freedom, in terms of policies. Economically, however, the government has tightened the budget on the different public service establishments, including the university, due to the high level of expenditure on the war and subsequently on armaments. The university in this case has to provide sound justifications for the money it receives from the government. The government and the public thus have acquired increased power for intervening in the internal business of the university. The result has been that the university now has to account to both stakeholders for the quality of its services, as it is not working in isolation any longer.

In order to demonstrate its external accountability to all stakeholders and to achieve some international comparability of quality standards, KU has developed new evaluative procedures to assure quality. The emphasis on such procedures began in1994. The old practices were thought not sufficiently demonstrable publicly, in that they were purely for internal consumption in the university. Further, evaluation and assessment procedures had been strictly a departmental business; the institution as a whole was only interested in indicators of students' performance.

Changes taking place in the region after the war also accelerated the emergence of the new QA policy. It is best seen as an incremental change. The new adopted QA procedures to assure quality at the institution level imply a departure from old practices that KU academic administrators find inappropriate, in the current circumstances. The change pursued is derivative from a diversity of sources. For the local context, 'innovations are not neutral in their benefits and that there are many reasons other than educational merits that influence decisions to change' (Fullan, 1989:28). In KU, there seems to be more than one reason for the prospective change. Demonstrating accountability for external and internal purposes seems to be an important factor. Hence each basic unit in the university has to provide an account of its activities, be they academic or administrative, in the form of performance

indicators to justify its different functions and operations. 'Shifts in the macro-environment are translated and filtered in different ways. Economic pressures have been felt in conflicting trends towards greater state regulation alongside expectations of increased market responsiveness, and in calls for efficiency gains and improved service quality against a backdrop of a steady decline in the unit of resource from the state'(Middlehurst, 1997:184). The accountability notion is also connected to the tightend budget in the post-war period, whereby KU budget has been reduced, resulting in a disruption of the functioning of many sectors in the university. However, the reduction underlines the value for money concept. Providing accounts seems also to help in appeasing community pressure (Fullan,1989) exemplified in the public, the parliament members and also KU students, who are not certain how their institution is doing in relation to other international universities. Hence 'there has been a constant flow of positive and negative feedback which has shaped the system dynamics. Together, these feedback mechanisms can explain why systems gain or preserve a given form and how this form can be elaborated and transformed over time' (Morgan, 1997:274). QA policy is an example of a product of this flow of feedback.

As for internal factors, it appears that they stem from different motives. The ambition of the current senior administrators to remedy both some of the previous administrations lack of documentation and the institutionalisation of present policies appears also to be an incentive for bringing about change. This is due to the fact that the change of the Rector every four years brings with it changes in rules and regulations at the institution level. The current administrators are attempting to refreeze the system by reinforcing, internalising and institutionalising the new QA procedures (Lewin, 1947). They are more inclined to keep abreast of the developments in the different colleges than their predecessors. This may be attributed to the fact that some colleges demonstrate in public their activities more than others. This helps the administration to sustain more control over the individual entities, as practices vary in the different colleges, in terms of methods of student assessment in particular, as well as other business.

Most important of these forces is the daunting concerns to improve quality and standards, or to put it in other words, to upgrade the institution. It represents a significant goal of the

university at large, according to the university five-year-plan document (1995-2000). The quality issue is becoming high on the senior administrators' agenda due to the developments that the whole country is going through. Hence, these and other specific detailed motives at the different levels may be considered as driving forces of change. The collective views of senior administrators confirmed the reality of those factors, as will be shown in the data analysis chapters. The changes thus embrace both the macro and the micro levels of the system as will be shown in chapter ten.

Responsibility for developing quality procedures was therefore placed with the office of the Vice- Rector for academic affairs. The Vice-Rector is assisted by a colleague from the engineering college who has been appointed as consultant. The new project is known as the 'strategy of excellence'. It is called a strategy because it is meant to be integrated into the existing system and to be fully developed over a period of 5-7 years. The basic goals are to establish an institutional system, which is founded on solid academic criteria and uses an ongoing evaluation mechanism. The purpose is to reach international academic standards in higher education, which aims at delineating the frames of an academic system based on 'internationally well-defined standards of higher education' in pursuit of excellence (EM office document:1). This strategy has identified nine aspects, which seem to be vital for achieving excellence and will therefore be the focus for the 'strategy of excellence' policy. These are:

1-student standards;

2-faculty performance in teaching;

3-research productivity;

4-community service;

5-academic programs;

6-facilities available such as laboratories, classrooms etc; audiovisuals;

7-support staff such as teaching assistants and laboratory demonstrators, technical and administrative staff in the department such as secretaries and laboratory technicians

8-the effectiveness of the administrative system in the academic department as a link between the department and the college and the college and the university;

9-and lastly the role of the academic department in the community.

This evaluation strategy aims at assessing the current practices in KU as an educational

system. Evaluation is meant to be an ongoing activity integrated in the university academic practices in such a way that weaknesses can be identified and improved at each stage. It is more or less based on the American model of Total Quality Management approach, which many international higher education institutions have adopted from the industry sector for its efficiency and effectiveness, as noted in chapter three. The impact of the new imported model on KU faculty is explored in chapter seven. At this point it is sufficient to say that the idea of evaluation as a continuous process has raised many questions among the faculty. They have expressed discomfort with this new notion of evaluation and probable change. The academic staff in the college of education resisted the project team visits to their departments at the outset. This, however, indicates their reluctance to give up the academic control that has been in their hands, when KU was first established. However, the situation has changed since I collected the data in the pilot stage in December 1996. The college staff seemed to develop a different stance during my fieldwork in 1997.

The project may meet good success as the leaders in the institution are whole-heartedly supporting it. In fact, the academic administration represented by the Rector and Vice-Rectors view their roles as leaders from a different perspective. That is to say, by backing up the new strategy, it seems that they are keen on adhering to its main principles, which suggest that quality in this approach is the responsibility of everyone working in the organisation. It follows that decision-making is not the responsibility of the few individuals at the top of the hierarchy, according to KU Rector (pilot interview on December 24th,1996).

To sum up this chapter, it is clear that KU as a higher education institution has its own distinctive political, economic and social characteristics that differentiate it from other similar institutions. However, as a public higher education institution, KU has its own long standing concerns in terms of accountability, autonomy, power and control, and change issues that need to be addressed like institutions elsewhere. The QA procedures are not new to KU as shown in the historical background provided. However, they were never integrated into the university system nor were made transparent to external stakeholders. Essentially, the emergence of the new QA policy is driven by various factors, most important of these is making KU purposes more explicit to external as well as internal

stakeholders. This trend coincides with the international thrust towards more explicit mechanisms that will assure quality at the institutional level. The following chapters will provide further details on this new QA policy. But before doing that a discussion of the methodology deployed to collect data relevant to this topic is provided in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1. Introduction

The review of literature in the previous chapters on quality assurance enhances my theoretical sensitivity to the major concerns of stakeholders in higher education institutions in general. It shows how quality is defined in different ways by different stakeholders as well as by the different approaches to the conceptualisation of quality. But at the same time, the studies made so far identify certain theoretical methods that are recognised and approved of internationally for measuring quality. And in KU, as a higher education institution, a similar concern and interest is manifested in the new QA procedures undertaken recently. Practices may slightly differ from one setting to another, but the essence of the pursuit of quality remains the same for institutions worldwide.

The theoretical sensitivity to the substantial issues of QA developed by a study of the existing literature helped to define what data I needed to collect (Strauss and Corbin,1990). In other words, issues such as the tension between autonomy and accountability, attitudes towards change, why the TQM strategy is selected, and power relationships characteristic of evaluation contexts, are encountered in the field of study, namely KU. But a progressive focus on emerging themes that are context-specific inevitably develops.

The intervention of the researcher is based on a fair grasp of the conceptual geography of the QA debate as well as a familiarity with organisational behaviour theory. It is expected, however, that a theory emerges during the data collection, analysis and interpretation phase to confirm and verify those theoretical perspectives. In other words, a theory is grounded inductively during that phase through the researcher's neutral transactions with respondents (Strauss and Corbin,1992).

Therefore what is discussed in this chapter on research methodology closely relates to the theoretical conceptualisations on quality assurance reviewed in the literature. This chapter is divided into two stages; pre and during fieldwork and post-fieldwork. The pre-fieldwork stage deals with the motivation for undertaking this research, whereby I recognise that there are the institutional as well as personal reasons. This is followed by an explanation of the research

design, where I discuss why a mix of qualitative and quantitative paradigms was appropriate for this study. The next part reviews the methods or instruments for data collection, which were: document analysis, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and thematic analysis of related literature. I explain how each can contribute to the credibility of the data. In the during fieldwork stage I describe my entry to the setting and the subsequent steps I followed to carry out the tasks of interviewing and questionnaire administration. A special mention of ethical procedures is also considered. The post –fieldwork section then sets out the modes of data analysis, which are based on inductive methods. The modes are mainly description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the motivation, positive developments, constraints and disjunctions of the KU strategy of quality assurance.

5.2. The nature of the inquiry

The theoretical perspectives help the inquirer to be more acquainted with the area, so that she/he is in a position to predict new information that may be encountered in the field and then to verify its existence. This assumption is based on the fact that quality assurance is becoming a theme of the nineties; almost all institutions are adopting various approaches to assure quality in their local contexts. However, there are certain approaches that are more powerful than others; TQM is an example.

Within the context of the local institution, the new policy required a change from old practices, which were not explicitly demonstrated in terms of existing assessment mechanisms, to more developed holistic procedures represented in 'The Strategy of Excellence' (TQM). This strategy attempts to scrutinize multiple aspects of the university, confirming what is surveyed in the literature on new quality assurance approaches.

This inquiry started with a focus of interest on the new developed approach to quality assurance in KU. It is an evaluation of what in essence is itself an evaluation. It aims to contribute to a solution and provide specific descriptions of the procedures undertaken for quality assurance in the sense that it attempts 'to clarify, to document, to raise new questions, and to create new perceptions' (Guba and Lincoln,1981:75). Thus it is both problem- oriented and policy related. The task of evaluation, in this case, is 'to contribute to dialogue and help shape understanding'

(Simons,1987:20) about the implementation of TQM, and its impact on the senior administrators, faculty and students as well as on current university policy.

The guiding criteria for this type of study are credibility, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba,1985). Credibility is determined by the method/s of data collection which in turn are shaped by new insights gained as the investigation proceeds, since the strategy is novel and at an experimental stage. An assumption of multiple realities is simply more credible than that of a single reality, as there is a multiplicity of audiences, which are diverse in values and interests in the Kuwaiti institution. For example, the concerns of the academic administrators about the new approach are not the same as those of the faculty such as the deans of the colleges, nor the students whose role will be more or less marginal. Thus, what is needed in this case is an identification of the concerns, causes, issues, consequences and values of the strategy for all stakeholders.

The consequent step is prioritizing these concerns. Hence the task of the inquirer is to collect relevant information about each retained concern until the point is reached where no new insights are gained. 'The evaluator has the right to prioritize the audiences in terms of the level of stake each holds, and to respond to them in that priority order to the extent that his resources permit' (Guba and Lincoln,1981:304).

This inquiry begins with the documents written on the project as a whole. Details of how the procedures are followed will introduce the basic information about TQM. The focus then shifts to the implementers of the project, the academic administrators, as they are the policy- makers and initiators of the project. Faculty, represented by the deans, heads of the departments and the teaching staff provide information about how the strategy is operationalised and what their feelings, attitudes, and expectations of it are. The students are approached, although their contribution in the evaluation process is hardly noticeable. However, the main purpose of exploring their views is to investigate if they are aware of the new processes. Also it is worthwhile to investigate if they are given a bigger share in the evaluation project than in the old practices.

The possibility of transferability exists, since the case study of the two colleges provides a 'thick description' of how each received the project and what the anticipated outcomes are. This should indicate the likely oucome in the other eight colleges of KU. Such an assumption is supported by the fact that the population in the different colleges of KU conforms to the same criteria. That is, the student intake, the quality of the teaching faculty and the general academic requirements are the same for all ten colleges, with only slightly different college policy regulations.

Confirmability, on the other hand, is achieved during the data collection process as certain issues like the tension between autonomy and accountability, the possibility of success or failure of this approach in assuring better quality than before, and the values assumed by the respondents, are either confirmed or refuted.

Furthermore, triangulation of the methods utilized allows for such a criterion to apply. A theoretical construct is expected to emerge during the data collection process, helping to clarify the methods deployed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In other words, 'the design emerges as the investigation proceeds; moreover, it is in constant flux as new information is gained and new insights are achieved'(Guba and Lincoln,1981:73).

The purpose of this research inquiry is twofold; institutional and personal. The institutional purpose is to explore and clarify the problem, in the sense of accumulating sufficient knowledge to lead towards an understanding or explanation of how the new quality assurance procedures are progressing and how they are received by the staff, students or administrators who are immediately involved in their implementation. In doing this, the inquiry seeks to reflect policies and strategies of the institution and reduces or clarifies the uncertainties of all stakeholders involved in the QA process. Uncertainties about the standards of KU have been a daunting concern for stakeholders outside the university represented by parents, members of the parliament and the government; a concern which drove the current administration to consider new procedures to assure quality. Whereas the university QA exercise is summative in intent, the present study aspires towards a largely formative influence on the development of the process within the university. It aims to explore views about modification and improvement as well as how well TQM strategy fits the local educational context. A detailed understanding and an

exploration of its impact and the response towards it are sought in this inquiry. Thus as Simons says 'the process of responsive evaluation is about negotiating a next step forward' (Simons,1987:20).

It is important to note that the boundaries of this evaluation are not specified by a sponsor or a client; rather the inquiry depends on a discovery posture. Thus the inquiry does not reflect the concern of a specific stakeholder such as, for instance, the higher administration. It is targeted towards a general understanding of how the QA strategy evolved, the causes for its emergence; the consequences that follow from such change; the audiences' complex reactions to its implementation; and the possibility of clarifying evolving practice and thereby seeking to inform future deliberation.

The personal motivation for carrying out this research is that the Evaluation and Measurement office in KU lacks local specialists in the area of quality assurance. As a result, it is always managed by expatriates who often have short-term contracts. Hence the researcher feels that it is important and useful for a Kuwaiti national to develop some expertise in that area and fill the gap.

5.3. Research design

The nature of this study lends itself more to qualitative rather than quantitative research. However, a small portion of quantitative study is required, in order to elicit responses from a large sample of KU students in the science and education colleges, via a questionnaire. Nevertheless, overall a qualitative inquiry is appropriate because the project involves a total immersion in the concerns, causes, issues and their consequences, as well as underlying the values of the researched participants in their setting. It seeks to establish the fit between the declared purposes of QA and the particular strategies adopted. It also seeks a perspective on the development of TQM within the Kuwaiti context that leads to the description and understanding of this new evaluation experience 'as a whole or at least, in ways that reflect its complexity' (Guba and Lincoln,1981:71). The 'wholeness' of that evaluation experience obtains through the transactions between the participants and the researcher which are interactive processes, whereby the yielded outcome forms the primary data (Payne and Barlett,1995).

Furthermore, qualitative method can deal with the multiple realities reflected in the different stakeholders' views in KU, be they administrators, faculty, or students. Their realities have influenced the research design, as it was deliberately planned to be adaptable and sensitive to such influences (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). The meanings that these stakeholders ascribe to their behaviour and that of others are set in the context of their values and practices as well as in relation to the structures that form their local setting. They also reflect their general perceptions of the whole setting, which Bryman refers to as the contextualism and holism themes (Bryman,1988).

The project, therefore, has many characteristics of a case study. To permit the in-depth approach required, the focus is narrowed to two colleges within KU. This may in fact reveal something about the transferability of outcomes to the other eight colleges.

A case study usually tackles small, bounded social entities. In relation to educational institution evaluation, these entities are constituted of individuals who are responsible for delivering social policy, and they are the implementers. 'At least part of the rationale for such studies was the conviction on the part of the advocates that strategies of change needed to be based on a better understanding of, and in general a lot more empathy with, those at the chalkface' (Simons,1987:80). To be able to reach such a stage, the inquirer spent sustained periods of involvement in the two colleges; four months altogether, from January 1st to April 24th, 1997.

Advocates of qualitative research tend to view social life as processual rather than static, thus a naturalistic inquiry should reflect the reality of everyday life. In this case my task was to focus on these processes and bring them to the surface. All the time this study was undertaken, the processes of quality assurance were still active, functional and topical, as they were given high priority on the senior administration agenda.

The study therefore attempted to elicit information regarding the following areas:

- the origin and development of quality assurance in KU. historical.
- the rhetoric that is used to justify and rationalise current practice. description.
- the current practice, that is, what was actually happening? description/analysis.

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- the views of the various stakeholders on the potential, the practice and the international status of such procedures. reporting/analysis/ interpretation.

These areas comprise the thesis questions, or the central questions within the evaluation. Thus the thesis deals with 'what' as well as 'how' and 'why' questions. It is also centrally concerned with impact and response. The first area deals with 'what' has happened. The 'how' and 'why' questions provide explanations for causes. The 'why' questions lead to generalisations that go beyond that specific setting of the case study of the two colleges to include the other eight colleges of KU. Therefore the overarching research questions are:

1-What are the causes, consequences and complex reactions to the new QA policy, and how may these be understood within the specific setting?

2-What are the implications of these findings for future deliberation about assuring quality **in Kuwait University?**

5.3.1. Sampling

A purposive sampling method is employed in this study to increase the scope of the data collected. Individuals were selected according to predetermined criteria, to reflect the full range of involvement. Sampling for the different groups aims to stress 'the exception, the deviation, the unusual interpretation, the reinterpretation, the new approach, the expert's view, or the singular perspective' (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:112). This will be clear in the different responses of the three selected groups in KU.

In the case of the major decision makers, the senior academic administrators, sampling was not appropriate and all members of this group were interviewed. They are all Kuwaiti nationals. These are the individuals who have the authority to implement the new strategy of quality assurance. They are the Rector, the Vice-Rector for academic affairs, the Vice-Rector for planning, the Vice-Rector for research, the Vice-Rector for academic support services and the evaluation and measurement office head. They form the first category with whom semi-structured interviews were deployed. The criterion for selecting this category is power and role in the organisation in the university hierarchy.

What has been said about the inappropriateness of sampling for the academic administrators holds for the senior administrators in the two colleges. The Deans and Vice-deans constitute another category. In the science college, the Dean, the Vice-dean for academic affairs and research, the Vice Dean for student affairs and the Vice-Dean for academic support services were interviewed, except for the Vice-Dean for planning who was on an academic mission abroad. In the education college, the dean and Vice-Dean for student affairs were interviewed.

Purposive sampling is again employed with the second category, which is the faculty. However, their numbers vary from one college to another. The focus is on the science and education colleges. In the former, there are 184 members. The criteria for selecting the faculty sample were: expatriate versus local, tenured versus contract, experience and gender. The application of these achieved some variation within the sample. The choice seeks to reflect these characteristics of the faculty concerned. Overall the number of interviewed faculty in science is 38, which constitutes 20% of the total. Of these 8 department heads were interviewed, among whom there is only one female head. The total number of other female faculty interviewed is 9. The academic qualifications of the science faculty range between professors, and they were 13, associate professors and they were 12, assistant professors, and they were 13. The ratio of Kuwaiti to non-Kuwaiti professors was 4:8. The associate professors ratio was 7:2. The assistant professors ratio was 13:3.

Once again semi-structured interviews were used in the education college. Sixteen faculty members were interviewed out of 79, of these four heads were interviewed among whom there was only one female head. The number of other female faculty interviewed was 4. A similar range of academic qualifications exists in this faculty. However, the numbers are fewer than those in science. For example, the ratio of Kuwaiti professors interviewed to non-kuwaitis was 1:2, the associate professors ratio was 9:1. And lastly, the assistant professors ratio was 3:0.

The third category is the students of the two colleges. There are vast numbers in each college, 2738 in science and 4154 in education. However, the size of the sample was recommended by a statistician, who is a faculty member in the college of science. The general norm for the size

of a sample in statistical terms is 20% of the total population. But since the project was carried out by a single researcher, a 10% would be an acceptable percentage. Thus out of 2738, only 270 took the questionnaire, while in education, 400 were given the questionnaire out of 4154. Hence, a random sample of 670 students of all years was selected, of these only 616 questionnaires were statistically acceptable. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the whole group. On the basis of this, a group of thirty five from science and forty from education colleges were invited to participate in group interviews. They were chosen on the basis of their apparent interest in the topic. 'Purposive sampling is intended to exploit competing views and fresh perspectives as fully as possible. Sampling stops when information becomes redundant rather than when subjects are representatively sampled' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 233). Random sampling helped me to obtain rival views on the topic of the questionnaire, which is the student evaluation.

5.3.2. Instrumentation

Human beings are the primary sources of data used in this study in order to encompass and adjust to the multiple realities encountered in the field. They can understand and evaluate the meaning of the differential interaction between investigator and respondents. 'And because all instruments are value-based and interact with local values, only the human is in a position to identify and take into account those resulting biases' ((Lincoln and Guba, 1985:40).

This study seeks to triangulate data collection methods in an attempt to enhance the reliability of the data. As the data sets correspond to each other, more certainty of the conclusions is achieved. Therefore a combination of methods is used such as, documents, semi-structured interviews, open/closed questionnaire, semi-structured group interviews and thematic analysis of related literature.

Thus the most appropriate instrument to employ to enhance an understanding of the case is semi-structured interviews with the first, second and third categories of informants such as senior staff, faculty and students. However, there is a difference between the three in the criteria of sampling, as mentioned earlier.

5.3.2.1. Document analysis: rationale

Documents are a rich and rewarding resource. Generally, they provide stability to further research. They are natural 'in-context' sources of information. The researcher needs to invest time and energy to make maximum use of documents. They are a complementary resource to a larger body of research, namely the fieldwork (Guba and Lincoln,1981).

Within the educational research and evaluation setting, the analysis of documents has an additional grounding purpose: 'it helps the inquirer to maintain interest in the context and helps to ensure that research is not removed from its social, historical, and political frame of reference' (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:234). Generally, it is one of the fieldwork rich resources that helps the inquirer to ground a theory in his/her area. However, there is a distinction between first-hand documents known as primary, and secondary documents which refer to documents generated from other sources.

The TQM strategy in KU has been documented from the early stages of its use by the TQM team, most of these have been written by the head of the EM office and other faculty members, who are well acquainted with this approach. The documents include all the preliminary steps undertaken towards the implementation of the new strategy. They also include reports on the performance of some colleges that have been evaluated so far. These results are treated with great confidentiality. In prioritizing the order for collecting information, the documents come as the first source for getting an overall idea of TQM strategy. That in fact helps to ensure that the information collected from human sources is more focussed, and complements to what has been found in the documents. The primary documents are: the main document on 'The Strategy of Excellence'; the Five-Year-Plan,1995-2000, of KU; the KU prospectus; the science and education college guides; leaflets prepared for workshops; the administrative structure guide of KU, and compiled publications of accomplishments of the student national union.

5.3.2.2. Semi-structured interviews: Rationale

'Semi-structured interviews and qualitative analysis are especially suitable where one is particularly interested in complexity or process or where an issue is controversial or personal. That is to say that qualitative methods have exclusive access to these domains' (Smith,1995:10).

Interviews also provide an interactional contexts to better understand the social worlds (Miller and Glassner,1997). The expected outcome of these interviews was to find interviews with some variation between the participants' responses, due to their positions in the organisational structure and their special areas.

These interviews serve many purposes of this study such as 'discovery, uncovering motivation, intent, or explanation as held by the respondent and ascribing meaning to some event, situation, or circumstance' (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:77). The information I seek to elicit in this type of study is concerns-oriented with a focus on the causes and consequences of these concerns; also the values that stakeholders hold, which can be inferred by analysis of the concerns expressed and the issues raised. The degree of conviction of those values also needs to investigated (Guba and Lincoln,1981).

5.3.2.3. Student questionnaire: rationale

A combination of closed and open questions was deployed. The closed questions were used because they reduce data to 'a common dimension that can be more easily applied to the testing of a specified hypothesis' (Adams and Schvaneveldt,1991:202). The open questions, on the other hand, were used to allow a response with greater depth. An open question would also 'invite a respondent to give authentic information to a question' (Adam and Schvaneveldt,1991:200). The motive behind this combination was to single out the students with more alertness to the evaluation procedures, namely, the student evaluation sheet. Based on the responses to the open questions, the researcher selected the cases that seemed to exhibit more awareness of the purpose of this process. The next step was group interviews to probe further the issue of students' role in the evaluation strategy and their understanding of what quality means to them. The questions were written in Arabic and a translation is given on page 102 .

5.3.2.4. Student group interviews: rationale

Group interviews were deployed subsequent to the questionnaire conducted earlier. They aimed at bringing to the surface the differences among the participants and the conflicts within and between their responses. They provided a better chance for the participants to express their views with ease, since the open/closed questionnaire is limited in time and space. Thus there was a good

chance for me to probe for more feedback on what is stated in the questionnaire by the same respondents. Group interviewees also spark off new ideas in each other. The group discussions, however, were centered around a series of key topics and questions to do with the student evaluation sheet and other forms of the assessment system, a process which should allow for a degree of flexibility (Bryman, 1988).

Student participants for interviews were selected on the grounds that they had provided more 'interesting' responses in the questionnaire than others, as noted earlier. Thus a list of 7 to 8 in each group was made. Five groups were interviewed in each college. However, care was taken to observe the criteria of selection including; gender, expatriate versus local and years of study.

5.4. Description of the fieldwork process
5.4.1. Access to the setting:
The data collection phase was not easy, although gaining entry to the chosen setting, was not a problem, partly because I was a former member at KU. Access was negotiated with the KU rector, who acts as gatekeeper, and has the power to grant me entry (Troman,1996). She, in fact, welcomed the idea of evaluating the new project. An additional factor was that she had previously been Dean of the college in which I was employed.

I also felt that my prior experience of that setting led me to a total reorientation of my main research interest. On those terms I think that I could be considered fortunate, in the sense that I am an insider rather than an outsider within the university. However, there are some disadvantages to being an insider. For instance, my entry as a researcher seems to imply to ex-colleagues a deflation of their views of themselves and their organisation, as they know that I am as familiar as they are with the details of that institution (Ball, 1995). Added to that was the possibility of being biased and partial in the way I conducted the fieldwork in a setting which I was part of at one stage.

The process began formally when I received a formal letter from the Rector, giving an official permission for entry. Her approval was based on the notion that the research project was appropriate for the setting, as the implementation of the new evaluation strategy was becoming

the main focus of the academic administrators in KU (Troman,1996). The letter was useful in terms of driving doubts away from participants as to whether I had official permission to undertake the research.

5.4.2. Choice of colleges

My choice of the education and science colleges was based on three reasons; firstly, the former is a representative of the social science colleges, while the latter is a representative of the 'hard' science colleges. Furthermore, the education college is career-oriented in the sense that all its output is directed toward the field of teaching, whereas science graduates have various options. Thirdly, the science college had begun the evaluation procedures required by the new strategy, whereas it was widely known that the education college has been reluctant to carry out such tasks, for a number of reasons that will be dealt with later. However recently, this college has yielded to pressure imposed by the higher administration and has begun the process of implementation.

It is worth noting that there is a close link between the two colleges since they share some of the same students. This has some interesting implications concerning the standards achieved by their students, which I will deal with later.

5.4.3. The interviewing process

Interviewees collaborated by their own choice. Five of these approached felt that the nature of the topic was political that there was a risk in discussing such themes were excluded from the schedule and replacement found. A few people expressed concern that taping their views might jeopardize their position, and there were two cases which were not taped; instead notes were taken of their opinions. Some demanded a copy of their statements. This was granted by providing them with a copy of the tape itself. There were ten such cases. This, in fact, gave them a means of checking the accuracy of my reporting (Hammersley,1992).

The time allowed for an interview was about half an hour; however, some participants took more time, while others rushed through he interview in fifteen minutes. Thus it varied between those who showed great concern to express their views with enthusiasm about a topic which had concerned, even agonised, them for a long time and those who gave blunt responses in a question/

answer type of interview.

I left open the option of whether the interview should be in Arabic or English. To my surprise the majority in science opted for English except for four cases who tended to mix both languages. In education, the majority seemed to prefer Arabic to English in order, as they said, to express themselves better.

Some participants were provided with a sample of the interview questions. This made them better prepared than those who did not get that chance. However, a few participants were put off by the questions as unfamiliar areas for discussion. With those, I had to spend sometime explaining issues before beginning the interview. Thus there was a kind of rehearsal before taping.

Student interviews, on the other hand, were dealt with more ease. The duration of the interview was about an hour. More time could have been devoted to these interviews, but due to the limitation of my time as well as the students', a limit was set.

Some students showed some reluctance when I asked them for their names during the interview, so I explained that it was for the sake of addressing them by their first names instead of addressing them as 'you'. At that point they were to some extent relieved. Taping their responses was not very threatening to the students, as they felt that the group setting makes it very difficult to distinguish voices.

5.4.4. Questionnaire administration

The administration of the students' questionnaires was more than I could manage alone, especially since the science and education colleges have the biggest number of students in KU. Another concern was the possibility of locating students in the different departments in good numbers to administer the questionnaires. Fortunately, the registration office in each college was prepared to help which facilitated the task tremendously.

The target groups were located in the language classes, which all the students in the two colleges are required to take. These classes provided a good sample sizewise. However, the quality of the responses depended highly on my presence in the setting. That is to say, students tended to give

more attention to what they wrote when I was there myself administering the task and explaining the benefits their college would get if they took the task seriously. When colleagues took over from me, the students' responses appeared quite shallow and reflected an indifferent attitude to what they were doing.

The time allotted for answering the questionnaire was 20 minutes. However, some groups took more than that. A few of them needed 40 minutes to finish the whole task. This was partly due to the detailed responses they provided.

The statistical analysis (EXCEL computer package) deployed aimed at investigating frequencies of the student participant responses on the course/instructor evaluation form. Those were used for the purpose of making generalisations of wider applicability to the KU student body. Three questions required further sub-categories because they were partially open and thus elicited disparate responses, as shown on page 102.

Interviews agendas

The Rector

1-Why is there a concern with quality assurance procedures?

2- What was the QA practice at KU in 1993?

3- What developments took place to reinforce the policy and practice of QA in 1995-1996?

4- What is your view of academic standards at KU at present? What academic standards does KU aspire to reach?

5-Why has the current administration recently opted for a new strategy?

6- How was TQM introduced?

7- What role do you play in decision-making within this new strategy (TQM)?

8- What does the present system use as quality measures? Are the same measures used in other international institutions?

9- How do you evaluate benchmarking as a quality measure?

10- What is the impact of this QA process on the different stakeholders of KU?

The Vice-rectors

The rector's questions were repeated with the Vice-Rectors, in addition to the following:

1-Why is there a concern for quality?

2-How do you define quality?

3- What kind of academic standards does KU seek to reach?

4 What is your role in decision-making?

5-What is your role, as vice-rector, in assuring quality?

The Head of the Evaluation and Measurement Office

1-How was TQM introduced?

2-What were seen to be the advantages of TQM over other strategies?

3-How far is the QA process shaped by economic and social factors in the Kuwaiti society?

4-What does the present system use as quality measures, and are they the same measures used in other international institutions?

5- Is everyone concerned convinced of the value of benchmarking as a quality measure, since KU is the sole higher education institution in the country? How far is it practical to measure its quality against similar institutions in the region?

6-What are the criteria within TQM as proposed in KU for selecting student standards; faculty performance in teaching; research productivity; community service; academic programs; facilities such as laboratories, classrooms, audiovisuals; support staff such as teaching assistants, laboratory demonstrators; technical staff and administrative staff in the department and the effectiveness of the administrative system in the academic department as a link between the department and the college and the college and the university; and lastly the role of the academic department in serving the community as the variables potentially linked to quality?

7- What is their significance for the different disciplines? Do they have a ranking order in each discipline?

8- What allowance, if any, is made for the fact that views vary in terms of what constitutes quality?

9- What is the nature of the relationship between the nine identified variables?

10- How can we measure each variable, and what are the sub-variables for each?

11-How will the data collected on the implementation of TQM be handled?

12-Is there a plan of action subsequent to the analysis of the findings of the evaluation?

The Deans of College

1-What do you think of the new QA procedures undertaken recently in KU?

2-What do you think of their implementation?

3-What are the motives behind them?

4-How are they received by the faculty members in your college?

5-Have they added more responsibility to your position as a Dean? How?

6- What do you think of the measures used? Are they appropriate?

7- Are they meeting the purposes and objectives of the college?

8- What would you like to see done about these procedures to improve them?

9- What do you think of the 9 aspects selected as the attributes of quality? Do you see any relationship between them? How and why?

Vice-deans were asked similar questions to the deans'. Responses, however, varied according to positions and duties that each has to perform.

Heads of Department

The questions above were also used with these interviews, with additional questions that put greater focus on procedures that need to be taken at the department level.

1-What have the new procedures added to the QA practices that existed before 1995-1996?

2-Does the new QA process put more responsibilities on the head of a department?

3-What are the advantages and disadvantages of this evaluation strategy?

4-What is the general feeling of your staff?

5-What is your role in the decision making-policies of the department as well as the college?

Faculty

Some of the heads' questions were relevant to the faculty also. These questions were also asked:

1-Why do you think the administration opted for this new strategy?

2- What is its impact on your job as a faculty member?

3- What do you think of the methods used to measure quality? Are they appropriate? Why?

4- How would you like them to be changed?

5- Does this strategy have any impact or influence on your students? If so how?

6-How do you define quality?

Student questionnaire: agenda

1-Do you usually complete the student evaluation sheet? **Yes/No.**

2-Is the student evaluation sheet sufficient to express your opinion about the course/instructor? **Yes/No.** If **NO** give your reason/s.

3-What in your opinion is the purpose of this sheet?

4-Does your response to it reflect a personal or objective response?

5-Do you think your view expressed on the sheet is taken into consideration by the college academic administration? If **NO** give your reason/s.

6-What does it mean to you, personally, to complete the evaluation sheet?

7-Would you like the academic administration to hear more of your voice on the academic services? If **YES**, in what way?

8-Are you aware of the new evaluation strategy implemented in your college? If **YES**, why do you think it is employed in your college?

Student group interviews: agenda

1-What is a quality university?

2-What are your expectations from Kuwait University as a higher education institution?

3-Do you see a difference between secondary school life and university life? How?

4-If you were given the choice to study in KU or abroad, what would you choose and why?

5-In your opinion, what are the effective means for developing self-learning and self-growth in college students?

5.4.5. Ethical procedures

I endeavoured to follow 'democratic' ethical procedures, such as confidentiality (Simons,1987). I therefore promised my informants confidentiality of their names, departments and position in the college. It often happened during interviews that some enthusiastic participants would express dissatisfaction and sometimes anger at certain procedures or incidents that they were exposed to at

one stage. When their discussion became too political I switched off the tape- recorder to show some caution and to gain the trust of the interviewee that his/her account would not be released or misused. 'Clearly, these social relationships were subject to the same constraints as any others, we hold back, and recognize that certain issues and the emotions connected to them, are better left unsaid' (Cottle, 1982:125).

Another procedure was anonymising individual responses. In fact it enabled me to protect participants from external scrutiny. This might be difficult with a minority group like academic administrators, especially when the responsibilities they perform indicate the title and position of each participant. Nonetheless their accounts seem to reflect university policies rather than their own personal views. Interviewing was easier, however, with the larger population of faculty as well as students.

Impartiality was another concern for me. Hence I tended to avoid including staff members whom I know well from the sample. However, this procedure alone does not guarantee a full neutral stance for me as an insider.

Undertaking this study, I did not feel accountable to any specific party. But once the empirical work was in progress I started to reconsider the whole idea of my responsibility towards the data I collected from people who trusted me and contributed to the completion of a significant phase of my work. Thus, I was aware of the need to be very careful in the interpretation of the data I compiled, especially when there were extreme views on the system as a whole which might have further implications related to state policies.

5.5. Modes of analysis

Having stated the theoretical frameworks of the methodology of this study and a description of the process of conducting the fieldwork, I turn now to the post-fieldwork stage, i.e. the analysis of the data. Thus the following section identifies, in the main, the modes of description and analysis of the data collected from the documents, interviews, questionnaire, and thematic analysis of related literature

Inductive data analysis is used in this research to make the interaction between the respondent and investigator more explicit and accountable. The data become accountable and recognizable as a result of negotiating and interpreting meanings with the human sources. The data reflect the participants'constructions of reality in the context where data collection took place. I, in turn, reconstructed their realities, thus the outcome is based on the interaction of myself and the respondent. Negotiating meanings enhances the confirmability and verification of the data. The interpretation of the case-study of this research depends on the validity of its local particulars.

However, due to its nature as an evaluation, a progressive focus was achieved during the phase of negotiation, during the interview, between myself as investigator and respondent whereby the inquiry became more finely tuned (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The analysis is mainly descriptive and evaluative, it focuses on the motivation behind the implementation of the TQM strategy; the constraints that its use is imposing on the system; the positive developments that have taken place as a result of the new approach; and the dysjunctions that may have arisen from its implementation.

One of the main purposes of this research style is to provide detailed descriptions of the social settings it investigates, which in this case are the two colleges. Such description must be consistent with the perspectives of the participants, the faculty and students in that social setting (Bryman,1988).

As mentioned earlier, the study deals with the analysis of the concerns of the target groups interviewed. It also surveys issues pertinent to the TQM procedures, such as the idea of change and of resistance towards it. Consequences of the new approach anticipated by the respondents were significant. Analysis, however, revealed some focusing problems such as convergence and divergence problems. The first is a two-step process whereby I identify first the concerns and issues of the stakeholders then collect the information that support these issues.

Triangulation was utilised to formulate valid propositions and reveal different aspects of the empirical reality (Cohen and Manion,1989). Triangulation took the form of combining three forms

of qualitative data and one form of quantitative data to measure the same empirical questions. This study thus created four sources of data.

The analytic mode is divided into three stages to deal with the collected data. First, the data are described and analysed in chapter six and seven. Second, in chapters eight, nine, ten and eleven the data are interpreted. And the third, in chapter twelve, the findings are reviewed and conclusions are proposed. For the first task, description and analysis, the data were arranged manually into patterns or clusters. Those in turn were put in categories of concepts that the audiences of KU seemed to agree upon, with regard to the new policy. Each category was given a colour code. The category in this case represents a major theme. Under these general themes, their attributes or specifics were listed. These form clusters of themes.

Moving from description and analysis to the task of interpretation, some explanatory theory was needed, which could deal with the multiplicity of themes and sub-themes, which emerged from the primary data. Thus, at this second stage, I decided to use the concept of organisational metaphor. This will be more fully explored at the beginning of chapter eight; but here it is sufficient to say that the idea of conflicting metaphors allowed me to account for the diverse views and preferences about QA issues which I encountered among my respondents. Metaphor making proved to be an efficient tool to 'achieve more integration among diverse pieces of data' (Miles and Huberman,1994:252) and give meaning to the empirical facts. The interpretation chapters deal with four metaphors. These are: KU as a system; KU as a political organization; KU as an unstable changing organization and KU as a cultural organisation, more specifically, an academic community. These metaphors were determined by the informants' responses to QA policy. By using the empirical data in conjunction with theoretical related themes in the literature, I intend to move to a more conceptual and inferential level to reach a theory that explains the 'how' and 'why' about the situation in KU. This in fact helps in reaching an in-depth understanding of the local setting.

Lastly, the concluding chapter integrates the findings of the previous chapters and discusses their implications. The task required at this stage is to link the three levels of understanding: 'the meanings and interpretations of KU informants, my own interpretations of those meanings, and my confirmatory, theory-connected operations' (Miles and Huberman,1994:263).

To sum up this chapter, despite the fact that this study concentrates on the stakeholders, there is always the danger that the power of the political imbalance and divergent opinions that the evaluation may reveal 'is likely to be focused on the evaluation itself; individuals whose power is enhanced by the findings will of course seek to support and defend these findings, but individuals whose power is reduced by the findings will attack and try to undermine the evaluation at every opportunity' (Guba and Lincoln,1981:299). My intention throughout was to deal fairly with all the issues in the hope of minimising this response.

It is worth noting at this point that in common with all research there are limitations to this study. In fact this study could have taken other directions in investigating the topic, especially in view of the fact that the area of QA is receiving heightened concern locally and elsewhere. However, my intention in the beginning of this study was to focus on the process of the QA policy, i.e. what the colleges of KU are doing and how, and analyse the reports produced after the 'Strategy of Excellence' process had been completed in the two colleges concerned. However, there were difficulties in getting access to these important documents, for reasons of confidentiality, I therefore had to be content with the data available to me. As the research proceeded the data collected from KU informants seemed to determine the direction of the research. The comments from many people seemed to transcend the new QA policy and go on to broader issues at the institutional level. As will be shown in the following chapters, the data collected were massive and at some points patchy, which made the task of making sense of it quite demanding. Nonetheless, in responding to the concerns of those people I interviewed and to the results of the student questionnaire, I am confident that what follows succeeds in meeting the criteria of credibility, transformability and confirmability with which I set out. Moreover, there is much here which not only reflects what has so far occurred but which can have a formative influence on future policy.

Chapter Six: Data analysis:
The development of the QA policy

6.1. Introduction:

This chapter shifts the focus from theory-oriented analysis to a presentation of the empirical facts obtained from the fieldwork. Therefore, the chapter attempts to explore how the quality assurance procedures are developing in KU. The inquiry builds on the collected data from various sources such as the informants' interviews, documentary evidence and students' questionnaires. They are used for the purpose of providing evidence about the quality assurance practices undertaken after1994. The previous review of the history of QA procedures up to 1994, in chapter four, was initially required to help us understand the debate of quality assessment on the ground before the implementation of the new strategy and up to the appointment of the consultant.

This chapter reviews the development of the new QA policy. This requires a summary of the rationale as well as the actions undertaken. The views of the academic administrators as the implementers of the new strategy are explored. It also deals with the procedures undertaken as the outcome of the new policy in the two colleges, namely science and education. The responses of all stakeholding audiences in KU are surveyed, that include, the academics in senior administration, the academic administrators in the two colleges, faculty and students, with regard to QA issues raised. These issues tackled represent the main themes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of alternative thinking about preferred options of the KU audiences, while relating it to the earlier discussion of quality conceptualisations provided by Harvey and Green (1993), and Barnett (1992).

6.2. The development of the QA policy

The new administration of the Rector and her five assistants immediately showed more concern to develop new quality assurance mechanisms in KU. In this section I explore the views of those involved about the rationale of the new policy and the actions undertaken, using the data collected during the fieldwork in 1996 and1997.

6.2.1. Rationale

The idea of developing new QA procedures seemed to be one of the prior concerns on the agenda of the new administration after the reconstruction phase in KU was completed. The Rector of KU thinks that the driving force behind those procedures is the pursuit for quality. She stated that *'it is the concern for quality during this time that led to the enunciation of the'Strategy of Excellence' at KU, particularly with regard to academic programs. This strategy explicitly implied total review of programs, assessment and evaluation procedures in their entirety covering such essential components as incoming and outgoing students, faculty, curriculum, infrastructure facilities, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, physical facilities, administration and mechanics and modalities for the smooth and rapid flow of infomation at all levels. These are vital ingredients of a dynamic educational process that aspires for continuous improvement towards achievement of excellence'*. She further added that *'we do not have to have problems with our institution to resort to QA procedures, sometimes you want to know the positive sides. It is important to stop and look at how you are doing'* (written account,March 2nd,1997).

The vice-rector for planning who is a staff member in the college of administrative science, thought that the need for developing QA procedures is internal. She stated that *'the main reason is to upgrade the institution. It is our motive as administrators. No official body is evaluating KU such as, for instance, the government. But the latter would complain if the graduates are not of high calibre or if we academic administrators are not doing a good job. It is because it is the only university in the country'* (interview on March 4th,1997).

The vice-rector for academic affairs, who is a faculty member in the college of engineering saw the pursuit for quality as a characteristic of the academic world. However, he added *'although there is no uniformity in the quality procedures implemented, as KU colleges differ in their strategies, still the main goal is to ensure that all aspects of the educational system go through certain processes to ensure quality. The strategy of excellence attempts to make those QA procedures more explicit. We need to know the points of weakness and strength and expose them to the academic community as well as society at large'* (interview, February 24th,1997).

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Looked at from a more specific perspective, the vice- rector for research, who is a staff member in the college of engineering, emphasizes the need for devising new mechanisms to control research. He explained that grants should go to the most appropriate projects that would be of benefit to the university as well as to Kuwaiti society. His personal experience of quality procedures seemed to be limited to the engineering college. The engineering college follows an American organisation that gives accreditation to all engineering schools in the USA. This is the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). However, the vice-rector recognised that different methods of assessment would be used in the various colleges because the nature of the different academic areas requires different mechanisms; thus what is appropriate for engineering as a career-oriented college is not necessarily appropriate for humanities (interview on February 23rd,1997).

The vice-rector for academic support services, who is also a faculty member in the college of engineering confirmed the need for new procedures. He believed that *'supervision is needed. It is not healthy to leave it open. Faculty are required to develop their teaching skills as much as their interaction with the students. We are not interfering in their methods. Rather, we want to ensure that these methods reflect good academic standards. Requirements of the course should be met, so should the students' needs. The methods should promote creativity. The whole process i.e. the strategy of excellence, is about a self-assessment which has to be done by every department for the benefit of both faculty and students.* His concluding statement was that *'KU is the only higher education institution that provides knowledge in the country, hence it is always the target of the media. So we need to demonstrate to the public what we are really doing from accountability point of view'* (interview on March 1st,1997).

6.2.2. Actions

The plan for developing new quality procedures seemed to have undergone many stages. These were crystallised in certain actions undertaken at the university level. The whole process was supervised by the vice-rector for academic affairs. Obviously the academic affairs office is responsible for all educational issues, including assessment and evaluation.

However, the Rector of KU explained how the plan was developed by emphasizing that *'in 1995-1996 KU took the first step towards specifying the action plan for 'the strategy of excellence'. The emphasis was on visualizing the whole spectrum of activities within a stipulated timeframe that would constantly steer development towards the attainment of high standards of performance, qualitative improvement and excellence. More importantly, KU's agenda was widened to link programs to the actual needs of the society. Hence, institutional doors were opened for the first time to build inter-institutional linkages outside KU to address common social, economic and strategic national concerns through shared expertise and input. These developments would not have been possible if KU did not adopt a forward looking policy and felt legitimate concern for quality. 'The Strategy of Excellence' is to mobilize our efforts and resources to improve and attain excellence. A start in this direction has already been made by defining plans, and the coming months will further accelerate this process to a more dynamic phase, where plans, priorities, and resources would add further momentum to this strategic program'* (written account on March 2nd,1997).

The plans that the Rector discussed appear to have been spelt out in a number of activities and actions that involve the whole institution. These are crystallised in the following:

1-The choice of an approach from among available models. From the start the preference for the new strategy was a version of the TQM.

2-The creation of new posts.

3-The production of documents related to the project.

4-The adoption of certain views of quality rather than others.

Therefore, it is essential to deal with the above actions in detail to reach an understanding of how the new policy is developing.

6.2.2.1. Choice of approach

Embarking on the TQM approach seemed to have been the responsibility of those who were mostly familiar with it; and those were the engineers in the college of engineering. Three out of the five positions of vice-rectors were occupied by engineers. Their experience with it as a component in their courses and the availability of a professor who had experience of its wide application encouraged the higher administration to adopt the TQM approach as most

appropriate. The decision to use this approach was made after the vice-rector for academic affairs had had lengthy meetings with the consultant. The meetings concerned the appropriacy of the TQM model in the KU context. Consequently, they worked out a plan for a strategy to suit the KU environment. The plan for the 'strategy of excellence', or 'academic excellence' as the consultant chose to call it, was forwarded then to the higher administrators for approval. Meetings with the deans of colleges followed to introduce it to KU staff.

The response of the rector to the question about why TQM was chosen from among other alternative strategies was that *'TQM is essentially a philosophy of continuous improvement. It implies serious concern for improving quality at all levels, and relies on the management's total commitment for improving and upgrading quality. In this regard KU's 'strategy of excellence' is essentially a quality improvement program, which seeks to develop and instil a natural desire for quality among all constituent elements of the institution, at all levels, such as management, faculty, students, community and the society'* (written account, March 2nd,1997).

Two of the vice-rectors appeared to have minor reservations. The vice-rector for planning thought TQM most successful when applied to certain areas in an institution. She believed that *'in some areas it is possible to apply TQM, such as research and academic programs whereby you set your measures. But not in all areas. A political decision may disrupt everything. Thus it is hard to apply it to all aspects when political pressure is imposed'* (interview on March 4th,1997).

The vice-rector for academic affairs also expressed his uncertainty about the choice. He stated that *'the project was there when I took over in this post'* (interview on February 24th,1997). That however does not mean that he is not familiar with the approach because he is an engineer himself. It happened that the decision was made by his predecessor in conjunction with the senior administrators. The predecessor stepped down from that position after serving for a number of years.

The vice-rector for academic support services conceived TQM as most attractive in its principle of reward, although this has not been employed yet within the new policy in KU. He thought

that *'we need incentives as much as we need supervision over the different aspects in our institution'* (interview on March 1st, 1997).

The vice-rector for research was very brief in the account he gave of the approach. However, he explained that he heard about its implementation through university channels such as the board of deans. But he could not add further than that it is quite successful in the engineering field where he works himself (interview in February 23rd, 1997).

The expert who is the appointed consultant stated that *'TQM is adopted in KU as a concept which has been invented in industry, the field where it first originated. It is working perfectly well there. However, adapting it to education means that certain principles have to be modified because we are dealing with human beings. You can adopt the concept and follow different strategies. However, the main reason for embarking on this approach is because it looks at all components of the institution. We don't have to have problems to adopt TQM. It is a strategy to promote quality. Another interesting feature of this approach is that you document every detail of your development. In the end you can always look back and see where you are standing and where you are heading. The strategy promotes continuous monitoring all the time. I think a strategy like the TQM will benefit KU in many ways. At least by adopting it we can always justify ourselves to the parliament, the public, the students and the faculty when they complain. We are trying to achieve quality education in this organisation'* (interview on February 24th, 1997).

The version of TQM, adopted for the strategy of excellence does seem to be reformulated to fit in with what KU needs to achieve as a comprehensive approach. The administrators' views reflected total support. The account of the new strategy provided below is an excerpt from an interview with the consultant. He defined the strategy as a 5 to 7 year plan for improving things in the whole institution. The strategy basically involves three phases:

Phase I
1-Phase I is the self-assessment exercise to be carried out by all departments in KU. The self-assessment includes the following nine identified aspects to be assessed by the strategy:

- students' standards;
- faculty performance in teaching;
- research productivity;
- community service;
- academic programs;
- facilities such as laboratories, audiovisuals, classrooms, etc;
- support staff such as teaching assistants, laboratory demonstrators, technical and administrative staff in the department;
- the effectiveness of the administrative system in the academic department as a link between the department and the college and the college and the university;
- and lastly the role of the academic department in serving the community.

The first step in this phase is to nominate the external reviewer/s for each particular department. Once the reviewer has been approved by the department, the college council, and the university administration, the self-assessment report is sent to him/her with all the documents that may give a comprehensive account about the department concerned. The reviewer's task is to visit the department in order to get a firsthand experience of how people in the department are doing. The head of the department arranges for him/her to meet with enrolled students as well as with the graduates of the department. At the end of the visit, the reviewer writes a report of his views on the strengths and weaknesses that he/she encountered in the department together with his/her recommendations. The final step is submitting the report to the dean of the college.

Phase II

Phase two of the strategy involves the head of department studying the reviewer's report and comparing it with the department's, so that suggested improvements can be taken into account for the benefit of the department. At this point, the department is required to come up with a counter-plan to the reviewer's. The counter-plan shows how weaknesses will be dealt with and improved upon. This counter-plan will be scrutinized on the reviewer's next visit. He/she will follow the same procedures.

Phase III

Phase III is the writing up of the strategy. This should represent a plan of action specified by the department. The department may include many alterations and additions to its original plan. The process also involves spelling out the implications of the plan in terms of both resources and actions. It requires an accurate account of the department's needs and its foreseeable future endeavours, such as the initiation of new programs and the merging of areas of specialisation.

It is worth noting at this point that the senior administration initially provided a standardized format of the aspects to be evaluated in the department. However, it seems that not all the colleges agreed on the use of this particular format. Thus it was left to the individual colleges to devise their own, as long as they adhered to the assessment of the nine aspects identified by the strategy of excellence.

Outside the departments there are other aspects at the university level, which the strategy aims to assess, such as libraries and physical facilities. Each aspect hence has its own specific attributes that are to be assessed.

6.2.2.2. Creation of new posts

The choice of the consultant was a step toward consolidating the thinking of the senior administrators about the best policy to adopt. Thus the availability of a specialist in the area of QA, and TQM in particular, facilitated the process of initiating the plan. This specialist is a staff member in the engineering college. He was appointed as a consultant in the Evaluation and Measurement office to begin the project. He is an American professor who has been teaching industrial engineering for twenty five years in an American university. He had experience of implementing one of the strategies of quality assurance widely used by engineers (Total Quality Management) in the university where he worked. It seems that it met success there. He is also an inspector in ABET (Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology) in the USA for seven years. As previously mentioned, this organisation accredits schools of engineering in the US and also abroad including KU. For personal reasons, this engineering professor had signed a contract to teach in the college of engineering in KU.

With the advent of the new QA policy, other posts were required to manage the new responsibilities for QA. That led the administration to create a new post at the higher level namely is the Vice-Rector for academic support services. This post appears to be the link between KU and society at large, dealing with the programs and services offered to the public. His duties involve the services that KU offers such as libraries, the computer centre, the university newsletter (Afaq) and the community service/ continuing education centre. The creation of such a post serves the purpose of ensuring that the services these centres offer are regularly inspected. This is demonstrated in the periodical meetings between the vice-rector and the heads of these centres, to inform him of the developments taking place. The evaluation exercise is executed annually. Users of these services are also involved in assessing the standards of the services through the evaluation sheets for both full-time students as well as in-service students in the night school. The vice-rector pointed out that *'such a post is widely known in other universities'*. He added *'KU does not live in isolation in the sense that it is following the steps of world class universities to keep abreast of the developments in the academic world and to achieve continuous growth'* (interview on March 1st,1997).

At the college level, the vice-dean for consultation is another new administrative post, which is closely related to ensuring that the college is at the service of the society. However, not all colleges seem to have this post during my empirical work. The vice-dean in the science college proposed that *'developing programs and courses that meet the needs of the community should give a good image of the university to the public. It also educates the society about the role of the university. Moreover, offering such a service to the community provides another source of income for the college'* (interview on March 11th,1997).

6.2.2.3. Documents

With the advent of the new QA policy, the EM office is now busy and is centrally involved in the QA procedures. This is evidenced in the various documents produced. The EM office staff also generated a number of evaluative studies on KU, listed below. Various forms were designed to explain the identified aspects to be assessed in KU (see appendix 2).

These documents provide a first hand account of what happened in relation to QA procedures when the program was first announced to the faculty in April 1995. Particularly useful is the

one written by the consultant. The document was published in April 1995 by the EM office. It consists of 8 pages, which deal with the goals of the strategy, aspects of KU activities which were to be evaluated, and a summary of what had been accomplished up to that date. What follows is a literal translation of the content of the consultant's document. According to the information provided in this document, the quality assurance project is about a comprehensive evaluation exercise carefully integrated with the future plans of KU. The evaluation exercise is intended for all colleges as well as the Language Centre. It is claimed that the criteria it contains are 'scientific', academic and international. The document was available to whoever requested it at the EM office.

The plans, the goals, and the aspects to be evaluated are stated early on. The document sets out the steps planned for the implementation process. They are divided into three successive sets of activities:

1-The first stage involves informing the different colleges and departments about this strategy and eliciting feedback on its strengths and weaknesses.

2-The second stage is about involving departments in setting up a plan of work within each college, which includes the following steps:

- forming academic excellence committees in the departments and informing department members about the strategy of excellence;
- meeting with these committees to identify the main aspects of the work plan;
- building a database in all departments and colleges;
- compiling reports on individual departments and colleges;
- nominating and inviting external reviewers for each department;
- sending the self-assessment reports to the external reviewers in Kuwait after which meetings would be held:
- writing up evaluation reports by the external reviewers: this is to be followed by a discussion, at the college level, of the strengths and weaknesses shown in the reports;
- specifying the dates for the next visit of the external reviewers;
- and finally, repeating the evaluation exercise as a recursive process within the strategy of excellence.

3-The third stage deals with setting up the action plan of each department in each college. Each

department hence has to submit this plan of action to the dean of the college. The Dean sends the reports to the Vice-Rector for academic affairs who sends the reports to the external reviewers. At the end of these stages, the plan of the college as a whole is to be included in the five year-plan of KU. However, the departments and colleges reports should include the following:

- academic objectives of each department.
- course descriptions of all the academic programs offered by the department as well as the student's major sheet for graduation.
- curriculum vitae of all faculty.
- facilities available in the department including classrooms.
- laboratories and equipments in the departments.
- evaluation of the library books and services related to the different disciplines.
- faculty publications.

The consultant's document stated that the colleges of arts, islamic studies, education, law, science, commerce, and allied health had already been contacted to begin with phase one, which is self-assessment. All except education had already formed the strategy of excellence committees, nominated external reviewers and compiled databases on their staff and department facilities. The college of education was an exception. However, its dean had 'promised' to do the above. He had provided the course description of academic programs and the student's major sheet for graduation only. He had also agreed to suggest names of external reviewers and to contact the International Organisation for Evaluating Teachers' Programs, which is based in the USA, to evaluate the college academic programs (document written in April,1995).

In the last part of the document there is a note about a supplementary document which deals with the details of the plan of this strategy and its time schedule. It was supposed to be attached to the main document. That supplementary document was not available, but a critique of the main document will be presented in chapter nine where I seek to interpret the data gathered. Another document, which is useful here was issued by the college of science shortly after the completion of phase one. In a two-page memorandum, the college reviewed the accomplishments of its different departments, such as the self-assessment reports followed by the visits of the external reviewers from the UK and the USA. These had been completed in the

computer science, geology, chemistry, biochemistry and zoology departments. The microbiology and physics departments were evaluated in the autumn term 1996/1997 (document written in 1996).

Many forms were issued by the office of the Vice-Rector for academic affairs office. They are standardized evaluation formats. In the main, they deal with assessing aspects of the different departments, as well as the academic services that KU offers to the whole population of the institution, and also to the community outside. They contain a range of performance indicators related to the new strategy (see appendix 2).

In addition to the above documents, many publications had been issued by the EM office since 1994, associated with the development of the new policy. Below is a list of these publications:

- A statistical study of the overall achievement of KU students.
- A comparative study between the achievement of students from the traditional secondary schools compared to students from the credit system schools.
- A fieldwork study of the distribution of students' grade point average (GPA) in the different colleges of KU, for the years 1993/1994 and 1994/1995.
- An annual report on the implementation of the student evaluation sheets about their courses and instructors for the year 1993/1994.
- A statistical study of the relationship between the instructors' evaluation scores as derived from these student evaluations and the grade point average of the students in their sections for the first term of the academic year, 1993/1994.
- A statistical study of the implementation of the student evaluation sheet for the first term 1994/1995.
- A modified version of the students' evaluation sheet.
- A leaflet which includes a summary of the studies and research that will be conducted in the future by the EM office.
- A student evaluation sheet in English for non-Arabic speaking students in KU.

Evidently, the EM office is in charge of the production of most of the publications related to the QA policy under the supervision of the Vice-Rector for academic affairs. This indicates that the office is playing an effective role associated with the new QA procedures.

6.2.2.4. KU administrators'definitions of quality

After reviewing the early activities undertaken to implement the new policy development, it is essential at this point to survey the views of the academic administrators. Their views reflect what KU seeks to achieve in terms of quality aims that underlie all the above procedures, or to put it in other words, what definitions of quality they are embracing to achieve quality. This is dealt with in this section.

The respondents found defining quality a difficult task, especially since it is dependent on a number of factors that differ from one group to another. The definitions I elicited from the informants seem to be in line with what the various expert commentators have said about the relativity and vagueness of the term itself. This is well illustrated in the views of the academic administrators. While, they do not appear to disagree on some basic aspects of quality, or what may constitute quality for an educational organisation, they tend to have different views on priorities.

Administrators expressed views that closely reflect the institutional vision of what embodies excellence or quality. Their definitions of quality more or less seem from a managerial perspective, since they are the individuals who are running the organisation and who are fully aware of what may accelerate the development of the university or impede its growth.

Their conceptions of quality seem to reflect their management responsibilities in their present position and situation. This issue illustrates the tension between the reality and the rhetoric. Thus their definitions tend to reflect conceptualisations of what they plan and aspire to achieve on the one hand, and what is possible to attain in reality on the other.

For instance, the rector sees the quality of an institution as reflected in the excellence of its output, which is the graduates. She asserted that *'to have a good end-product we need to make sure that there are other factors which contribute to quality output such as, efficient teaching staff, good curriculum, a high standard of student intake, good library, facilities, etc, available. We aim as an institution to reach certain academic standards which are compatible with other high quality universities. But there are always factors that interfere to deter such ambition. For example, we aim to recruit good teaching staff as a significant aspect to*

promote the quality of the institution, but with the tightening of the budget recently the salaries are too low to attract good staff. In addition, other Gulf countries have better offers which attract the best faculty from different parts of the world. Therefore we end up with mediocre faculty members. Such circumstances take quality a step back' (written account on March 2nd,1997).

The vice-rector for planning also found the definition of quality relative. She stated that *'when we talk about quality we need to talk about how to measure it. My measurements differ in different circumstances. My milestone sometimes changes according to the situation. So there are different phases to quality in different instances. That, however, does not mean that I lower my standards but I will be satisfied with some sort of acceptable standards when, as an administrator, I am confronted with external restrictions. In other words, as a manager in this organisation I have to yield to certain pressures and constraints which affect the quality negatively, but still the aspiration for excellence is always there'* (interview on March 4th,1997).

The vice-rector for academic affairs defined quality as *'the performance of a task in an optimal way with minimal problems and maximum achievement'* (interview on February 24th,1997). He seemed to give priority to leadership as the main component in a quality organisation. He perceived the effective manager as the individual who is capable of selecting the right people who are capable of running the institution efficiently. He noted that *'from my position as a vice-rector for academic affairs I can ensure quality by meeting the university objectives designed for this office. That in fact entails supervising the Centre for Teaching Workshops and Multimedia; the Centre for Decision Support which deals with academic problems such as class schedules, registration and multimedia implementation to raise college standards; and the Scholarship Centre which design the selection criteria for choosing the top candidates who will be sent to the best universities abroad'* (interview on February 24th,1997).

The vice-rector for academic support services seemed to agree with his colleague on quality assurance by adhering to the mission by objectives notion. He asserted that *'quality is reached when we fulfil this mission. The objectives are crystallised in four areas, namely; teaching,*

research, community service and the development of the technological knowledge of the student. He added that *'it is our main objective to fulfil the needs of both the student and society. You can look at it from different points of view; be it accountability or from purely academic perspective'* (interview on March 1st,1997).

Academic administrators tended to perceive the need to fulfil the objectives expressed in the mission statement as the central task for KU as a higher education institution. The vice-rector for research's view does not markedly differ from his colleagues. He affirmed *'quality is achieved when we meet the objectives of the academic program in the best manner in conjunction with the available resources. Quality is to meet those goals and refine teaching and research to keep them up to date. It is also to meet the needs of society and the academic community and between these there are a lot of details that need to be taken care of'* (interview on February 23rd,1997).

As has been observed from the infomants' responses, mainly from the standpoint of the senior administrators, some of their definitions are in line with the taxonomy of Harvey and Green's (1993) and Barnett's models (1992), which mainly are: quality as exceptional , quality as consistency, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money and lastly quality as transformation. Some of these seem to find more support than others in KU. In particular, the senior administrators emphasized the fitness for purpose and value for money notions. Harvey and Green's (1993) fitness for purpose concept of quality, which is the other alternative to mission driven concept, repeatedly occurred in the senior administrators' definitions of quality. Evidence from the collected data shows that the notion of fulfilling the mission of the university has high currency among most academic and senior administrators. The Rector, for example, referred to this concept in meeting the crucial objective of the university, which is producing graduates of high calibre. She therefore identified the factors that help in achieving that objective. The Vice-Rector for planning viewed the same concept from another angle, which is the standards of the university. She emphasized the fact that KU standards are determined by the current social and political circumstances; standards thus are defined in relation to what fit each instance. The Vice-Rector for academic support services' definition includes fulfilling equally the needs of students and those of society. Despite the fact that there is an agreement on the fitness for purpose notion, the concept itself remains loose and vague. Its vagueness lies in

the variety of purposes that KU subsumes. Furthermore, fitness for purpose notion is vaguely defined in terms of the order of priority of these purposes that KU ought to meet, as it is always a matter of individual departments rather than a system, let alone meeting the needs and expectations of the main customer which is the student. The latter is hardly recognised within KU context.

Currently, standards are defined within the context of the mission statement of KU. These are the standards the institution is attempting to achieve within its stated objectives or purposes. Whether KU is fulfilling its purposes is left to the academic administrators to decide, since they are the policy makers responsible for setting mechanisms to monitor if quality is delivered in accordance with the mission statement of KU or not. Nevertheless, the mission statement, as given in the five-year-plan document, points to different goals and purposes, which at certain points are overlapping and conflicting simultaneously. Further discussion of KU goals is provided in chapter nine.

The value for money notion seems also consistent with the new QA procedures. This in fact is implied in the rationale of the 'strategy of excellence'. The emphasis on the provision of quantifiable outcomes reports suggests a push towards more transparency of how resources are utilised, which underlies accountability notions. Further, the value for money seems to be a major motive for some regulations that are stipulated in KU. For instance, a new policy is initiated with regard to the number of courses a student is entitled to register on. They are allowed to register on more than the previously designated number. The motive behind this policy is to encourage students to graduate in three and a half years instead of four or five years. It appears that such a policy was made under a pressure from the government so that KU can accommodate all high school intake, since the government is the funder to which the university is held accountable. This also encourages an optimum use of capital resources across the whole higher education system.

Other notions such as, quality as exceptional and quality as perfection or consistency found little place in their comments. The first has no longer any currency worldwide. The second, however, focuses on certain specifications to be met to achieve quality. This is vaguely defined in terms of who decides what quality specifications of the different educational services KU ought to

meet; the individual faculty, the department, the college or the senior administration. Benchmarking against other higher education institutions in this notion is also irrelevant, since KU is the only university in the country. Nonetheless, the external examiner policy and the heterogeneity of the university staff seem to solve part of the problem for the academic administrators.

The transformational notion seems to be the aspirational conception of quality popular among KU faculty, as will be shown in their definitions of quality in chapter seven.

However, among Barnett's (1992) models, the relativist's is emphasized by the Vice-Rector for research's comment. His response suggests that the concept of quality combines two perspectives; one deals with public policy and decision-making and the other concerns the world of the academics, being himself a member of it. These represent two conflicting powers of major stakeholders namely, the government and society on the one hand, and the academic community on the other, as illustrated in chapter two. This notion basically involves the mission statement of the institution, subsuming a host of possible internal and external purposes that the university attempts to achieve, like other higher education institutions elsewhere. What really differs is the specifics of each institution and how stakeholders prioritize these different purposes.

6.3. What is **happening on the ground?**

According to the accounts elicited from the informants in the senior administration it seems that some colleges such as science, engineering, medicine and allied health are already following some form of QA procedures. Science seemed to have followed a self-assessment exercise similar to that specified in the new policy for many years, which means that it is a well established part of the college policy. Medicine, on the other hand abides by the Swedish/British methods of evaluation. That indicates that it is somehow independent of the local procedures. Engineering is subjected to external assessment, as it is a member of the American Accrediting Board of Engineering and Technology. The college therefore receives its external reviewers from that organisation. It is subject to the same evaluation procedures applied to all engineering schools in the US. Allied Health justifies not conforming to the new procedures by defending

its own evaluation system that has been efficiently utilized for many years, '*which they seem very comfortable with*' as the consultant states . He added *'however, all these colleges have to abide by the assessment criteria of the nine dimensions identified by the strategy, proposed by the senior administration. Clearly, formatting is left to the individual colleges, which does not seem to make considerable difference'* (interview on February 24th,1997) .

Other colleges have started QA procedures as a result of the policy statement. They do not seem to have followed a definite policy for evaluation procedures previously. Their past practices were confined to drawing up an annual report on their activities. These colleges include the humanities, islamic studies and law.

The remaining colleges, which are education and administrative sciences had not yet begun, for different reasons. Education seemed to be reluctant to implement the new policy for both political and academic reasons. However, the senior administrators in that college mentioned that they would begin once they had finished the study on the college output. Administrative sciences delayed the project because the college was going through administrative changes to do with merging certain programs and cancelling others. It was expected that most of the colleges would finish phase three by the end of the academic year 1997, except for those that had not yet started , such as the Language Centre, or those which had delayed, namely the college of education and administrative sciences.

According to the consultant, the process of ' the strategy of excellence' seemed to be developing along the lines of its three-phase- plan, although it was not progressing at the same pace in all the colleges. Out of the ten colleges, eight had completed phase one which is self-assessment. That, however, required inviting external reviewers to evaluate the self-assessment exercise and write a report of their views on that activity.

There seemed to be a consensus among administrators on the fact that what suits one college does not necessarily suit another. Thus as far as the implementers of the project are concerned, there is no uniformity in the evaluation procedures. There are alternative proposals for the three colleges which are not complying to the strategy of excellence procedures, namely engineering, medicine and allied health.

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The colleges which had completed phase one moved on to the second phase of coming up with a counter-plan based on the recommendations made by the external reviewers. And that obviously covered all departments in each college. The consultant in senior administration proposed that *'external examiners are used as our yardstick to measure standards. They represent a certain area not the school they come from, thus it is benchmarking the area but not the institution'* (interview on February 24th,1997).

At this point it is essential to look at the science and education colleges, since they form the case study of this project, and review the development of the new procedures in each individually.

6.3.1. College of Science

From the report of the college of science, the detailed account of the consultant and other indicators, it seems that the introduction of self-assessment process had begun prior to the new policy. The new procedures were already well-established in the various departments. Some had already completed phase one and received feedback from the reviewers. Others were still in the process, and that was obvious in the academic administrators' responses in the college of science.

Administrators in the college such as the dean and her assistants and the heads of the departments exhibited a good knowledge of the development of the new policy. The dean of science gave a comprehensive account of the strategy and how its implementation was progressing at the university level; its objectives, and the expected outcomes. She, in fact, was very enthusiastic about it. She asserted that *"there is an open dialogue between the deans and the vice-rector for academic affairs, who is in charge of the whole process'* (interview on March 10th,1997). She mentioned that the first phase of the plan had been carried out, that is, the self-assessment. It was conducted after the external reviewers were nominated with the consent of the departments and the college. They came mainly from the USA and UK. This is attributed to the fact that KU follows these two models in its educational system. The evaluators indicate the points of strength as well as weakness in the reports they write. Their reports are based on their observations after spending a week or two in the college where they visit laboratories, talk to the department members, chat with students and look at all sorts of

documents produced by the department, including students exam papers. They also discuss relevant issues with alumni. Reports are then discussed in the college council as well as in the department.

The vice-rector for academic affairs and research in science, who is responsible for following up the assessment exercise in the departments, gave a comprehensive account. He explained that the program of excellence was initiated at the university level. Once the aspects to be evaluated were approved at the higher level, the science college began selecting its external reviewers. However, the departments proposed names of reviewers which were passed on to the university administration. The reviewers' task is to evaluate all aspects of the academic activities and the college performance. He confirmed that the internal reports of some departments had already been sent to the reviewers. Some of those reviewers were available in KU and had since submitted their reports to the senior administration. The reports are then forwarded to the dean of science who sends them to the departments concerned. The dean asks the departments to provide comments on the reviewers' reports. They are required to explain their plan for overcoming any weaknesses identified. Then the two reports, the reviewer's and the department's, are both sent to the dean of the college. The dean checks that all the points on the report have been addressed by the department. A summary of those points are discussed at a meeting of the college council. The exercise is to be concluded by completing the statistical forms provided by senior administration.

Within the college of science the departments of mathematics, operational research and statistics had already finished that stage. The next phase, however, is to send all these reports with the comments of the college back to the reviewer. The reviewer, in turn, is supposed to reconsider all the issues raised by both the department and the college. These three departments were still expected to come up with a strategic plan for the coming five years. This should take place after the second visit of the reviewer who ensures that the process is in progress. The strategic plan should cover how the department is going to address the weaknesses, if they have any, their needs in terms of facilities, funds for research or projects etc.. They are required to justify their reasons for following such procedures, not others (interview on March 18th,1997).

All the heads of the departments in the college of science provided good accounts of the

development of the self-assessment exercise in their departments. However, there are some variations among the eight departments in science in the number of reviewers they invite and the universities they come from. Heads of the departments are also expected to compile a database for all staff in the department including the faculty, support staff, technicians, students, facilities classrooms, laboratories..etc...which is supposed to be updated annually. This information should be ready for the use of the college council as well as for the senior administration for inspection and documentation purposes.

All the developments mentioned above were reported in March and April 1997. However most of the departments in the college of science were expected to finish the three phases by the beginning of the autumn term,1997.

6.3.2. College of Education

The education college, on the other hand, had had a different experience from science, due to their delay in following the suggested QA procedures. Individuals varied in terms of being willing to discuss with an outsider like me why the college was lagging behind in comparison to other colleges in KU. I had difficulty getting any sort of documents about the new procedures. Again it was the academic administrators who showed some knowledge of the project. Some faculty were frank and open about it. Others denied any knowledge of its details. Thus my account of the college of education is based mainly on the views of the college administrators.

The dean of the college was very informative in the details he provided regarding the college's views about the strategy of excellence. His objections to the project was directed at the rapid rate at which it was implemented. The college staff was reluctant to provide samples of course exams and marking schemes in their departments when they were requested by senior administration. The staff thought that the administration was interfering in the internal business of the college, especially since the college does not follow a common exam policy which is common across a number of colleges, due to the variety of courses. The dean emphasized that the intention of the college is to follow the new policy in the near future. The college provided other forms of data to the senior administration, but the process was going rather slowly. The college was moving towards conducting a self-assessment and would then send it to the external

reviewers as they were nominated for different departments. The dean also mentioned that the college was contacting IOET to evaluate the college academic programs.

The dean informed me of a statistical study of their outputs, (a follow-up of their graduates since 1980) in response to what he called 'invalid' accusations regarding the low quality output of the college. The study had begun in 1996. It would be completed by the end of the summer of 1997. The intention of the college was to begin the self-assessment exercise required by the QA policy after the completion of that study (interview on March 26th,1997).

An academic administrator in the college of education explained that the heads of departments had a meeting in which they discussed the new QA strategy, but apparently it was rejected. That was due to the form in which the proposal was presented. It was a text translated from English which was very vague. He also attributed the rejection to the fact that the proposal did not meet the expectations of the college. Further, the presentation which the consultant with one of his colleagues from engineering had made in the college had not been well received. This informant also mentioned that he had attended a session, at the university level, about the strategy of excellence. There had been a large audience, approximately 100 people from different colleges, but still the strategy was not very clear to him (interview on March 26th,1997).

Further information about the reaction of the college of education will be included in the next chapter, which deals with attitudes, feelings and reactions to the new policy. This may help in clarifying the reason for the delay in the education college.

This chapter has covered some of the ground on the development of the new QA policy. The analysis and description of the data were mainly based on the views of KU informants and documents collected. It surveyed the views of the senior administrators of KU as well as of those in the colleges. The chapter provided empirical facts about the QA policy. Discussion of the views of other audiences of KU will be surveyed in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven: Data analysis:
The response to the QA policy

7.1. What is the response at this stage?

In this chapter I will survey the views and reactions of all stakeholding audiences in KU on the impact of the new policy. This will include the higher academic administrators, the senior faculty in the two colleges, i.e. Deans and Vice-deans and Heads of departments, other faculty and students. The views expressed here mainly reflect support from academic administrators; reservations from senior faculty in the colleges; lack of clarity on the part of other faculty; and total ignorance on the part of students.

7.1.1. University Administrators

The views of the academic administrators tended to back up the strategy whole-heartedly. The Rector of KU was well-informed of the developments made so far at all levels. Obviously this can be attributed to her close contact with the vice-rectors. However, she stated in her account of the general development of the strategy *'academic programs at KU are periodically reviewed and evaluated to maintain high standards. This process is not confined to any particular discipline or field, but is uniformly applicable to all programs'* (written account,March 2nd,1997).

The vice-rector for planning showed great concern about how the'strategy of excellence' was progressing, especially with reluctant groups. She believed that *'it is a matter of time. People need to get used to the idea of evaluation and scrutiny. It is a culture that we need to foster in KU, to make the people see it as part of their organisational structure'* (interview in March 4th,1997).

The vice-rector for academic affairs explained that the exercise is new for some colleges. *'Although they have visiting professors, professionally it is being done for the first time in some colleges'* (interview on February 24th,1997).

The vice-rector for research favoured the new policy over the old practices, explaining that

'evaluation is the appropriate method to improve. It should be mandatory for all departments in KU. At least it is in engineering. Faculty in the past seemed to give research more weight than teaching for promotion purposes. However, the new policy for promotion considers teaching, research and community service as the three main areas for faculty promotion' (interview on February 23rd,1997).

The vice-rector for academic support services noted that all new procedures are geared towards quality promotion. He affirmed that *'We as administrators are fulfilling our mission. We want to guarantee that students can get the knowledge that will help them to serve society. In my position I have to find every possible means to achieve that, by using all the resources and quality services in terms of libraries, computer services and community services which all contribute to quality promotion'* (interview on March 1st,1997).

The consultant's response to what was happening in the different colleges seemed to reflect an expected reaction. He noted that *'a non-conforming college has to put its case, it has to justify its strategy. The strategy of excellence will not be standardized if there are reluctant people. You can't have a yardstick and push their heads under it. TQM is a practice. We have different strategies in implementing it. I believe we achieve quality if we talk about it'* (interview on February 24th,1997).

It is clear that the implementers are aware of the consequent reactions to the new QA policy from the outset. For those who will do the work time is required to accommodate the new changes in as much as a sufficient and effective communication between the implementers and the faculty is inevitable.

7.1.2. The Dean and Vice-deans in the Science College

Out of the 38 faculty interviewed in this college, only 14 exhibited a good knowledge of the project. These were mainly the administrators: the dean, her four assistants and the heads of the departments. Presumably, this is because they are in positions, which require constant communication with senior administration. They are also in charge of following up the QA

procedures in the college and the departments in order to report on their progress to senior administration.

Senior faculty in the college of science demonstrated considerable awareness of the development of the strategy of excellence. The dean, for instance, gave a lengthy account of how the evaluation exercise was progressing in science, as reported in chapter six. However, she pinpointed the areas that have been subjected to assessment according to the new policy, such as research, teaching policy, the undergraduate assessment program and grading. She mentioned, as a result of these exercises, that there is an inclination to merge departments of similar areas to avoid repetition in courses. She believed that resistance from KU staff was predictable, as the new QA policy would take some time to get used to (interview on March 10th,1997).

The vice-dean for academic affairs and research confirmed that the exercise was progressing at a good pace. He added that the required procedures were received from the top administration and that he, as an administrator, had had to do a lot of paperwork, which could not be avoided. The same thing was occuring at the department level. The processing of the database, for instance, begins at the staff level moving via the college dean to senior administration. His concluding remark was that *'the exercise will give a chance to the department faculty to critique themselves. I think we need to know what are the basic strengths and if we are doing well. We need to consider how to maintain good standards and do even better and look at our weaknesses and try to improve'* (interview on March 18th,1997).

The vice-dean for student affairs thought that *'these procedures are important to improve the quality of the educational system and specifically the college administration where I am now. It is essential to know what the current quality is, and what are the basic parameters to measure quality in KU. Since we are dealing with human beings we need to know how accurate the evaluation is'* (interview on March 17th,1997).

The vice-dean for consultation believed that the services that the office offers contribute in strengthening the relationship between KU and society. He stated that *'there are a lot of*

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community problems that need to be addressed by people with expertise, such as the academic staff. And in cases where we cannot find specialists in a certain area, we resort to the academics'contacts abroad. KU's role as an educational institution is becoming more effective' (interview on March 11th,1997).

The general feeling I got from the senior faculty comments in the science college is a total support of the new strategy. They all seem to encourage the integration of the new policy in the university system.

7.1.3. Heads of departments in the college of science

The heads of departments are another category, which in the hierarchical structure are closer than other faculty to the senior faculty in the college of science. The 8 heads interviewed tended to reflect an awareness of the new policy. Their accounts of the development of the QA procedures, however, did not seem to show a markedly different response from that to other procedures undertaken in the past. Their reactions to the new policy did not show either support or resistance. However, to me it indicated, on the whole, compliance to the system.

A head of a department thought that *'there was some publicity about the project two years back when KU invited a number of deans and presidents from American universities to give talks and organise seminars to communicate their experiences to the administrators and faculty in KU. I think the whole idea of implementing these procedures is that KU is a new university and people need to know where it stands among other universities. It needs recognition'* (interview, March 3rd,1997).

Another head believed that *'these evaluation procedures have been with us for a long time. But they were never integrated into the system, especially the external reviewer policy. The only difference however is that it is systematized now'* (interview on March 3rd,1997).

Another head of a department agreed with his colleagues on these issues, adding that *'I was involved in those evaluation projects a long time ago. They aim at achieving high standards so that KU becomes compatible with high-standard universities worldwide in*

its output, research...etc. It is an old project; however, the approach has changed slightly. He concluded: '*I think the visits of external reviewers are of no use, if our progress is handicapped by administrative procedures* (interview on March 8th,1997)).

Thus the informants seemed to agree on the fact that the evaluation exercise is not a novel practice in KU. However they recognise that the motives behind the policy seem to have slightly altered as well as the approach itself.

Another head of a department emphasized that '*the focus of this strategy is more on teaching than research. It highlights the importance of communication between students and lecturers. The emphasis in the past was on research, which made teaching so marginal. Also that last seminar on ethics was very interesting, it is becoming an international concern in the academia, it is new in KU. This should promote good practice based on ethics*' (interview on March 3rd,1997).

The workshop on professional ehtics was held on November 16-18,1996. It was part of the many issues that the new strategy is addressing to promote maintaining good standards as well as good practice.

A head of a department thought that '*the new policy has not added anything new. All the activities in the department are routine jobs, which I have to keep abreast of. Some of them were with us before the war. However, the new policy has brought many new suggestions and ideas. They are still ideas, which some departments are considering for application. Other departments prefer to wait and see how they are implemented by others*' (interview on March 3rd,1997).

Other heads talked about their direct involvement in the QA procedures. One of the heads explained that '*we have been part of the new project. We co-operated with the senior administration by providing all the documents needed. Our external reviewers come from the American Chemical Society to assess our department. I think the new strategy added more responsibilities to my job such as preparing a database for the whole department, and an extra file for assessment, which includes internal and external statistical*

assessment activities. I believe the whole staff co-operated immensely, because they believe it is important for the image of the university' (interview on March 8th,1997).

Another head found the current procedures representative of an overall policy of the new administration. In her opinion, the reason for such procedures is accreditation (interview on March 18th,1997). Accreditation seems to be a daunting concern for most KU staff because they realise the need for KU to be internationally accredited like other universities elsewhere.

7.1.4. Faculty in the college of science

The survey of the new strategy provoked different feelings and reactions. Some found the interview as an outlet for their feelings or a chance to give vent to long-standing concerns and fears. Others thought this research might be a means of highlighting the topic and making it more public. Few found that it prompted controversial issues over long established practices.

Within the science faculty my informants' views tended to vary depending on their years of experience in KU, their own educational background and their academic status in the college. Old hands seemed to have got used to the idea of new assessment procedures in every four year rectorship. Both Kuwaitis and expatriates seemed to agree on the fact that there has always been a concern for quality but that its manifestations seem to differ with every new rector.

Exploring the views of the faculty in science, I didn't not find much awareness of how the new strategy was developing. Only a few showed some knowledge of the QA procedures undertaken. And when I asked how they got that information, their response was that it reached them either through seminars or circulars from senior administration. Some faculty members expressed rather vague ideas about the strategy of excellence indicating very limited knowledge about the project. The sources from which they acquired the information seemed to vary from one department to another, and sometimes from one individual to another.

The respondents expressed various views on the issue, ranging from the very optimistic to

those who seemed to have lost faith in the system as a whole. Ball (1991) argues that educational institutions 'are political arenas where opposing ideologies and competing vested interests are played out. Any case study which taps into these facets of institutional life would seem to stand little chance of consensual agreement' (Ball, 1991:90).

For instance, a science associate professor showed his unawareness about the new policy. His response was in the form of a question, when I asked him about the new strategy more than once. He wondered *'is it a project to evaluate our curricula? We have already done that with two external reviewers and received the report with recommendations. But frankly I do not know anything about this strategy of excellence'* (interview on March 19th,1997).

A female lecturer showed complete ignorance of what was going on regarding this project. Although she had attended a workshop (on teaching methodology for new teaching staff and faculty with no teaching background such as in the hard sciences) where basic information about the strategy was introduced, she was not aware of it. In fact, she asked me for information about the new project (interview on March 10th,1997).

Another assistant professor expressed his anger about being uninformed of these procedures in one blunt statement:*'I knew that it exists only by a piece of paper circulated in the department. Other than that I know nothing'* (interview on April 14th,1997).

A few faculty members put the blame on the department heads for not holding meetings or workshops at the college level to educate the staff about this new evaluation strategy.

An experienced professor showed some disappointment about how he was kept in the dark about the project. He wondered *'why don't they release enough information for the faculty? We might even be more co-operative, especially people who have good background and experience in evaluation'* (interview on April 5th,1997).

One annoyed professor responded to my enquiry about the strategy in a sarcastic tone. *'It is*

a phrase everyone uses so as to make politicians believe that everything is under control in the university' (interview on March 4th,1997).

Overall it seems obvious that information on the new strategy had not been effectively disseminated in terms of time, location and instruments.

More than 10 faculty members mentioned 'the excellent teacher' and 'excellent researcher' schemes, neither of which are formally part of the strategy of excellence. (They also enquired about the criteria of selection for these schemes because they were not clear about them. The only exception was the faculty member who had won the award of the excellent teacher whom I interviewed later to find out more about that scheme. It seems that student evaluation scores determine to whom the award should go).

A science associate professor believed that '*a potential evaluation exercise started in the 80s. But it was not followed up after that. It disappeared with the departure of the then rector. Since then there had been no settled policy*' (interview on March 4th,1997*). Another professor suggested that this state of continuous change affects standards negatively. He added that '*stability is achieved when a university reaches maturity, which does not seem to be the case in KU*' (interview on March 9th,1997). A sympathetic professor stated that '*the sincere motives for continuous improvement are there but they are not reflected in the procedures undertaken*' (March 4th,1997). Or, to state it in the words of an expatriate professor:'*the administration does not know how to go about it*' (interview on March 4th,1997).

Most of the comments on the tendency of the system to change constantly were made by Kuwaiti nationals. Many of these people seemed to have more concern about the university as a whole rather than their own department, because as they see it the latter is well-taken care of. Expatriates however seem to focus more on the details of their own jobs as teachers and researchers rather than on university or even departmental affairs.

An expatriate professor who had been involved in the evaluation exercises in the past asserts that '*the driving force for all these evaluation procedures is quality assurance. Changes*

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in the university system are very much to be expected in a young and wealthy country like Kuwait'. He believed that, *'evaluation of programs is a new practice in the Arab world and KU has not had a long-standing tradition of how to carry out that activity. Administrators are trying different things. However, the mission of the university is there to guide them'* (interview on March 4th,1997).

The views surveyed above are about procedures at the university level. At the college level, however, the science faculty showed more awareness of the internal quality assurance procedures and that included both nationals and expatriates. The reason can be attributed to their constant practical involvement in some of the procedures such as the students advisory committee, equipment provision, and so forth. They are also members of the college council, where crucial decisions regarding the college are made, such as selecting a dean and heads of departments.

At the department level, faculty seem to be quite content with their own methods for ensuring quality. Most of the interviewees asserted that enough care and attention are given to program and course development. Examinations are well-monitored. Seminars and colloquia are held regularly in the science departments, and these are seen as a positive indicator for quality from the faculty perspective.

An associate professor mentioned that *'all procedures that we implement in the department aim to safeguard quality standards'.* However, he suggested *'it is other components of quality that we do not have power over that take quality a step backwards. An example is the poor quality student intake which is forced on the department for political reasons'* (interview on March 5th,1997).

7.1.5. The Dean and Vice-deans in the college of education
I now turn to the views of parallel staff at the college of education. At this college, views tend to have some similarity in terms of exhibiting a lack of awareness of the new procedures at all levels, or it may be that 'all members of stakeholding group share a common myth, decide that they will maintain an organisational front, or even deliberately conspire to withhold information' (Guba and Lincoln,1989:240). The dean and his assistants seem to show a

relatively good knowledge about the new policy. However, they were not very positive in the accounts they gave of the strategy of excellence and were not in full support of its implementation.

The dean of the college stated that *'the new policy is not progressing at a good rate in some colleges. Senior administration is putting more pressure on the social sciences. Social sciences should be treated equally with sciences. We are the only college, which is reluctant to provide the administration with our course exams and marking schemes. We want to see other colleges proceeding with the new policy. However, we will begin the self-assessment exercise as soon as the college finishes its own study of its output from 1980 till the present. Senior administration should wait till we finish this study'* (interview on March 26th,1997).

The vice-dean for student affairs in the college confirmed that all departments are aware of the new policy, because it had been discussed in all committees in the various departments. However, he continued *'there is a concern for quality, the strategy of excellence is an indication of that. However, the college of education staff do not support it. I am flexible myself, I don't mind it, in fact I am for it. But the faculty here believe that they are the experts in educational evaluation and I agree with them. It is the educationist's job. Talking about evaluation, the college had a program evaluation once, six or seven years ago. But frankly speaking, we do not have a self-assessment exercise annually'* (interview on March 26th,1997).

7.1.6. Heads of departments in the college of education

Again, it was the academic administrators in the college such as the heads of departments who showed some knowledge of the project. Some were frank and open about it. Others denied their knowledge of its details. The comments they made criticise the university as a system and organisation. They reflected dissatisfaction and resentment.

A head of a department wondered how we can talk about a concern for quality when we have not defined it yet at the level of the university. He thinks that *'KU's problem lies in the fact that evaluation procedures are linked to chair position, i.e. to whoever is in post. They*

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change with each change of the individuals'. He sees KU as *'a punitive institution rather than a rewarding one, which is demonstrated in the way regulations and rules are made to restrict staff members at all levels'* (interview on March 29th,1997).

A head of a department conceived the concern as individualistic. He stated that **'the education college does not provide a specialisation, it is not an independent discipline, it prepares students for a profession in conjunction with other colleges. Thus our end-product is not ours only, it is ours and other colleges'**. He proposed that *'there is also the absence of a clear ideology and philosophy of the educational system in Kuwait as a whole which, in theory, should be based on the objectives and the needs of the state that seem to cause deficiencies in the higher education system'* (interview on March 23th,1997).

A head of a department sees the new procedures as only temporary. He believes that *'these procedures are linked with the individuals who are in charge, they will change when the individuals are changed. Two years ago everyone in KU was talking about the strategy of excellence, but the criteria are not there. The psychology of the people was not considered. We cannot adopt an alien model of evaluation; we should adapt it to our own culture'* (interview on March 29th,1997).

Another head of a department noted that she had read about the project, but she did not know the details. She too mentioned the excellent teacher and the excellent researcher schemes, but was not aware of the criteria by which they were judged (interview on March 23rd,1997).

The overall impression I got from the senior administrators in the college of education about KU as an educational system is that it is unstable. It changes with the change of the rector every four years. Change fatigue seems to be a permanent problem for the majority of faculty in education. The senior administrators views seem to stress the disjunctions accompanied by the new QA policy such as the proposed timing for the implementation of the QA procedures, which they think, does not respect the feelings of the people working in the organisation. Or to put it in other words, more time is needed for a substantial change in the institutional culture such as that implied by the strategy of excellence, and the appropriateness of the model deployed and how it builds on the existing university system,

which is not without flaws.

7.1.7. Faculty in education

The reactions of the faculty do not seem to differ from those of the senior administrators in the college of education. However, their responses reflect a concern over university policies in general. This was apparent among the 'old hands' just as much as among newly appointed members. Each respondent expressed a concern, which he/she thinks as of prime priority.

Old hands seem to show more awareness than others of the development of the QA procedures over the past 32 years and their consequent results.

A professor who has been in KU for many years, first as a student then as faculty, thought that there used to be a greater concern for quality. But it is no longer serious. She attributes that to complicated procedures and regulations. She added that *'an indicator of high quality at KU in 1966 was that it used to award postgraduate degrees such as masters and PhD, which is not the case any longer'* (interview on March 25th,1997).

As a result individual faculty are driven by their own personal motives for maintaining quality, at least at the departmental and individual levels.

A contemporary of the above professor, an experienced associate professor asserted that *'the concern for quality is at the individual level, it is not a characteristic of the college'* (interview on March 23rd,1997).

Their colleague a sociologist, an associate professor noted that there are variations in the concern since KU was established. However, she showed great concern over the topic of quality. She said that *'the concern is there, but it is not continuously highlighted'*. She gave an example of a workshop 'professional development' on teaching methodology for staff with no teaching experience. She confirmed that it was an illuminating experience for her, not being an educator herself. She regretted that it was not followed up. She showed interest in visiting her peers in the classroom to gain more teaching experience, but her

colleagues thought it was not good for her image as an established lecturer in the college (interview on March 30th,1997).

On the other hand, new recruits were still busy with their own immediate concerns. A newly appointed lecturer showed a great concern over teaching as of considerable importance. She noted that she had not noticed a concern for quality at the level of teaching. For some faculty it was just a matter of getting by. She added that teaching methods had not changed since she was a student at the same college, and that creativity and innovation were not encouraged (interview on March 29th,1997).

However, another colleague of the same status, who was appointed four months ago, expressed an opposing opinion.*'There are manifestations of such concern exhibited in the continuous review of programs, in participating in conferences and in developing better skills among student teachers. The decision to extend the years of study to five instead of four demonstrates the concern to turn out student teachers professionally qualified for the job*'* (interview on March 22nd,1997).

Other faculty seem to look at other manifestations of quality concerns in KU. A more optimistic view was expressed by an associate professor who sees the concern for quality in KU as an aspect of its strong connection to the outside world. KU, to him, is following the most recent developments in other higher education systems. (interview on March 23rd,1997).

The lack of communication between the implementers and the education faculty seems to be given a great emphasis by most of the respondents in the college of education. The frequent complaint from faculty about the lack of communication between faculty, departments and colleges may be attributed to the fact that 'individuals are governed by an old occupational culture characterised by teachers working in isolation from their colleagues' (Weil, 1994:41).

Some reluctantly mentioned 'something' about the new QA policy. A female associate professor said that her knowledge of the strategy of excellence is very limited. The source of

her information was a circular in the department, which was worded in a very superior style that she did not like, hence forward she was against the project (interview on March 30th, 1997).

An associate professor expressed some disappointment in the lack of communication between colleges in KU, which in his opinion isolates each college from the others. This affects quality negatively. Others talked about a lack of communication between them as faculty and the implementers of the new QA policy (interview on March 23rd, 1997).

However, it seems that few are more informed than others in getting more information about the QA policy in the same college due to their direct involvement in the QA procedures. An experience expatriate professor who contributed to publicizing the new strategy gave a reasoned account of how the whole project started. He explained that it was through one of the workshops that he organised called 'professional and academic development' in 1995/1996. He thought he had been chosen on the basis of his vast experience in organising similar programs in other places outside Kuwait. Hence he was approached to evaluate the QA policy, as his area is higher education. He stated that *'the strategy is based on a comprehensive philosophy of the TQM model that encompasses the whole university. It follows a scientific method whereby the project looks into evaluation first then it gets into improving all aspects of the institution'* (interview on March 29th, 1997).

Out of the 16 faculty interviewed, only 3 denied having heard anything about the strategy of excellence and they were newly-appointed lecturers in the college. The rest showed some knowledge but few spelled it out in words.

Few provided different reasons for the emergence of the new QA policy. A newly-appointed staff member believed that *'these procedures reflect the ambition of certain academic leaders, but the problem is that the policies stipulated seem to hinder progress at all levels'*. He thinks that 'to develop quality in an institution there should be the basic components of it, which is a decent building with decent offices. He said that it took the college a whole year to find an office for him in the department. He wondered how he could be productive if he

is not settled in his new job (interview on March 27th,1997).

In general, the education staff seem far more critical than the science staff in their reactions to the new QA policy. Their views dealt not only with the new QA procedures but also include the social and political aspects of KU as an educational organisation.

7.2. Alternative Thinking

So far I have been concerned to report responses to the QA policy as designed and implemented. In this part I will review the alternative options proposed by the audiences in KU. These should reflect their reservations, aspirations and vision of how QA procedures ought to be in relation to what was happening on KU campuses. The views expressed here are of the immediate stakeholders in KU, that is, the senior administrators, the senior administrators in the two colleges, faculty and students. The alternative thinking reported in this part deal with three main themes, which are: the adequacy of TQM as an evaluation mode;, the appropriateness of the current measures, and finally, the audiences' views on what quality might mean in the KU context.

7.2.1. Adequacy of TQM as a model

Despite the positive accounts provided on this very issue in earlier parts, some respondents seem to find the TQM approach inappropriate in certain ways and for various reasons. The academic administrators tend to express some reservations about the success of such an approach in the context of the Kuwaiti society, especially among those who are very familiar with it. For instance, the vice-rector for planning who is a management specialist herself, explained that *'I have mixed feelings about the applicability of TQM. I like to see it applied in its totality being in it myself as a management specialist. But I know its limitations when applied in the KU context as I am involved here as a planner. We haven't reached the stage of developing it internally and externally yet. Internally, within the institution itself, we need to educate the people in how to establish their standards, to set specific criteria...etc, this is necessary both for personal reasons and because of a prevailing lack of objectivity. I think it is the culture. Externally the staff of KU have different backgrounds, they use various measures. We are faced with a tough job trying*

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to get reliable measures for the multi- educational backgrounds of the staff. Added to that is the limitation of funds. You need to reward and constrain. There should be more flexibility in rules and regulations. It is a government agency, it is hard to apply your own measures. These are the drawbacks. It may be more successful in academia but not in administration' (interview on March 4th,1997).

Her account suggests that the TQM approach requires a certain culture to develop within an organisation, a more controlled and well-defined measures for the nine identified aspects by the strategy so that to overcome the existing variations and more flexibility with regard to the current rules and regulations that appear to impede a more successful application.

The consultant seems to agree with the vice-rector response. He stated that *'TQM is most successful with regard to curriculum because you have a goal that you are attempting to reach. While doing this you are documenting every stage in order to proceed to the next. With faculty, it is not that successful because of the tremendous paperwork that they have to do, which they are reluctant to execute. They find such procedures time- consuming. In industry, however, specialists do it effficiently and at a striking speed. Again, it is difficult to apply it to students because we need to measure the value-addedness that a student attains at the different stages in his education from the beginning of his enrolment in KU. We still haven't developed an efficient system to control that yet'* (interview on February 24th,1997).

The above response suggests that the chosen aspects by the strategy of excellence, which are mainly academic, are within the capacity of the senior administration to assess and change, but not the administrative system of the university, which is tied to the state bureaucratic system. The resentment of the faculty in the colleges to follow documentation at every step of their work is also an expected consequent reaction by the implementers.

The developed measures by the new strategy also raise some issues to some faculty since these are mainly based on performance indicators. A head of a department in science confirmed that ' *the parameters used are not uniform. There are no set parameters to assess teaching nor research output in terms of quality of research or its ethics'* (interview

on March 18th,1997).

The dissatisfaction of faculty with the current measures is attributed to the fact that the measurement of outcomes in respect of input and output qualifications provides quantifiable indicators but conceals the nature of the qualitative knowledge, skills and abilities. The effectiveness of such indicators is debatable as they demonstrate figures rather than processes, which are at the heart of the learning/teaching process and the quality of research.

From the senior faculty in the colleges' perspective, the new QA policy requires a lot more resources than the implementers have had provided. A head of a department in the college of education believed that *'there needs to be the right environment to implement TQM. The simplest thing we are talking about here is space. We do not have a proper campus and other basic facilities'* (interview on March 25th,1997).

The same view was expressed by an expatriate professor in education who has been involved in the QA policy by chairing one of the workshops. He proposed that *'the problem with this approach is that it does not specify certain conditions that need to be met such as the teacher/student ratio, space etc.. Another reason is that there is no real effective communication between colleges and the same is true between reluctant colleges and the implementers of the new policy. Co-operation in such a case should dissolve the disagreement'* (interview on March 26th,1997).

The above response stresses effective communication and feedback between the implementers and KU staff as essential requirement for the QA policy to develop. Some propose that a local model of QA will be more successful than a foreign adapted one. An experienced professor in science thought that *'if TQM can be adapted properly to our context, I don't see why it shouldn't be a success. I believe there is a need to develop an intellectual model which can fit our society culturally'* (interview on March 4th,1997).

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7.2.2. Appropriateness of current measures:

7.2.2.1. External reviewers

The external reviewer policy appears to be of great significance to most of the university staff. Their views range from the extremely positive to complete resentment. However, the general feeling is that it is an efffective procedure if it meets certain expectations that the faculty see as very important.

To science staff, the experience of external reviewers was not new. It had been with them for more than ten years, which indicates that it is a college policy than a novel and imposed mechanism. Their reactions and attitudes varied over its usefulness to their individual departments. Most of the informants in the college of science thought that the time the external reviewer spends in the department is insufficient. Five to ten days are not enough for the reviewer to provide an accurate appraisal of the departmental activities. Thus their feeling was that the report produced is very general. Some tended to see it as a routine task.

An assistant professor said *'the external reviewer serves an administrative purpose. Things that he mentions in the report are already known to us'* (interview on March 10th,1997).

More than three faculty members suggested that when the reviewer's feedback is ineffective it is because what is written in the report is even influenced by the concerns and problems of the department staff. Staff report to him/her every detail about departmental activities at the beginning of the visit. Hence the report does not reflect the reviewer's own independent insights.

An extreme view came from an assistant professor, who noted that *'the ER's views reflect what senior administration likes to hear about the different departments. There is a political bias in the selection of those reviewers. I think it is a good method, but it is not executed properly in KU'*(interview on March 18th,1997)

Others find that this method represents the external link with the outside world which helps to give KU international recognition. However, the process has its shortcomings, as some

explained. The vice-dean for academic affairs and research in science suggested that '*many ERs are biased in their evaluation in terms of the social and cultural aspects of the Kuwaiti society. Their judgements usually imply a bias towards their own systems*' (interview on March 18th,1997).

Two heads of departments expressed a preference for a team of reviewers rather than two only. One of them stated that '*I think that if our department could be a member in one of the accreditation organisations, the evaluation would be more valid and credible*'. She stated that '*In the ER method there is a bigger chance of subjectivity and bias in judgement*' (interview, March 18th,1997). Her colleague agreed, adding, '*an external reviewer looks at the whole process from his point of view and his own background. But with a team from an accrediting body, it is more of a standard procedure*'(interview on March 8th,1997).

More than ten associate professors argued that the ERs do not give sufficient attention to teaching, but others disagree. Some think that they want an ER to visit them in their classes and to hear his/her opinion about teaching method. Others protest against that, as it is not the reviewer's task to evaluate faculty on their teaching. It seems what the ERs look into is mainly curriculum content and research output. Sitting in on some faculty classes is only a complimentary gesture rather than a part of the evaluation process. It usually takes place at the request of a concerned member of staff.

7.2.2.2. Student Evaluation

The student evaluation form seems to provoke different reactions among KU staff. As a method of assessing teaching performance all faculty find it an effective tool. However, they find it unreliable as a measure for numerous reasons. Some faculty find it statistically efficient in that it gives an indication, but it is not %100 accurate. More than half the interviewed faculty think that statistically speaking it does not work in small classes,. It is more reliable in large classes. The majority of the faculty respondents uninamously agree that

the items on the evaluation form have to be modified and undergo an accurate analysis.

An associate professor in science stated that *'the part on the course is totally irrelevant to students, especially as they do not have the slightest idea of the content of the course. How could they evaluate content when they don't know what it is?'* (interview in March 5th,1997).

Another professor in science mentions that, *'it seems to me that the same form is used for all departments and all colleges. Hence there are certain items that are not relevant to each specific department'* (interview on March 9th,1997).

Students'responses on the evaluation sheet seem to disturb the faculty in both colleges who say that the responses are often not sincere or objective. An associate professor in science noted *'it reflects a lack of maturity and awareness of the purpose of that method of assessment'* (interview on April 7th,1997).

Another professor in the same college thought that *'students tend to overrate instructors who are easy graders and underrate those who make them work hard throughout the term. Thus the responses reflect personal and emotional reactions which are not objective at all'* (interview on March 8th,1997).

Some Kuwaiti faculty believe that the evaluation form is like a double-edged sword in relation to expatriate instructors. The latter seem to use it for promotion purposes. Or to put it in other words, it is a ladder for advancement as it is one of the criteria for promotion. However, this does not affect Kuwaitis, since they have a permanent contract. Other faculty with temporary contracts would perhaps twist their teaching to maximize their scores.

A head of a department in science thinks that the graduates tend to provide better feedback on their experience, because their accounts are not guided by any personal interest or distorted by emotional reactions to particular staff (interview on March 8th,1997).

An experienced professor in education stated that *'student evaluation in education is highly positive because as educators we believe that high grades on courses are good indicators of quality improvement. Academic administrators, however, do not see that. They follow the traditional schools of thought. But I wonder how far it reflects reality? I do not think it reflects it completely. We might be lenient in terms of quantity of material, i.e. less coverage of the curriculum than expected, exam questions and so forth'* (interview on March 26th,1997).

Another interesting comment was made by an associate professor in education who argues that, *'students' responses indicate a lack of objectivity which can be attributed to the tribal culture they come from. That is, students are biased in their judgement in favour of a faculty member who supports them, whether right or wrong as members of one tribe. It has to do with the value system they are brought up in. Even faculty are the product of such culture'* (interview on March 30th,1997).

A head of a department supports that point, mentioning that *'we cannot blame students for being immature. Maturity is usually acquired from the teaching staff'* (interview on March 29th,1997).

7.3. Faculty conceptions of quality

Having looked at a broad range of responses to the QA policy and having examined opinions about both the adequacy of the TQM approach and two particular procedures that form part of the overall strategy, it is now time to see how faculty and then students define quality for themselves.

In this section I shall first look at some views of the 38 faculty members interviewed in the college of science and then turn to the college of education, where I interviewed 16 faculty members, including senior faculty. However, among the most crucial topics that faculty in both colleges raise are student attainment, relationships between students and faculty, experiences and benefits of learning processes.

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7.3.1. Science faculty perceptions of quality

Faculty differ in the way they look at quality. Fourteen staff members out of 38 in the science college think that quality must be assured in each of the three activities identified by the administration, namely: teaching, research and community service. Others replaced community service with administration. However, as teachers and student advisors they tend to put more weight on student learning experience and effective interaction between faculty and students. Faculty definitions of quality cover a wide array of concerns and ambitions in the academic community.

Nevertheless, the initial response by all the participants was that quality is a vague, relative and broad term that may encompass various notions. What differentiates one individual from another is the way each prioritizes the aspects or attributes of quality. However, the definitions provided here relate to Barnett's (1992) developmental model which involves the internal members of the institution in assessing and reviewing what they are trying to accomplish and make that explicit to the external community. The members in this approach are constantly improving the quality of their work, which makes quality the responsibility of everyone in the organisation. It focuses on processes rather than the end-product.

The vice-dean for research in science asserted that '*a quality university has to have a student product, which attains high calibre professionally, mentally and personality-wise. And between these two times when the student enters the university and when he leaves it, we as an organisation have to do something of quality*' (interview on March 18th,1997).

Not all the manifestations of concern for quality at the university level are accepted by some faculty such as the insistence of senior administration on recruiting expatriate full professors. An associate professor believes that '*most of them have been too long in the profession that their contribution is becoming so minimal in both teaching and research*'. She added that '*climbing the professional ladder does not concern them any more so their productivity is reduced.* She concluded '*recruiting younger staff with less experience may bring more benefits to the college than professors*' (interview on April 5th,1997).

A professor in science who is very familiar with TQM approach, as a researcher, conceived quality as *'a set of characteristics which describes the end-result in education, which is the student. If the student leaves the college with 60% of the curriculum still in his brain then we met the objectives and we achieved quality. This notion is known as fitness for purpose. That is, we compare our performance with the standards. What we need to focus on is the quality of performance '* (interview on April 5th,1997).

A technology-oriented associate professor believes that, *'quality is to prepare people who can deal with the society that is developing technologically in a tremendous speed, to be ahead of our time or at least within the frame of our time'* (interview on March 19th,1997).

Many faculty members have definite expectations from their university students. Some believe that student intake is a crucial factor in achieving quality. Students should have the motivation to learn for learning's sake, not only for obtaining a degree. Faculty work towards assuring that 'learners fully participate in, and contribute to, the learning process in such a way that they become responsible for creating, delivering and evaluating the product' (Harvey and Green,1993:25). In fact, some faculty view quality as the outcome of the learning experience that a student has attained in a higher education institution: this in itself is an indicator of the quality of that particular institution; a view which has a place within the transformative notion of quality (Harvey and Green,1993). Few see a rich learning experience as the responsibility of both the teaching staff as well as the student.

A head of a department thinks that quality education is *'to help students to learn, not to memorize texts. They must be trained on how to seek knowledge through different means'* (interview on March 8th,1997).

An assistant professor believes that a quality university always fosters a continuous rapport between students and faculty. He noted that *' teaching faculty should have a special style in dealing with students. He/she should begin at their level and try to boost their standards to his/hers. Faculty should devote time for class discussion, encourage students to research and never treat them like information-receivers only. Students ought to be encouraged to ask and discuss and communicate effectively'* (interview on April 12th,1997).

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An expatriate professor finds defining quality very difficult. He believes that, *'quality can be defined in different ways. No one can define quality here the way manufacturers define a certain product, simply because we are dealing with human beings. The graduates, the academic programs, and the teaching staff are all indicators. But there are no absolute standards for such aspects. In KU we use external reviewers as the major tool for assuring quality. Again it all depends on how it is done'* (interview on March 4th, 1997).

An experienced professor noted that *'quality depends on the people of the institution; faculty, students and administrators. Innovation and creativity in the different disciplines should be the leading motto for all those categories. Faculty can achieve this through research. Students should always question things. If this does not happen, then we have failed in our mission as an educational institution'* (interview on March 2nd, 1997).

A modest assistant professor thinks that, *'quality is the ability to do things well and achieve internal satisfaction'* (interview on March 2nd, 1997).

7.3.2. Education faculty perceptions of quality

Turning now to the views of the education faculty, it is clear that there was a more notable awareness of what measurement and evaluation are about, as well as of the methods for assessing the quality of inputs. One of the experts in this area conceives quality as *'a level whereby you reach certain specifications of any input. Thus every input should have its own specifications of quality. There also should be some relationship between the different inputs. These are only assumptions. Staff, students, curriculum...etc are only constituents of a system, these could have internal good or bad qualities'* (interview on March 26th, 1997).

However, faculty in education tend to talk about indicators of quality in exactly the same manner as science faculty perceive them. They seem to agree about the aspects or constituents of an educational system. The difference lies in the way they prioritize those aspects from their own personal perspective. Seven faculty members out of sixteen

interviewed in the faculty of education thought of output as the first indicator of a quality institution. The other nine seem to find prioritizing the identified aspects by the strategy of excellence very complex, in terms of perceiving these as interdependent.

The vice-dean for student affairs thinks that output is the best indicator of the quality of the college. However, he added '*superficially, it is obvious in the college of education. Our outputs graduate with honour every term in theory. But in practice we really don't know. Facilities are available but how we are utilizing them and how to optimize their use is doubtful. I am not really sure if we are doing a good job. What I am trying to say is that it is very difficult to measure the quality of different aspects of the teaching-learning process*' (interview on March 26th,1997).

An associate professor defines quality as '*the ability to produce outputs who are adequate enough for the service they are about to enter; they should be prepared for the market. If we meet these objectives we are achieving quality*' (interview on March 23rd,1997).

A different view was illustrated by a head of a department, who noted that '*quality is usually assessed by either direct or indirect measures. The criteria set for every aspect of our work such as teaching, writing a textbook..etc are very specific to that particular aspect. It is an internal process which can't be seen directly*' (interview on March 23rd,1997).

An associate professor seems to agree with her colleague on the difficulty of measuring the quality of the graduates. She explained that '*I myself care for theory before application. Some colleges such as engineering and medicine can easily measure the quality of their outputs, but not us in education. No empirical study has been done in the past. We as faculty never evaluated student teachers on their practical training properly*' (interview in March 30th,1997).

A head of another department thinks that '*to do every small action to your best is quality*'. She believes that, '*it is one of the main islamic principles that each one of us is expected to do any job well, or in other words to excel in it*' (interview on March 23rd,1997).

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A specialist in evaluation and measurement, an associate professor, was puzzled by my question. He stated that *'there is no clear definition of what quality means'*. To him, it seems that *'the concern for quality can be divided into two categories; one is the concern of administrators, the other is of academics'*. He adds that *'the concept of quality in KU is not connected to punishment or reward for those who deserve either'*. In his view, the system is inconsistent in its policies in terms of promotion and other affairs, because of the absence of criteria for many procedures undertaken in KU (interview on March 25th,1997).

Other useful insights came from an analysis of the KU weekly newsletter (Afaq), over three month period of my fieldwork. One of the issues had a lengthy interview with the dean of the education college. The main theme of the interview was the empirical study conducted by the college of its output. In that interview the dean emphasized that the college would not be following the new QA procedures before the evaluation of the college output was completed. In another issue the dean of science expressed her views on current concerns in the college, giving a brief account of the development of QA procedures there. These two interviews suggest that there is some publicity on the project available to students as well as faculty. But the question remains, how sufficient is it?

7.4. Student perceptions

In this section I attempt to explore the views of KU students. I therefore sought their opinions in two ways: firstly, specifically about their views on the student evaluation exercise through a questionnaire; and secondly, about their thoughts on quality issues in general via group interviews.

7.4.1. Student questionnaire findings

It may be remembered that this questionnaire was carried out before the students' interview stage with the particular intention of exploring views on the student evaluation process. It elicited various responses ranging from indifference and anger to eagerness and sound criticism. The questionnaire items are dealt with in sequential order below. Charts are

provided to display the frequencies of response in each prompt.

Students are asked to complete a questionnaire, which covers both the course and the effectiveness of the teaching. Chart 1 displays the number of students who regularly complete the evaluation questionnaire in the two colleges, responding to the first question, *'do you usually complete the evaluation sheet? YES or NO.* Out of the two colleges, 86% complete the sheet, 87.7% in education and 85% in science. The most notable comment was that though the evaluation exercise is important, its value depends upon what happens afterwards.
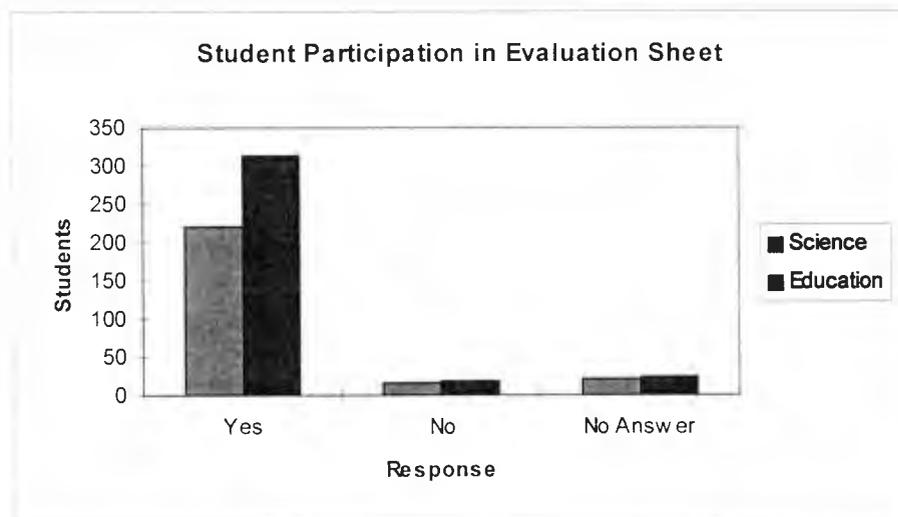
Figure 1

In response to the second question, *'is the student evaluation sheet sufficient to express your opinion about the course/instructor? If NO give your reason/s'.* Out of a total of 86%, 65.6% in education and 46% in science, feel that such an instrument is not a sufficient vehicle for them to express their views (chart 2a).

Sufficiency of Evaluation Sheet
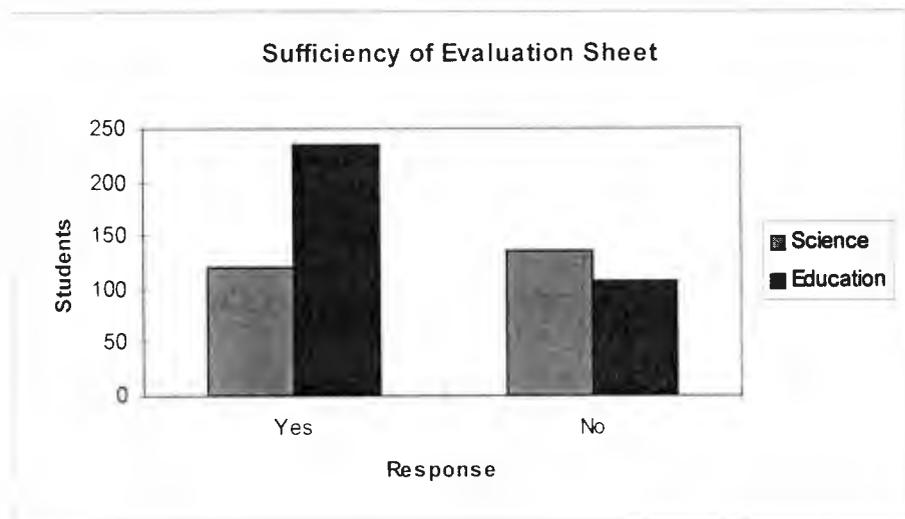
Figure 2a

The most significant response to the dissatisfaction with the evaluation sheet, 6.8% in education and 6.9% in science ,is that it does not cover all relevant aspects concerning the course and the instructor. The second significant response is that it is highly structured so there is no space for them to write comments. Other factors also influence the validity of the evaluation. For instance, students propose that there is not enough time to respond to 40 items in the last few minutes of class-time. They also think that there is bias in their responses due to the presence of the instructor during the administration of the evaluation. That is, it represents a threat to them (Chart 2b).
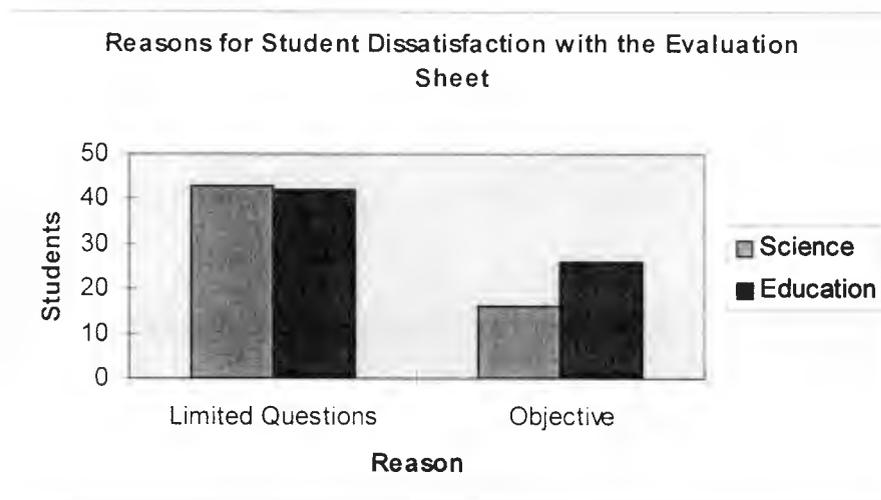
Figure 2b

The responses to the question, *'what in your opinion is the purpose of this sheet?'* exhibit a wide range of different reactions. However, the significant response, 66%, is that it is meant to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the instructor/course. More articulate students, 7% only, believe that their evaluation is requested because student opinion has weight in KU, that is, out of a democratic motive. 'To improve academic services' is another response given by 13% of the students. Three humorously stated that it is a means for the researcher to get a PhD!!! (Chart 3).
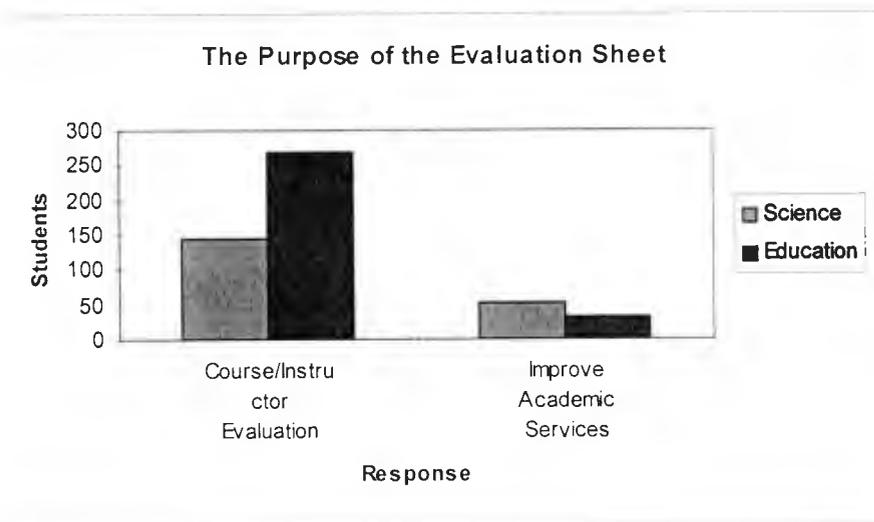
Figure 3

Student replies to the third question, *'does your response to evaluation reflect a 'personal'* *or 'objective' response?'* vary according to the level. First and some second years claim to give spontaneous responses which reflect moral judgements concerning the instructor, whether he/she is an easy grader or not and on his/her attitude, in general. Third and fourth years' claim that they evaluate objectively with a sound justification for such response. Small number in education, 10%, think that they tick both responses. A bigger percentage in science, 20%, however, agreed with those. (Chart 4) shows the percentages in the two colleges.

Type of Response for Evaluation Sheet
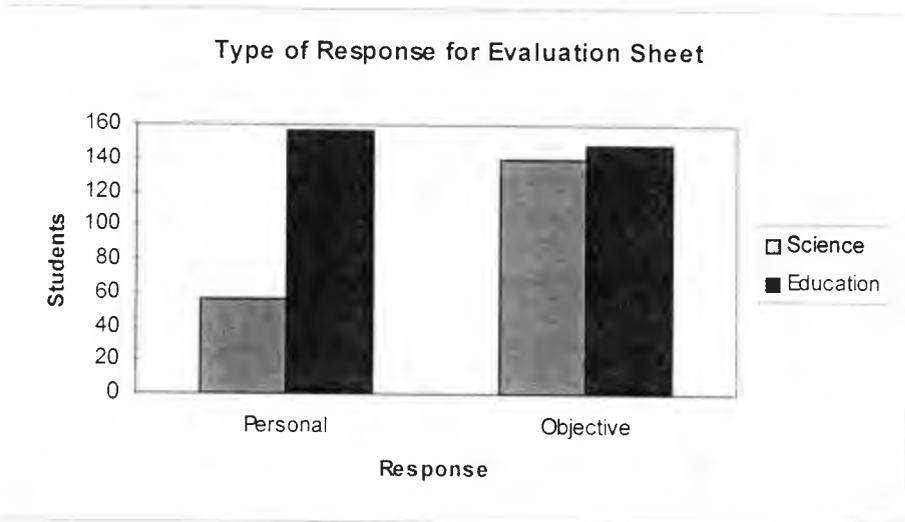
Figure 4

The next question asked students, *'do you think that your views are taken into consideration by the college academic administration? If NO give your reason/s'*. The replies suggest a gap between the responses from the students of these two colleges. The education students appear to be more positive than those in science, 21.7% in education and 10% in science. Most of the negative replies suggest that student views are not taken seriously at the higher level in KU, for political reasons, 20% in education and19.7% in science. They also felt that rules and regulations, with all their rigidity, will not change. 20.7% in education and 36% in science gave such a response. Some students have even given up on the idea of completing those evaluations. Many believe that there is a lack of communication between the senior administrators and the student body. Even respondents who had stayed for a long time in the college repeated the same answer, that there is no indication that things will ever change in KU (Chart 5).
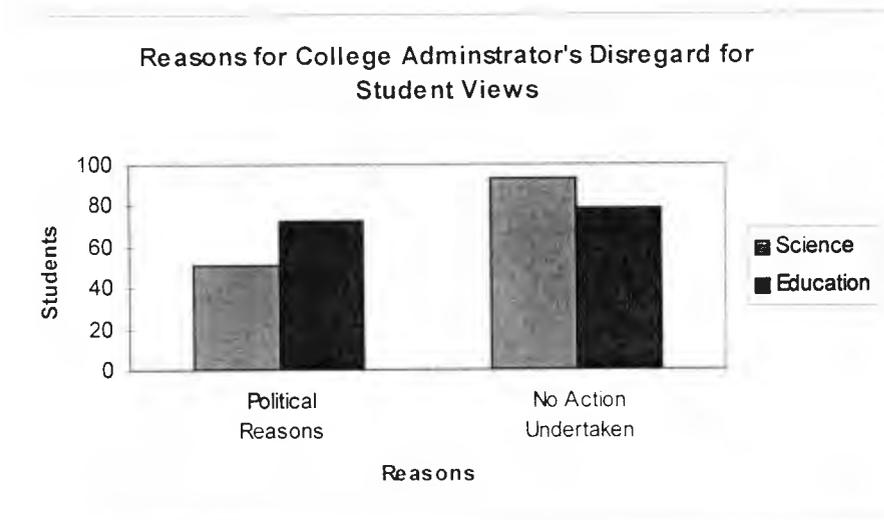
Figure 5

In their response to the next question, *'what does it mean to you, personally, to complete the evaluation sheet?'* some do not see any use for such evaluation procedures and those gave the reply that it does not mean anything to them, 15.6% in education and 22% in science. The fact that no real changes have taken place makes them believe that it is only a routine procedure. The responses in the two colleges are similar, 17% in education and 13% in science. The majority in both colleges, 43.8% in education and 49% in science, state that the evaluation sheet gives an opportunity to the student to express his/her opinion irrespective of consequent action (Chart 6).
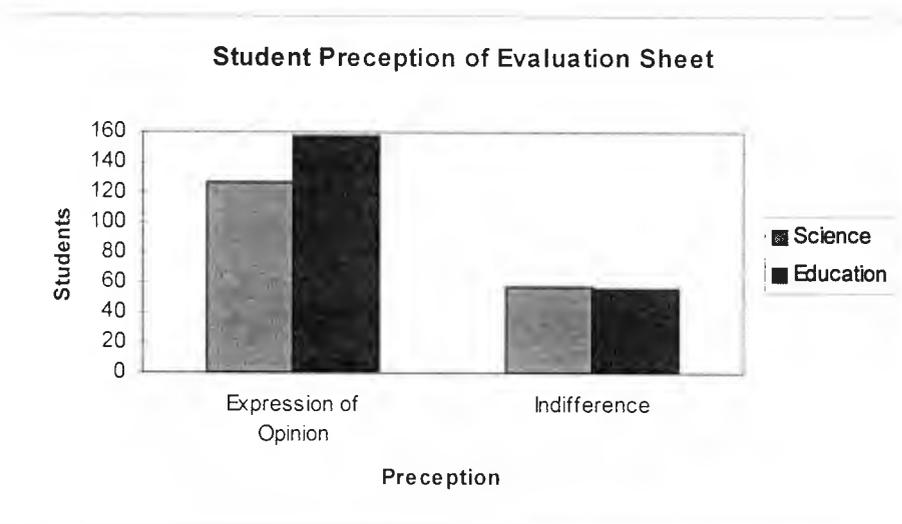
Figure 6

Students came up with different proposals for making their voice heard by the academic administration in their college, in response to the question, *'would you like the academic administration to hear more of your voice on the academic services? If YES, in what way?'.* Those who responded with a 'yes', and they are the majority, 80.7% in education and 89.9% in science, suggested that there should be scheduled meetings between administration and student representatives. Questionnaires came second as another means for communicating their views. The student union seems to get very few votes in both colleges 4.6% only (chart 7).

Means for More Communication between Students and Academic Adminstrators
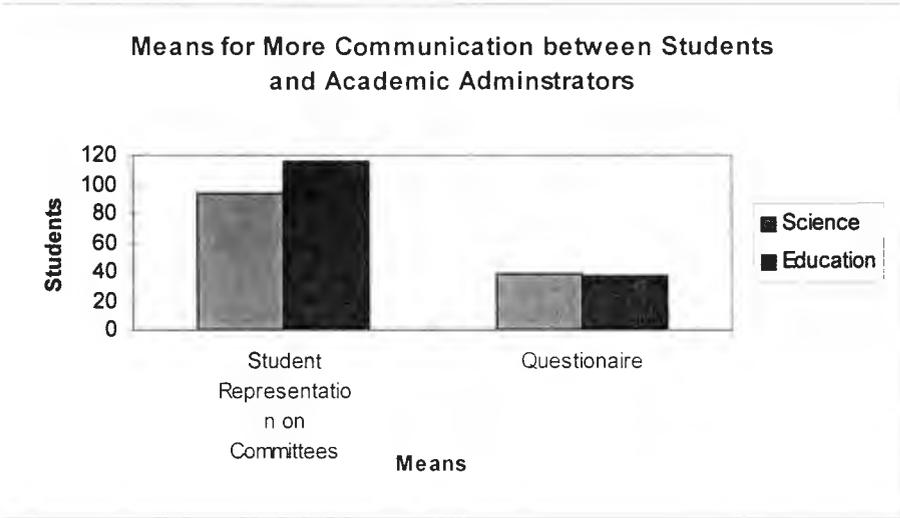
Figure 7

The last question, *'are you aware of the new evaluation strategy 'strategy of excellence'?*
If YES, why do you think it is employed in your college?' elicited few 'yes' responses, 3.9%
in education and 14.3% in science who appear to mix up the new QA policy with the
'excellent student' scheme in the college, which is sponsored by the dean of student affairs.
The criteria again did not seem very clear to most students, nor did they know how and
whether it is related to the strategy of excellence (Chart 8).

Student Awareness of Strategy of Excellence
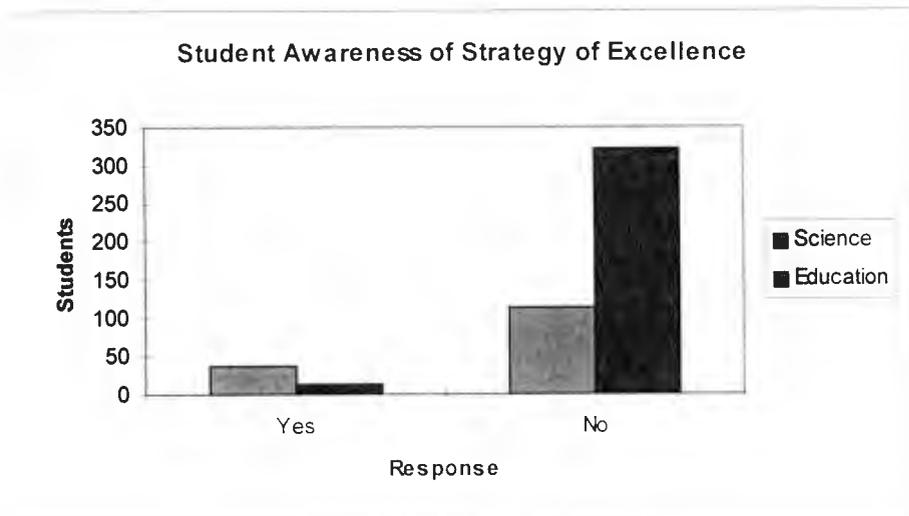
Figure 8

The above responses exhibit a noticeable awareness on the students' part of the potential effectiveness of student evaluations. However, some reactions reflect complete despair about the way in which they are used. This was confirmed by the group interview participants, who stated that students at KU are not entitled to participate in decisions on their own learning. The current methods of quality assurance do not seem to recognise the student as a main stakeholder in the institution; this seems to have a negative effect on KU students. Overall, the role of students, as main stakeholders in the institution where they are expected to contribute in the evaluation procedures undertaken, is still conceived by students as marginal or non-existent.

7.4.2. Science student conceptions of a quality university

Students' responses to the meaning of quality in a university are not very different from those of the other groups. However, they reflect their concerns, needs and expectations from higher education. Their views vary due to the multiplicity of educational, social and ethnic backgrounds that students come from. Differences in opinions may also be influenced by the college and even the department they belong to. The views of science students differ slightly from those of education students, in respect of the nature of their subject areas. This distinction is however rather blurred for those education students who major in science.

Overall student responses tend to be slightly critical of the university. They also reflect their wish to see KU developing into an elite institution in the Gulf Area. The thirty five informants seem to agree on one concern as of prime significance: they want to see a unified campus instead of five campuses spread over Kuwait city. Students find the present situation problematic because they have to commute some days between three campuses for courses scheduled on the same day.

Furthermore, science students find problems with their campus in terms of the parking space, facilities, equipments and laboratories. An expatriate student who is on exchange program complained that *'some classrooms are meant for other business but not for teaching and*

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learning. How can we talk about a quality university when basic things such as these are not taken care of?' (interview on April 2nd,1997).

Another expatriate student confirms the comments on classrooms, adding that *'it is also the number of students in a class, which is becoming a serious problem these days. Sometimes I never get a chance to ask a question because of the huge number of students in the class. We need smaller classes to make optimal use of the lecture time as well as the office hours'* (interview on April 2nd,1997).

The efficiency of faculty appears to be another concern for students in science. Out of the thirty five respondents, only nine think that their faculty staff are efficient as teachers. The rest believe that their teachers need some training in teaching methods. They see teaching as the backbone of the whole teaching/learning process. They see this as exciting and challenging to both the student as well as the teacher in a quality university. An expatriate female student criticized the faculty on the grounds that *'there is no real communication between students and faculty, between students and administration and between students and society'* (interview on April 2nd,1997).

Her Kuwaiti colleague explained the above statement by adding that *'some faculty staff in KU act very superior to students. Sometimes they are biased against certain students; they do not treat us on equal grounds. A few faculty put us down as being a poor intake since we were pushed into science because of our low GPAs (grade point average), in certain departments'* (interview on April 2nd,1997).

All except five of the respondents seem to agree that faculty are keeping a distance from students. They believe that they treat them like 'secondary school kids' not as adults. From an academic point of view, they still make them feel very dependent. This is illustrated in the way they teach in class, the kind of coursework they assign to students, and in the way they are assessed at the end of their courses. Such a faculty stance appears to make students perceive university education as a continuation of secondary schooling.

Another critical remark was made by eleven students about evaluating faculty. A graduating

male student queried about the purpose of the student evaluation sheet, if the administration takes no action against 'inefficient staff'. He continued *'there are certain faculty members who have been criticized for their methods and attitudes on many occasions and they are still there! What is the use of these evaluations if no improvement is going to take place? We, as the main customers of this institution, have the right to evaluate those who are providing the services. How will KU improve and become a quality university?'* (interview on April 5th,1997).

A very conscientious male student attributes the students' general low achievement to the fact that English is the medium of instruction. He stated that, *'language is a barrier for us all except for private school products, especially in the first year. How could faculty expect us to write a report or an exam essay in a language which we hardly speak, let alone writing academic essays!'* (interview on April 5th,1997).

Expanding on this point, another male student added that *'it was really bad before the war, the competition among students was very fierce but now it is getting more relaxed, after many Arab students left the country. They all used to be private school products'* (interview on April 2nd,1997).

A female student on a fellowship program from KU clarifies this point. She noted that *'it seems that the administration has appreciated this problem. And just a year ago KU started with the prep year for all new entrants to solve this language problem and other academic problems'* (interview in April 5th,1997).

Science students showed considerable awareness of new academic procedures that are of immediate concern to them.

A first year student believes that 'arabizing' the college of science to improve the quality of students'achievement will not solve the problem. She added *'I think they need to do something about the English courses in high schools, maybe introduce academic English at early stage so that students can handle college level English later. Arabizing does not work especially for a dynamic field like computer science, which is developing at a*

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tremendous speed' (interview on April 2nd,1997).

Another expatriate student, who thinks that a quality university should offer interesting and challenging courses, believed that *'the content of the courses in my department is very boring and out of date. I want to learn new concepts and be exposed to more original ideas'* (interview on April 5th,1997).

A suggestion was made by another student with regard to the above point. He proposed that *'one way to solve this problem is to circulate the courses in a department instead of leaving a course with a faculty member who monopolizes it for ages like what is happening here in KU. Another staff member may be more innovative and up to date in his teaching and his choice of textbooks'* (interview on April 5th,1997).

A more interesting point was raised by a graduating male student who thinks that the science college is a purely theoretical college, which is not supposed to be the case. He commented on his department: *'the college of science should have a program of practical training for its students in all departments. It would then be easier for us when we graduate to match theory with practice. Hospitals, banks and companies are good representative fields to apply our knowledge to. So why don't administrators do something about it? We feel so cut-off from the real world'* (interview on April 12th,1997).

Another female colleague elaborates on this point further, mentioning that *'I applied during summer to a company as a programmer. They asked me to get a letter from the department and the university administration saying that they support me on this application. But both refused my request without giving a reason. I think there is no co-ordination between the two. It is not fair for us students'* (interview on April 12th,1997).

Science students also think that a quality university should have good administration. They all tend to agree that KU administration procedures, including registration, classs schedules, and transferring from one department to another, or from one college to another are extremely tedious. They believe that all those activities follow bureaucratic procedures, which are time consuming, a matter which reflects negatively on their achievement.

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Out of the thirty five respondents, six explained that they were forced into their departments. In other words, they were not admitted to the departments they applied for when they first enrolled, due to their low GPAs.

The expatriate student thought that the fact that he was in the wrong department showed discrimination between national and non-nationals. He thinks that *'KU administration must be more democratic, I believe that there are certain departments meant for Kuwaitis only, such as computer science'* (interview on April 2nd,1997).

Another angry female student stated that *'it is only KU which has all these problems with registration and transfer! Universities all over the world do registration over the phone. Students do not have to stand in long queues to get registered '* (interview on April, 2nd,1997).

7.4.3. Education student conceptions of a quality university

The same issues and concerns were raised by students in the education college. But their criticism seems more severe than the science students'. The forty students interviewed identified a wide range of aspects of a quality university. However, they agreed that qualified faculty, effective curriculum, appropriate campus, efficient administration, good library and good audiovisuals, all help to create a quality university. Thus, the problems that education students confront do not differ from those of science except department-wise.

Their vision of a quality university is embodied in an appropriate campus where there is enough space for all kinds of facilities, as noted earlier. A graduating Kuwaiti male student believed that *'expanding and reconstructing the colleges' present buildings are not going to solve the problem. KU administration needs to put some pressure on the government to build another university. There is no alternative to that'* (interview on April 6th,1997).

Another female student commented that *"Kuwait was the first country in the Gulf to*

establish a university in the sixties. Students from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and The United Arab Emirates used to get their education in KU. Look at them now, they all have more than one university, which are developing rapidly, while we are still at the same point as when we first began. For instance, Saudi Arabia has seven universities, Bahrain has three and the Emirates has two. Isn't that ironic?' (interview on April 9th,1997).

Establishing another university seems to many to be the only way of solving numerous problems, whether academic or administrative, that KU is confronted with. They all agree on the fact that it requires a strong political decision.

Here too, the English language seems to be one of the main barriers for those education students who are majoring in science. Six of the respondents had to change their major because of the difficulty they had with the language of instruction.

A male student comments on this problem: *'the college of education proposed to the science faculty to arabize the courses given to education students to solve this difficulty. We as teachers teach science in Arabic, not English'* (interview on April 9th,1997).

Faculty appear to be an immediate concern for the whole group. The fact that some faculty monopolize a particular course seems to affect students' choices. A female student conceives this phenomenon as unhealthy. She noted that *'staff should not keep a course for four years without making the slightest change in it. If this faculty cannot add anything new to the course, he/she should leave it to someone else who can update it and implement new teaching methods to make it more motivating to students'* (interview on April 6th,1997).

Another graduating male student proposed the idea of supervision over faculty as part of a quality assurance policy. He suggested that *'there should be some sort of inspection body, which assesses faculty performance and ethics. Faculty use their power in different ways both positively and negatively, and we cannot complain. For instance, there is no baseline for course curriculum in both colleges, namely arts and education. When we complain, they put the blame on us as negligent students'* (interview on April 9th,1997).

A suggestion about ways to secure improvements came from one of his colleagues, who proposed that *'the student union has limitless power. They are our representatives. They can communicate any message to the parliament easily. It is the students who are not aware of their rights'* (interview on April 6th,1997).

From these and many other comments it seems that the relationship between students and faculty in education is very poor. Some students claim that the exchange of ideas between the two is very limited. It is only an examining relationship, when intensive communication takes place to prepare the students for the exam, or after it to discuss the results.

One major problem which education students refer to is the absence of a connection between theory and practice in their subject areas. They see the practical component of their specialisation as teachers turned into memorisation and exams. They think that one term of practical training in schools is not sufficient. They find what is presented in class about school administration in Kuwait so ideal compared to what there is in reality (interview on April 6th,1997).

The complaint from many student informants asserts the need to link theory with practice. It was not confined to career-oriented college, such as education, as student responses in the computer science and statistics departments showed a lack of such a pertinent component in their learning experience. Harvey and Knight (1996) argue that 'students learn more when their in-and-out-of-class experiences are mutually supportive and reinforcing' (p.148). Hence the judgement of the enabling quality of a course of study will be shared between faculty, students and employers.

Student responses in both colleges exhibit various concerns over their learning as well as the university they are enroled in as a higher education institution. The overall feeling I got from student informants is that faculty and senior administrators are just as responsible as the students for better and richer experience in higher education.

To conclude this chapter, it is evident that the strategy of excellence is not transparent yet to

all KU audiences. However, the different informants' responses provided a means to identify key issues that reflect their concerns, conceptualisations, attitudes and expectations. The responses also display points of convergence and divergence among the different groups. It is clear that views of the respondents diverge on some crucial issues. Essentially, the knowledge that the academic administrators exhibited about the strategy was not reflected in the responses of other groups, except for senior faculty in the college of science. There are also variations in terms of practices within the sphere of QA procedures deployed in each college. As shown in the data, the college of science has a long experience in that area. Hence the overall reaction and attitude of the science faculty to the strategy of excellence is less critical than the education faculty. Views also diverge on priorities that the new QA policy needs to consider before the actual implementation of the strategy. And last but not least, there is a lack of agreement on the methods deployed to assure institutional quality among faculty as well as students. And as been fully documented in the preceding pages, students while concerned about quality issues feel far from engaged in the current exercise. However despite these points of divergence a start has been made and resistance of one kind or another is inevitable.

Obviously the themes brought up by the respondents are both numerous and complex not least because they so often touch on broad issues concerning the institution as a whole. To make sense of this diversified data, I decided that the notion of organisational metaphor would allow me to reflect this diversity while continuing to focus on the QA strategy. It is to this we turn in the following chapters.

Chapter Eight: Data interpretation:

KU as a system

8.1. Introduction

Over the next four chapters, the focus will be on interpretation. In view of the fact that so many respondents, in the process of discussing quality assurance at KU, referred to cross-institutional issues, I intend to use ideas about organisational constructs as an interpretative framework. I shall employ the notion of organisational metaphors focussing on four in particular. I shall look at : KU as a system; KU as a political organisation; KU as an unstable changing organisation; and KU as an organisational culture; an academic community. For each I shall identify the key themes/concepts of each metaphor, highlighting the relevance of the above themes to KU. I shall then seek to analyze the response to the 'strategy of excellence' (TQM) from within each metaphor.

As the focus shifts from analysis of the data to seeking to understand and explain their meaning and significance, the data need to be organized and interpreted using thereby some tactics to generate meaning which is the main guiding principle of the qualitative enquiry. The data collected consist of extended texts or 'collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning' (Miles and Huberman,1994:8) that reflect the participants' perceptions of their institution. The way they are presented show how the data are massive, patchy, and vague at certain points. In an attempt to reduce the bulk of the data and make sense of those lengthy 'constructed texts' they are organised into patterns and clusters which are developed into a number of general themes subsuming particular ones to make a whole, which is more than the sum of its parts. Such tactics lead the researcher to move up the abstraction ladder, connecting thereby the empirical evidence with an identified corresponding construct, or to put it in other words, to link the observable with the unobservable to reach a theory.

Organisational metaphor appears to offer a powerful analytical tool. Metaphors have been described as literary devices which represent 'partial abstraction' (Miles and Huberman,1994). They are utilized for various reasons. An important one here is their ability

to reduce data by making a generality of several particulars, as will be shown in the chapters to follow. Metaphors do not only describe a phenomenon, they move up to a more inferential or analytical level which 'implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally' (Morgan,1997:4). They also foreshadow alternative interpretations beside the dominant one, and this can create valuable insights. 'Myths, metaphors, stories, humour, play, rituals, and ceremonies represent the basic symbolic elements in organizations' (Bolman & Deal,1991:xvii). A metaphor is also a vigorous factor in ideological controversy, a way of bringing an area into one rather than another ideological domain (Kress,1989). 'The ubiquitous action of metaphor is one force in the discursive and ideological process of naturalising the social, of turning that which is problematic into the obvious'(Kress,1989:73).

The approach to organisational metaphor that I am using is derived from the work of Gareth Morgan. From those provided in his 1997 book I have chosen as particularly relevant the system metaphor; the political metaphor, the metaphor of an unstable changing organisation; and the cultural metaphor, which I will interpret specifically as the culture of an academic community. Giving due attention to these broader issues and concerns enables me to provide a better explanation of the many points of view about the QA policy which were gathered during the empirical stage.

My argument will be that different groups and individuals within the university appear to understand their organisational environment through different metaphors. Hence QA policy (TQM) looks different according to which metaphor a particular group or individual prefers. It follows then that the four metaphors generate different perspectives and thus develop various 'modes of engagement'. However, the argument is not that one particular approach is better or stronger than the others as 'there are no right or wrong theories in management in an absolute sense, for every theory illuminates and hides' (Morgan,1997:8). Therefore there can be no single theory or metaphor that provides an all-encompassing view. Nor can there be 'a correct theory for structuring everything we do' (Morgan,1997:348).

The prime aim of this approach through metaphor hence is to develop a dialogue and to broaden horizons rather than to achieve closure around an all-embracing perspective. The

approach encourages a way of thinking that is always open and developing and which can deal with the complexity of organizational life. Also, the use of such an approach helps us to gain insights from one metaphor which in turn contribute to overcoming the limitations of another. 'This encourages us to recognize and, indeed, search for the limitations of existing insights: so that we can use them as springboards for new insight' (Morgan, 1997:353).

Morgan (1997) relates physicist Werner Heisenberg's view to support the above point by arguing that definitive understanding is dependent on the ability to identify how many different phenomena constitute a whole. 'Genuine understanding cuts through surface complexity to reveal an underlying pattern' (Morgan,1997:376). He suggests that this enables an effective diagnostic reading and storyline, based on an ability to tackle multiple insights and aiming thereby to integrate them into a logical pattern.

Morgan further proposes that a diagnostic reading enables us to be open-minded to different interpretations whereas a more conventional evaluation leads us rapidly into a 'more focused perspective'. He argues that a broad range of insight and action opportunities emerge if we remain open to multiple interpretations. According to him, a good diagnostic reading sensitizes us to the competing dimensions of a situation and allows us to explore the 'unfolding tendencies and character of a situation' ((Morgan,1997:361).

The following four chapters thus illustrate how this can be done by exploring the implications of different metaphors for understanding the nature of KU as an organization. Each has its characteristic concepts and orientations; and as will be shown, each accommodates an approach to quality assessment via TQM with varying degrees of ease.

In this chapter, the first metaphor, system theory approach looks at KU as a composite of sub-systems nested into each other. Further, it draws attention to the different goals at the different levels illustrated in both major goals of the university and the specific ones of the colleges. It also examines the relationship between the university as a system and its environment or the society in which it is embedded. Its openness to the environment necessitates an exchange process flowing from and to the environment in the form of inputs and outputs. Feedback as an essential component of system theory seems to influence the way KU operates in response

to its environment in many ways. The chapter concludes with the response to TQM model from within the system metaphor.

Chapter nine explores the second metaphor namely, KU as a political system. It deals with the macro-politics of the organisation, which is illustrated in the relation between the state and the university on the one hand, and the micropolitics represented in the internal relationships among its members in the hierarchical structure of the organization, on the other. The political metaphor focuses on the different sets of interests, conflicts, and power plays that shape organizational activities. The chapter thus draws on manifestations of power such as the strategic planning mechanism, documentation, boundary management, and control of information flow. The chapter concludes with a mention of the inadequacy of QA policy within this metaphor.

Chapter ten exploits the third dynamic metaphor, which is KU as an unstable changing organisation. The issue of change is tackled from different angles that are most relevant to the nature of the changes occurring in the university. From one angle, it shows that change is driven by many factors other than educational merits. Further, there is more than one type of change that KU experienced; the radical as well as the incremental changes. From another angle, the incremental and drastic changes appear to be accelerated by different agents, resulting thus in various impacts on KU audiences. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the fit and misfit between TQM and the unstable organisation metaphor.

In chapter eleven, I discuss the academic aspect of the educational institution by exploiting the fourth metaphor, which is KU as an organisational culture: more specifically, an academic community. It examines different images of the academic community. Disciplinary differences are also drawn upon to show how the academic community is separated by knowledge structures. I then suggest that academics seem to overstate a concern for academic standards in the way they safeguard standards in their departments. A review of the assessment mechanisms which are in place are presented. The formalised QA mechanisms are examined in the light of the new QA policy. The chapter concludes with a mention of the adequacy of the TQM within the academic culture metaphor.

The metaphor approach facilitates an exploration of perspectives on the essential nature of KU as an organisation. Although most people are capable of understanding their institution as something of a hybrid, for each individual one metaphor offers the most appropriate way to characterise their university. However, as mentioned earlier, the metaphor approach 'has both strengths and limitations. It should be interpreted and used in a way that enhances the strengths and overcomes the limitations' (Morgan,1997:428). Relating this to the multiple realities of KU audiences, each individual is inclined to perceive one metaphor with its associated QA issues as the most significant. This in fact reflects the purpose of this method. It is 'a two-way conversation', whereby the reader brings his views to a situation, and also recognizes that the situation may have a 'view or opinion of its own' (Morgan,1997:428). The reader therefore cannot apply every metaphor to every context in a conventional way for he/she will be overwhelmed by the complexity of such a task.

8.2. TQM within organisational metaphors

In the following chapters, an attempt is made to demonstrate the meaning and interpretation of TQM approach within each metaphor. It will be argued that its relevance differs within each metaphor. For example, within the system and the changing organisation metaphors, it will be seen that TQM seems to fit comfortably. But within the political and academic organisations, on the other hand, TQM principles seem to conflict with the main characteristics of these two metaphors. However, at this point it might be useful to recap the specific nature of TQM as enacted at KU before attempting to examine its relevance to each metaphor. The nature of TQM, its philosophy and rationale are, in theory, all-embracing and comprehensive. In other words, 'it is holistic in that it permeates every aspect, every relationship and every process of an organisation' (West-Burnham,1992:28), whether academic or otherwise. In reviewing the literature, it is evident that quality assurance procedures are established to assess all these aspects for effectiveness and efficiency.

In chapter four I discussed the varied approaches to TQM. It is clear that the new policy at KU is only one possible version. The assumption then might be that if TQM fits more readily one metaphor, but not the others, this might explain why people who are more inclined to perceive the institution through those other frames, are resistant to TQM.

TQM 'gurus' and their followers have developed sets of principles, which are broadly in accord but differ in significant respects. Most importantly TQM has to develop in response to the needs, context and values of a specific organisation. There are marked differences in the way in which TQM is interpreted and applied in the different settings. However, 'certain fundamental principles will remain constant and these can be identified by synthesizing the key imperatives of the originators of TQM' (West-Burnham,1992:28). The KU consultant asserts that the emphasis is on the concept of TQM, however, he agrees that the practices differ from one context to another' *'TQM is a practice. We have different strategies in implementing it'* (interview on February 24th,1997).

The differences among TQM approaches are the relative emphasis given to:

- a focus on statistical procedures;
- a focus on the customers wants or needs;
- a focus on customer desires;
- a focus on fitness for purpose (Harari,1993)

At KU, TQM was implemented initially on a small scale rather than changing the entire institution. It was applied to specific academic areas. It may be remembered that the KU strategy of excellence focuses on:

1-students' standards;

2-faculty performance in teaching;

3-research productivity;

4-community service;

5-academic programs;

6-facilities such as labs, audiovisuals etc;

7-support staff such as teaching assistants, laboratory demonstrators etc; technical and administrative staff in the department;

8- the effectiveness of the administrative system in the academic department as a link between the department and the college and the college and the university;

9-and lastly the role of the academic department in the community.

The comments of the academic administrators explain why it was directed to these particular

areas. However, in KU case an incremental approach was adopted because a small group wanted to demonstrate, by results, how TQM can work and therefore hope to change the whole institution, the 'infection model' (Seymour and Collet,1991). As we have seen, the prime movers were the academic engineers within the university administration who seem to have been committed to TQM from the beginning. In order to verify such an assumption we need to examine how those principles of TQM fit into each metaphor in KU. The first metaphor to consider here is the system organisation.

8.3. KU as a system:

This chapter focuses on the system metaphor. It deals with the main characteristics of system theory. However, I will focus on those which are of relevance to the main themes in my data. These are: the hierarchical order; the goals of the university; openness to environment; input and output; feedback; and the role of the individuals at the top and at the bottom of the institution hierarchy. I argue that the hierarchical order lays strong emphasis on task allocation and task structures in a bureaucratic organisation. I also show how the roles of individuals are essential elements for effective and efficient performance. Further, this metaphor draws on the achievement of the system goals as essential requirement for the organisation success. Thus an analysis of KU goals with a special focus on the college of education is considered. I then examine the input/output exchange relationship between the university and the environment as indicative of the openness of the system. I also highlight the role of feedback within this approach as a significant driver for change within KU. The chapter concludes with the fit and misfit between TQM and system metaphor.

The literature provides a wide range of views of organisations as systems. The theory, basically 'is a way of thinking which enables us to cope with a complex phenomena by identifying their systemic relations' (Elliott,1980:87). It is interpreted in various ways in the different contexts. This is attributed to the fact that the practices vary and tend to reflect mechanistic methodologies to maintain stability for an organisation. In system theory, a primary emphasis tends to be placed on the importance of organisational design: the design of organisational structures or the design of adaptive processes, as in any bureaucratic organisation. System theory has high currency among managers who wish to maintain stability through the

management and control of the behaviour of other members within an organisation.

In order to reach a better understanding of what a system is we need to look first at the definition of the term 'system'. There are lots of definitions around, however, Elliott's (1980) is quite appropriate here. According to Elliott, 'any group of entities which are interrelated so as to perform some function, or reach some goal, can be seen to be acting as a system' (P.87). Thus, a system is made up of a number of sub-systems, which in theory, work independently towards the final goal of the major system. Studying the interrelations between the sub-systems in the hierarchical order should reveal something about the nature of the system.

Looked at from the hierarchical order perspective, we find that the new QA policy in KU builds on the existing system which is a large governmental system consisting of subsystems represented by the ten colleges. This forms a multi-level pyramid structure. These sub-systems ideally work independently towards the final goal of the larger system. The classification of subsystems can continue endlessly, as each subsystem further subdivides into smaller groups such as departments within a college, and into sub-subgroups of various disciplinary specialisations within one department. The hierarchy can continue to include technical and administrative staff till we reach the base of the pyramid where student population is. The way the whole system is structured indicates how those entities are located within the hierarchical order. This structure has existed since 1966, when KU was first established and it is continuing ever since. However, the hierarchical system has changed overtime in line with the adoption of changing models from abroad. This illustrates some of the difficulties encountered in attempting to identify discrete types of organization. Hence one form tends to mix with another, producing organizations that have hybrid characteristics (Morgan,1997), which seems to be the case in KU. This is exemplified in two dramatic shifts in the educational system set-up, as mentioned in chapter four. Nevertheless, several charateristics of the foreign models still persist in many sectors in the university, e.g. the medical college and the law college. Administration also seems to be following Egytian procedures, which remain for thirty two years in KU.

The QA policy within the system metaphor hierarchy appears to lay strong emphasis on the provision for continuing activities directed towards the achievement of the university's broad

goals, as set out in the 1995-2000: five-year-plan document. Hence regularities in its activities such as task allocation, supervision and co-ordination constitute the organization's structure which are unique to that institution. Procedures such as: student transfer between colleges and among departments; cross registration between colleges; cross-course teaching; research collaboration; membership in councils and committees at the three levels; the department, the college, and the university and others, are all indicators of the inevitable interaction within the broader context of the university. The same is also true within the subsystems, such as the ten colleges and the sub-subsystems as in the departments ((KU Structural Organisation Guide,1995). 'Indeed, in some respects every organization is unique in terms of its objectives, its size, ownership, geographical location, and technology' (Pugh and Hickson,1973:51).

Within this hierarchical order, we find that organizations are constituted of human elements which introduce some variety and internal inconsistency to the mechanical model of a functioning system. However, the system approach deals with this individual variety in organizations, by focusing on the roles of individuals within the system rather than on individuals per se (Elliott,1980). It seems that the QA policy promotes the concept of roles within the hierarchy. The new created roles in support of this hierarchy, as mentioned in chapter six, serve the purpose for an efficient delivery of the new policy. In the nine dimensions identified by the strategy of excellence , each falls within the responsibilities of a vice rector. These are research, academic affairs, planning and academic support services. Each vice rector supervises a number of directorates and offices to ensure that each unit performs its task effectively and efficiently. ' A multi-level pyramid of authority clearly defines how each level supervises the other' (Handy,1985:192).

Moving to a lower level in the hierarchy, which is the colleges, it appears that some colleges follow an administrative team, which mirrors the structure of the higher administration while others have opted for a different structure, e.g. colleges of science and education. This in fact has some bearing on the extent to which the basic college structure can facilitate the development of the new policy or hinder it. Further, the strategy of excellence committees in the science college represent the link between its various departments and the college administration. Hence the QA policy seems to depend on the hierarchical structures and the tasks allocated at every position along that hierarchical order for its development. There

appears to be a consensus among all KU administrators that performing their roles should promote the new procedures and drive the new policy forward. However, when TQM operates in an industrial setting, it is claimed that the boundaries between individuals, departments, and hierarchical levels are reduced; at KU this does not appear to be the case.

As has been observed, one of the nine dimensions that the QA policy seeks to assess is the effectiveness of the administrative system in the academic department. However, nothing about university administration is mentioned. This in fact indicates the difficulty of assessing, let alone changing, long standing structures that persist and overtime retain power, especially when it is tied to the government bureaucratic administration (Giddens,1984). It may be remembered that the university structural pyramid is in fact located below other levels of potential authority, namely, the Amir and the state. In short, 'by means of appointments of top leadership in the university the state reserves for itself ultimate control over all aspects of university affairs' (Al-Ebraheem,1990:1045).

Another important component of the system theory is the goals that a system sets itself to reach. System theory emphasizes the precision of goals as an important step in the analysis of a system. Organizations thus are often defined by their goals. The QA policy is based on the strategic planning mechanism which involves the set goals that KU attempts to achieve 'as criteria to be used for evaluation of organisational performance' (Taylor and Hill,1993:22). This is quite evident in the rector's account, *'the first step in introducing TQM has been through the process of strategic planning with explicit goals to be achieved within a stipulated time-frame. For this purpose, the short and long-term developmental goals for improving educational quality have been specified and relevant action plans are being identified for achieving those goals with provision for periodic evaluation to improve and excel. This process requires facilities, resources, monitoring, commitment, and above all a dynamic leadership for the successful implementation of TQM to expedite progress'* (written account,March 2nd,1997).

However, according to the five-year-plan, there is a diversity of existing goals in KU. They are substantiated at different levels: the level of the institution at large; the level of the college; the level of the department; and the level of the individual. Obviously, all the groups at the last

three levels are expected to work towards reaching the major goals of the system. Defining the primary goals of KU is quite complex. The document classifies the goals into four categories. These seem to focus on the development of society by investing in the human resources in disseminating knowledge through research, promoting effective teaching and community service; and empowering the young generation; culturally, spiritually, and morally. In an attempt to examine the immediate and distant goals more carefully, a translated list of these goals could serve such purpose (see appendix 3).

Looked at from an analytic perspective, the discourse of the goals statement shows a noticeable overlap between the stated major goals, the mission of the university, the policies undertaken and the philosophy of KU. The discourse used tends to vary slightly from one category to another, using alternate semantic and syntactical texts to express the same broad concepts.

Furthermore, KU stated goals are aspirational rather than operational. In reality, they do not seem to be taking place entirely, according to a head of a department in the college of education. He notes that the goals of the university are not linked to the state's philosophy and ideology, that the connection is missing. The head added that the university has not so far taken the state's needs in consideration in its planning strategy in functional terms. Another point he raised was about the preparation of university students. He asserted that KU does not prepare its students neither for the market nor for life which he attributed to an absence of educational policies in the public education (interview on March 25th,1997).

It is also noticeable that formulating the goals does not appear to be the responsibility of the present senior administrators, their basic contribution seems to be recurrent alterations of the discourse of their precedents. 'The meanings of any ideological system are therefore always the meanings of the past. Whenever there is change, ideology provides the categories, which shape any thinking about the new practices. While the practices may be new - arising through technological changes or by 'importation' - the categories used to think about the practices and to classify them are the established, comfortable categories of a well-understood past, about which there is a common sense' (Kress,1989:83). Typical of bureaucratic institutions the agency of the text is not necessary, that is, the whole discourse is in the agentless passive form. The decisions to have the formulation of goals in such a manner rather than another are

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ideological ones, related entirely to the kinds 'of social and economic structures of a given society' (Kress,1989:76).

Furthermore, the goals as set out are vague and often unquantifiable. They represent a set of general conditions that any institution of higher education has to satisfy in order to warrant the title 'institution of higher education'. As a public sector institution, KU 'develops a contractual relationship' with its main funder, the government, 'to provide a publicly accessible statement of what it is about' (Barnett,1992:17), from accountability perspective.

What has been proposed about how encompassing the goals of KU to the extent that they cannot be met in reality , the same can be said about the college of education. The set goals of the education college do not seem to provide a basis for clear operational goals. These are classified under four categories: the general goals followed by the aims to be achieved in three major areas such as knowledge, values and skills. The broad goals cover the development of all the work force in the college and transcend it to other institutions inside and outside the country. The more specific aims are also broad and elusive as they tend to develop, in theory, the student as a learner, as a teacher, as a citizen with certain islamic and Arabic values, as a leader, as a scholar and as a well-rounded individual (College of Education Guide,1994). In practice, however, it appears that very little is done with regard to the above aims. More than five out of the sixteen faculty interviewed thought that the output of the college is not up to standard in terms of the crucial objective which is qualifying teachers for the job. The vice-dean for student affairs believes that their students are competitive in theory learning, according to the vast number of honour degrees in the college. Nonetheless, nothing is revealed about their performance in schools, as there is no statistical study to rely on (interview in March 26th,1997).

This indicates 'that parts of the service are intangible, they are delivered face to face in an integrated manner, and with variations appropriate to the individual needs of customers who are active in evaluating the service' (Bolton,1995:14). This view counters the orthodox TQM advice to reduce variability. Thus the different departments in the college are likely to have met their objectives and ensured that their output meet the criteria of distinction according to statistical methods. But there still remains the everlasting complaint that the output are not of

high calibre, with regard to the prime aim which is graduating qualified teachers. Yet, the college administrators seem to show some reservation about passing judgements on their output until their longitudinal study is completed. Thus what Deming (1986) has stated with relevance to this view seems quite applicable here, 'outputs cannot be considered without considering the goals they are designed to achieve' (p.16).

To shift the focus from the career-oriented college to the science college which is non-career-oriented, the college guide does not provide any statement of goals. In separate leaflelts, each department provides a summary of work opportunities in the job market. There appear, however, some contradiction in the way the state is streaming high school output in science majors when the job market cannot accommodate those later at college completion, according to student informants (group interview on April 2nd,1997). This issue of haphazard planning is discussed in the subsequent political metaphor. Taylor and Hill (1993) attribute this confusion to the difficulty in identifying the external customers of an educational institution, whether the government, research councils, employers and others. They argue that, 'until the mission and objectives of the organisation are clarified with regard to such matters, there will inevitably be a prevalent lack of common purpose' (P.26).

Within this sense of uncertainty of goals achievement, the QA policy seems to limit the task to the academic departments. That is, in the self-assessment report each department is expected to provide an account on the specified areas by QA policy, as given in chapter six. Among these is the academic objectives of the department. At the end of each academic year a statistical account based on performance indicators is produced to show the extent that the stated objectives have been met. Thus a comparative year -on - year statistics should give an indication of how each department is doing in terms of its stated objectives. At the college level, it appears that decisions regarding the evaluation of its product, the students, are internal matters that the senior administrators in the college have a large say in it. The longitudinal study of the output of the college of education is a good example of providing evidence of meeting the college prime objective, which is graduating qualified teachers. At the level of the university, however, the strategic planning mechanism takes care of holistic goals of both administrative and academic nature, as will be shown in the following chapter.

Moving from the organization and the subsystem levels to the individual level we find that there ate two types of goals; personal and professional. The personal goals depend mainly on the motivations of the individual. Professional goals on the other hand depend on the organizational roles of the individuals. Individuals in KU do not seem to be any different from other individuals working in other organizations. The concerns of the Kuwaiti as well as the expatriate faculty seem to pool in a number of personal and professional interests. Those are manifested in promotion up the hierarchical ladder of the institution, well-recognised publications, salary rises, and other fringe benefits that a governmental institution provides. Such personal expectations or goals sometimes clash with the institution's policies and the consequent resultant outcome will be a loss of motivation and dissatisfaction with the job as a whole on the faculty part. An expatriate professor mentioned how he could not get a leave of absence to publish a book in his home country due to the bureaucratic regulations of KU. He thought that the publication in itself should bring a good reputation for the university. However, he had to delay it till the midterm holiday (pilot interview in December 22nd,1996). Within a bureaucratic organisation, the major goals are of chief priority; other individualistic goals are usually ruled out.

Turning to another characteristic of the system metaphor is its openness to the environment. To begin with, the QA policy is one version of the TQM. Its implementation takes into account the context that the university is embedded in which requires a socio-economic, cultural and political relevance to the Kuwaiti society, according to the senior administrators. This is particularly important for public sector organizations 'where a change in the socio-economic and political structure may mean a change in policies and priorities' (Lawton and Rose,1991:51). Basically, the goals statement in the five-year-plan articulates the desired relationships between the university and its environment. When change occurs in either, it requires review and perhaps modification of goals. 'Even where the most abstract statement of goals remains constant, application requires redefinition or interpretation as changes occur in the organization, the environment or both' (Thompson and McEwen,1973:156).

The QA policy also emphasizes the strong link between the university and the wider environment. This is clearly stated in the rector's account. *'More importantly, KU's agenda was widened to link programs to the actual needs and problems of the society. Hence,*

institutional doors were opened for the first time to build inter-institutional linkages outside KU to address common social and strategic national concerns through shared expertise and input. These developments would not have been possible if KU did not adopt a forward looking policy and felt legitimate concern for quality' (written account, March 2nd, 1997).

Notwithstanding, the focus of QA policy seems to be on the relationship between KU as an academic institution and its sponsors, particularly the government and the larger public, rather than between KU and the main customers, the students. This lack of recognition of the student as a main stakeholder is attributed to the difficulty in differentiating between students as customers and students as products of higher education in the QA adopted model. On the other hand, the excessive responsiveness which the higher administration at KU has demonstrated towards external imperatives or constraints over the past thirty two years indicates the dependence of the institution on its founder/ funder and on other external bodies. This in fact illustrates how the environment affects the functioning of the system by constraints or imperatives but never shares the goals which the system is trying to reach (Elliott,1980).

Turning to input and output aspects in system theory, we find that QA policy stresses both as essential institutional variables for achieving quality. These are included among the nine identified dimensions that QA policy attempts to measure. The input and output exchange between the university and the environment demonstrates a dependence relationship. KU depends on the environment for the provision of its requirements. Whatever flows from the environment to the system is in a sense an input, and what flows from the system to the environment is its output. Hence 'an organization is tied in to its environment through both its inputs and its outputs. Inputs to a system are the matter-energy and information absorbed by the system from its environment'(Rogers and Rogers,1976:65).

The inputs of KU are: the entering students; faculty and administrators; contribution from individuals in the society be it theoretical or physical; the budget from the government, etc; these and others are forms of inputs that maintain and mobilize the system and make it ready to function. However, despite the emphasis that QA policy places on inputs, controlling the quality of essential KU inputs, the entrant students, is still beyond the capacity of those in charge. Very little indeed is accomplished with regard to monitoring entering students as a

main input. The fact that there are variations in the academic knowledge and skills among entering students coming from different educational systems is not adequately addressed yet by the current administration. Obviously this issue has direct implications for the quality of education. According to Al-Ebraheem (1990),'What Kuwaiti students study in secondary school often leaves them totally unprepared to study at the university' (P.1046). The same also holds for faculty, administrators and support staff. That is, the standards of the selection criteria for these categories fluctuate with the allocated budget of the university. It is clear that the senior administrators are left with very little power to control the quality of essential inputs.

Signal input provides the system with information to be processed. A significant signal input to KU was provided by the state, the parliament and the public in general about the university standards. QA policy initiation came in fact as a response to this signal input to explicitly put forward what KU as a higher education institution is about. Another vivid example of such informational input is the government and private sector organizations reaction to the graduates of KU. The vice rector for planning explained that the principle behind merging the departments in the colleges of science, administrative sciences, medical sciences, social sciences, and languages within the QA policy development is that the university aims towards producing a well-rounded graduate in all relevant areas to his/her major, in response to the employers of KU output. This in effect should deter repetition of certain courses taught in relevant departments. It will also help to save the concerned colleges extra expenditure on equipment that could be used by all specialisations in the same department and college; a procedure which underlies the value for money concept (interview in March 4th,1997).

The outputs of a system, on the other hand, are 'the information, matter-energy, and other products that the system discharges into its environment' (Rogers and Rogers,1976:65). KU outputs are: alumni; research; community service in its different forms; conferences and workshops; publications, etc. Other outputs can be in the form of a behavioural response of the people in the organization. Sometimes it takes the form of actual action such as the resistance in conforming to QA procedures in the education college at the outset, or simply an attitude represented in the science informants' responses to the new policy. Negative attitudes such as boredom, dissatisfaction, etc are also outputs in the sense that they may result in action such as absenteeism, negligence,etc (Elliott,1980).

Unarguably, there must be a relationship between inputs and outputs. Once a demand for an output of a system changes, feedback about this modified demand reaches the organization as an input, resulting thus in an adequate change in the rate or type of output. When the demand for new political science graduates fell, feedback to KU from the government informed the senior management to gradually slow down their rate of production and thereafter ceased by closing the department altogether. This was attributed to the fact that the job market could not accommodate the output in relevant jobs any longer. Such a negative feedback from the environment acts as a self-regulating device to constantly correct and adjust the internal processes of an open system. Feedback thus is a significant concept in system theory. 'Many systems are structured so that some part of their output response is fed back to become an input. The system monitors its own behaviour through this feedback loop' (Elliott,1980:87). Typical of any organization, KU exists within a changing environment and thus it has to respond to this environment. At the same time, it also needs to ensure continuity.

Furthermore, the information flow between the university and its crucial input, the entering students, is almost non-existent. The vast gap between the public schools and higher education obliterates any communication between the two. This lack of communication usually results in irrational choices on the student's part and in an inadequate selection of the academic programs on the faculty's part. 'Feedback in TQM requires timely measurement of performance and outcomes, and communication of those results back to the antecedants, including the schools and colleges as suppliers of the students' (Taylor and Hill,1993:27). This problem is even more compounded when the state puts the pressure on the university input to specialise in areas which are most pertinent to 'its needs', as explained earlier. Coupled with that is the immense pressure on this institution, being the one and only in the country since 'the social context associates university degrees with government jobs in which salary scales are stratified according to degrees earned rather than job performance' (Al-Ebraheem,1990:1046).

The openness and closedness of a system to its environment is usually determined by certain individuals in the system. The individuals who provide an organization with openness are concentrated at the very top and at the bottom. The KU senior administrators represent those individuals who are in a position to acquire new ideas from sources external to their own

institution such as; representatives from the government, the parliament, and employers from the private sector organizations. The presence of those on the university council provides information at a relatively high level about the 'big picture' of changes in the environment without paying too much attention to the specific details (Rogers and Rogers,1976). The result of these contacts is portrayed in the strategic planning of KU. The document appears to be based on the state's development and investment plans (KU Five-Year-Plan Document,1995).

Conversely, the individuals at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy also enjoy a certain degree of openness. For instance, in an educational system, the lower-level in the hierarchy such as faculty deal most directly with incoming output of the environment, i.e. the students, as well as with other operational - level information. To the extent that the faculty are able 'to transmit their knowledge of external conditions to top leaders through upward vertical flows, this knowledge can lead to appropriate organizational change' (Rogers and Rogers,1976:68). This, of course, includes their reactions and perceptions of new policies whether they are operational or dysfunctional and their feedback on the sutdents as the main customers of the institution.

Having reviewed the basic characteristics of system theory, it may appear that the system approach is in considerable accord with the QA policy, since they both stress the goals of the organisation; efficiency of input and output; feedback from the environment and lastly and most crucial is the overruling of conflicting interests of individuals. It may well be from the standpoint of those who prefer to view the QA policy within this metaphor, mainly the senior administrators, that QA policy will develop within this frame, based on a bounded rationality of their perceptions as managers (Elliott,1980). However, 'rationality is always interest based and thus changes according to the perspective from which it is viewed' (Morgan,1997:209). Furthermore, according to the literature, the practices within the system approach seem to be subjected to mechanistic methodologies, overruling thereby its totality in the different contexts. This in fact renders the approach more of a behaviourist and reductionist in terms of implementation. Since the methodology is applied from above as in KU, the formal and informal structures and practices rarely correspond. Individuals are not only roles in the hierarchical order but relate to the institution and to the wider society. Further, QA policy within system theory has not yet adhered to a specificity of goals that the university is trying

to achieve. Thus the evaluation of goals is limited to the academic departments. With the plurality of internal and external stakeholders whose expectations and wants KU has to cater for, the institution faces problems even with its most immediate operational goals. On the one hand, the system approach stresses goals but does not provide a method for defining them. It is concerned with efficiency rather than direction. It stresses an identification of problems, decision making and the monitoring of solutions. Thus 'its emphasis is on value rather than values' (Stenhouse,1975:69). On the other hand, TQM is concerned with well-defined specifications of a quality output that everyone in the organisation is aware of and attempts to reach within a definite time frame. It is concerned with the customer satisfaction and transcends to customer delight; a principle which renders the market as the main arbiter of what passes for quality.

Furthermore, system theory emphasizes the significance of input and output to the system, but it is never concerned with the process, that is to say, what really happens to the input to convert into an output at the end of the process. TQM, conversely, lays strong emphasis on processes as the core of quality product. Processes are well-controlled at every step to detect faults before they occur. Therefore, the QA policy within this metaphor is another adaptive procedure for an internal readjustment in terms of efficiency in its academic activities as well as an adaptation to the external demands that the higher education system in KU has to respond to (Morgan,1997:213). Also, system theory is unable to explain deviant activities within the hierarchies of a system. Those include change, conflict and deviance, which this theory seems to ignore as dysfunctional. In sum, it describes the structure and analyzes some behavioural phenomena. However, it does not provide any explanation why the structure especially its power aspect, is the way it is. These issues should in fact lead us to the next metaphor which is KU as a political organisation.

Chapter Nine: Data interpretation:
KU as a political organisation

9.1. Introduction

In examining the system metaphor, I argued that KU is characterised by certain qualities, which enable it to maintain a satisfactory equilibrium within its environment. I reached the conclusion that there is a noticeable fit between the (TQM) QA policy adopted and the notion of KU as system since harmonisation between the different levels is intrinsic to both. I suggested that system theory is basically concerned with behavioural phenomena such as the structure and the function of the organization. Nonetheless, it was obvious that the metaphor had no means of accounting for deviant activities within an organization such as change, conflict and competing interests which it disregards as residual and dysfunctional. Such an approach thus limits our ability to understand why systems are managed in certain ways not others. In order to extend our understanding of the nature of organizations a closer look at the political metaphor will unravel relations of interests, conflict, and power. 'If we are to understand organizations as political systems we must come to grips with how, when, and why groups mobilize power' (Bacharach,1980:9).

This chapter considers QA policy at KU from within the political metaphor. It examines how QA policy is influenced and determined by the power and control systems that prevail in the university at large. It focuses on the macropolitics of the institution, which is the external dynamic relation of KU with the state, illustrated in the strategic planning mechanism. It also reviews other manifestations of this mechanism such as documentation for accountability purposes. It looks then into the micropolitics which is represented in the internal relations among the members of the institution at large; be they administrators, faculty, or students. The chapter also draws on strategies to retain power such as boundary management and the control of knowledge and information as a way of creating uncertainty. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the adequacy of QA policy within the political metaphor.

9.2. KU as a political organisation

Theorists in the organizational literature direct attention to the significance of power relationships within an organization. They perceive interests, conflicts and power play of direct influence on the flow of the functions of an organization. This is attributed to the fact that people think and act in different ways. Power, however, has certain forms and contents. Bacharach (1980) for example, argues that form is characterised by three aspects of power such as dependence, relation and sanctions. Content, on the other hand, is specific to the situation. Authority and influence are dependent on the content. That is, they vary from one power situation to another.

These aspects of power occur 'on an ongoing basis, often in a way that is invisible to all but those directly involved' (Morgan,1997:160). An analysis of an organisation thus require us to focus on relations between interests, conflict and power. The tension created by the diversity of interests of the stakeholders in an educational institution cannot be resolved except through political means. Hence we turn to this aspect to find out how politics influences the choice of alternative paths of action, e.g. QA policy, by the various actors involved at KU.

As a public higher education institution, KU has to abide by certain rules that public education tends to stipulate under its general policies, stemming mainly from governmental sources. Broad issues such as student access; the structure, duration and balance between different disciplinary areas; national staffing policy, etc have always been the concerns of the state as much as the university's. In responding to governmental pressure after the gulf war which led to cuts in state budgets, higher education has developed a strategic planning mechanism at the institutional level and embedded in the framework of new planning procedures operating between the government and the university. This is encapsulated in the five-year-plan document which is guided by the state's development plans. It must be approved by both the university council and the council of ministers. It is also based on an evaluation of the previous five-year-plan of 1990-1995. The five-year-plan illustrates what Neave (1988) has termed 'Strategic evaluation' and its counterpart 'routine evaluation'. The new QA policy involves both.

These developments may be interpreted as part of the thrust towards refining the management of higher education systems which underlies Neave's concept of the evaluative state. It also indicates the shift from 'process' and 'input' assessment towards 'product evaluation' (Neave,1988) as a way

of aligning higher education with 'national priorities'. As argued in chapter two, such significant development comes as a result of the drive towards mass higher education.

The interrelationship between the state and the university underlies the relational and dependent aspects of power and control that the government exercises over higher education in Kuwait as both the funder and the owner (Bacharach,1980). However, the impact of the higher authorities on KU used to be covert; that is to say, decisions were not made public. They were not to be questioned. Gradually, however, the relationship has become more transparent and the five year plan is evidence of this. The strategic planning mechanism seems to have made the ambiguities that characterised the macropolitics of KU clearer. The QA policy shows the way in which the university is attempting to align with its environment. It illustrates the aspirations and expectations of the higher authorities for higher education. However, in times of crisis, the higher authorities tend to take the initiative in deciding 'what's best for KU in the current circumstances', and this happens on many occasions. Unarguably, this demonstrates that the higher authorities exercise a right of ownership over this public institution. It also can and does apply sanctions. 'Third world universities survive by a process of constant adaptation, negotiation, and compromise, punctuated by dramatic events and even closures when the negotiation fails' (Caston,1992:1301).

The relationships between the government and KU are articulated in the process of strategic planning, whereby the senior management sets goals and allocates resources. The planning represented in the institutional goal setting should correspond with the output specifications, in terms of the students numbers as well as their qualifications (Neave,1988). However, according to the present plan, the current number of enrolled students is 20.000, and this is expected to reach 40.000 by the year 2010. The document does refer, in a 'reserved tone', to the difficulty of accommodating this incredibly large number, which could well necessitate the establishment of another public university. But the plans are basically derived to reflect priorities expressed in the state's development plans.

Having drawn attention to planning as a major requirement of any educational institution, it seems that documentation which is its complementary part is becoming a significant procedure to KU academic administrators (interview with the vice- rector for planning on March 4th,1997). That is quite evident in the five-year-plan document as well as in the delineation of the QA policy. The basic

motive for documentation seems to give an account of what KU is doing to the different stakeholders in higher education, which rarely happened in the past. 'The central authority has the responsibility for collating the demands of society on the higher education system, in terms of its consumers represented in the employers of graduates and the potential students and of its sponsors (its elected representatives). It has the further responsibility of seeing that the system meets such demands to an acceptable degree' (Becher and Kogan,1992 :22). This is illustrated in the student admission figures for the years from 1995 to 2000. The same holds for postgraduate students, faculty appointments, continuing education programmes, support staff and the expected financial and functional balances of KU. 'Calculation and rationalization have developed in organizations through the development of norms of accountability. These are the rules on which modern organizations are based. They have to be continually produced in organizational practice by particular actors. The actors with the central role in the maintenance of these processes are the professional experts'(Morgan,1990:100-101).

KU as a state organisation seems to be committed to this system of accounting and control within which the strategic planning mechanism shapes the criteria of work performance which can be recorded as statistics. The chances of success and failure according to these criteria are indicative of the 'financial health' of the organization, in Morgan's terms (1990). 'It increasingly exerts an effect, particularly on state organizations, where work relations, although not based on capital-labour are nevertheless to a significant extent money-based. State organizations can be coerced into adopting such practices by governments bent on expanding the influence of capitalist relations' (Morgan,1990:123). An indication of this tendency is exemplified in the value for money concept in KU context. In fact it underlies the new student registration regulations which permit students to register in more than the previously allotted number of courses so as to accelerate the completion of their study period from four years to three and a half (Pilot interview with Rector on December 15th,1996).

The need for financial and performance accounts stems from a lack of communication between the university and different stakeholders, as one of the reasons explained earlier in chapter five. The academic administrators have to respond to these stakeholders through a 'book keeping' process, as the consultant states earlier (interview on February 24th,1997). Becher and Kogan (1992) view accountability in higher education as a way to certify that universities give good value for money for the following reasons; 'first as a requirement to demonstrate economic efficiency; and second, as a

need to show that high standards are being maintained in relation to the calls of the system on public expenditure' (p.165).

This move to greater documentation is also reflected in the new QA procedures. The multiple forms that different parties in the institution have to fill out are beyond the capacity of many. Heads of departments believe that it is a very time-consuming exercise. The forms include staff CVs, details of teaching loads, class assessment, etc. Students are expected to follow other procedures to feed in information that the QA team think is essential. The QA policy in other words relies on performance indicators as a quantitative measure of the quality of the identified nine aspects in addition to the other qualitative methods such as student evaluation and external examiner respectively, the consultant asserts (interview on February 24th,1997). This issue is further discussed in chapter eleven.

In a way, documentation seems to bring benefits for KU. The lack of documents about the activities of previous administrators' deprived their successors of the chance to learn the origins of the present situation. It also made it difficult to build on their accomplishments. According to my informants, every new administration seems to start from scratch. This recurring process creates a feeling of individualism in running the institution the new rector's way. With the arrival of every new rector a change of regulations became an anticipated procedure for all KU staff. This tendency to change rules and regulations thus becomes a topic for critical comment among faculty.

Although the process of producing financial and performance reports makes many demands on all sectors in KU, it seems it will pay off eventually by improving the image of the institution, (interview with the vice-dean for academic support services in science, on March 1st,1997). Producing more studies and statistics about KU will clarify many ambiguous issues about which the public seems to be so ignorant. That includes the government, the parliament, the parents, the employers and most important of all the students. The absence of adequate records was very apparent as I sought data on earlier approaches to assessment and evaluation at KU. The importance of such documentation is stressed by Taylor and Hill (1993) who argue that 'the process of documenting systems and procedures brings discipline and greater consensus to that which previously was informal and perhaps ambiguous' (P.22). However, excessive transparency about the institution affairs may have a counter effect on its autonomy if it reaches a stage whereby 'it may divert

universities from the creative tasks of educational programme improvement into the activities of bureaucratic reporting' (Dill,1995:101). This obviously leads to a 'tension between quality monitoring for accountability and quality monitoring for enhancement' (Harvey,1995:138). Deming has also warned against an excessive use of performance indicators. He states that 'it is unfortunately to be feared that quality assurance means in many places a deluge of figures that tell how many defective items of this type and that type were produced last month, with comparisons month to month and year to year. Figures like this tell the management how things have been going, but they do not point the way to improvement' (Deming,1986:15).

Clearly the process of gathering and publishing data in the form of statistical accounts is done in order to demonstrate that a multiplicity of goals - external and internal, varied stakeholders - are being addressed and harmonised. TQM, on the other hand operates with a much simpler view of goals in terms of satisfying the customer. Seen as a political organisation, KU must clearly contain varied and conflicting goals, so the simplicities of TQM are not adequate.

The impact of the state on KU is also evident in the bureaucratic hierarchy. KU has adopted this type of organisational structure for thirty two years. The decision reached was based on following 'the common practice of universities in the Arab world', despite the recommendations suggested by the commission report in 1965 warning against the danger of simply copying any existing Arab university. KU is like other 'Gulf and Arabian Peninsula universities which are conditioned by the Egyptian university traditions, academically and administratively' (Al-Ebraheem,1990:1045). The Egyptian influence goes beyond the university to the entire state bureaucracy, with all its flaws and shortcomings, event to the extent that even ' the university philosophy looks like a form of prescriptions that tied it to the state general service regulations' (Alebraheem,1990:1045). Hence, the state bureaucratic structure persists to an extent that is beyond the academic administrators' power to assess or modify. It is the reason for the current administration to confine the QA policy to academic areas only. The institution thus has been and still is disadvantaged by such dependence relationship on external authorities in managing its own internal affairs.

It may be remembered that the decision about overall planning and policy making, the budget and finance, student admissions and access are all issues that the government has a say in. This reflects negatively on the quality of the university input which is the students. In an interview, an associate

professor in science mentioned that internal matters controlled by the university such as academic programmes, staffing, and research are always well taken care of, when the government intervenes, that the quality of education can be affected (interview on March 5th, 1997).

Moving down the hierarchy from the highest level of the state to a lower level to the university, we find that the former has a great impact on the micropolitics of latter. Therefore, we need to look at the relationships that prevail among the people within KU, both hierarchical and collegial (Becher and Kogan, 1992). There are two basic concepts to be examined 'the degree of structural hierarchy and the extent of unity or cohesion in decision making' (Clark, 1978:2).

As already stated, the Rector is appointed by an 'Amiri decree'. The appointment of the vice-rectors is then the responsibility of the rector who has the right to select her/his own team following certain university criteria. The choice of the current vice-rectors is biased towards engineering college who hold three out of the five positions. Going down the hierarchy, the dean of each college is appointed through a search committee at the college level, which explores the views of all faculty within a certain college about a number of nominated candidates with relevant qualifications. The dean then appoints his/her vice-deans. Further down, the chairperson of a department is normally elected by her/his own staff. These procedures reflect the twin conceptions of collegium and hierarchy. It is collegium in the sense that those holding leading positions are from within the institution. They are familiar with the academic norms and functions; they constitute part of the academic community. However, what is expected from them as they occupy their positions within the system hierarchy may influence the way they run the institution in response to extrinsic demands, influences and pressures. 'The interplay between executive and committee, hierarchy and collegium, cannot be easily rendered down into a straight forward and predictable structure' (Becher and Kogan, 1992:70).

Furthermore, academic administrators strive to maintain a balance between collegial and hierarchical formats in their management, except in issues which far transcend their authority and that usually emanate from the outside environment. The implementation of the new QA policy is only an extension of the strategic planning process that KU administration has to follow in response to governmental pressure. However, not all colleges seem to follow the same procedures due to individual differences between one college and the other; a decision made at one particular college, which was eventually accepted by the senior management. This, in effect, demonstrates the collegial

relationship between the higher level and lower levels of the institution. The new policy of merging departments, based on QA procedures, is another example of the relationship between management and colleges, i.e. hierarchical. The first example demonstrates the negotiation patterns which follow recognition of what is appropriate and reasonable in the collegium context (Becher and Kogan,1992). The latter, on the other hand, illustrates the decision-making power, originating from positions in the highest level in the hierarchy, reflecting decisions about the overall deployment of limited resources.

Such acts reflect the way academic administrators view their role in management, which they believe is more than being mediators between the different levels. Their responsibility is not simply to promote the view of their particular constituency, but also of the overall development of the university, in a form which will be acceptable to the formal authorities. When a university shapes its policies it, in fact, it stands to gain in the long run by taking into considerations both its own needs and priorities as well as those of society with a view to reconciling them where possible (Clark,1978). At the same time, however, the institution acquires strength from its relationship with external authorities and sources of power (Becher and Kogan,1992). This is evident in the close relationship between the current administration and the University Council's members.

At the level of the college deans, it is noticeable that their main task is to mediate between the college and the senior administration. An illustration of that role is the response that the dean of education made about his college's resistance to the new QA policy in its initial stages. He stated that *'as a teaching member I am with it but not as a dean, because I am voicing the collective opinions of the college'* (interview on March 26th,1997). It also indicates that he has the authority in his designated role in the hierarchy of the institution, but not the power to make a decision alone on the implementation of the new policy. This requires a consensus of all faculty and a consideration of the collegial controls that members in the academic departments are equally aware of what is best for the college. 'The deans therefore have to exercise their leadership informally' (Becher and Kogan,1992:68). Deans also have a teaching load, which makes them closer to the reality of their colleges than higher administrators. They rely on negotiative patterns to reach decisions at the college as well as the departmental levels through the college council, where representatives from the various departments participate in the policy making process. Some deans seem to be more influential than others in terms of getting resources for their colleges depending on the nature of the

college and the reputation of its members, although resources distribution has its own implicit criteria set by academic administrators of the university which are usually guided by detailed plans of the basic units. Deans participate in the overall decision making policy, as they are members of the deans' committee which is headed by the rector. However, agreeing on a decision often depends on the kind of policy that is to be implemented, the source it emanates from, and other factors that may influence the impact of their views on whether to apply it or not.

Another designated role in the hierarchy is that of head of a department. Heads are nominated according to collegial criteria, that is, they are elected by their peers in the department. Chairpersons have power within the scope and domain of their territory (Bacharach,1980). An example of exercising the power in such position was provided by a teaching member in the science college, who expressed his anger at the manner of appointing new recruits for the department. He asserted that *'the choice always falls on teaching staff from one place, where the head of the department comes from, eliminating thereby the chances for other candidates from other countries with better qualifications'*. He stated that *'despite the fact that the way the whole process is done is through a committee where heated discussions take place, still the head has his own supporters from the staff that back him up on his decisions for their own individual interests that they may attain in the long run'*. He added that *'the criteria for quality selection of new recruits are influenced by such power play within the department'* (interview on March 18th,1997).

Power is thus not confined within a certain level but distributed within the department, between the chairpersons, the executive committees and the individual teaching members. Typically, one level will suggest a measure, and higher ones will either accept it or veto it. On many occasions it is sent back for further consideration with or without modifications, along the hierarchy. 'The relationship of power among the different levels can be delicate and subtle; in fact, the important manoeuvring may take place informally and behind the scenes, so that when a matter comes up for formal consideration at a given level, the outcome is a foregone conclusion'(Clark,1978:6).

As observed from the above, the task structure, which is based on knowledge-centered tasks, by its very nature necessitates a multiple hierarchy. 'The case for a division of power is also a case for the support of variety' (Clark,1983:269). Thus, the power differential seems to be a legitimate concept in any educational establishment context. Policy-making processes seem to depend on the collegial

as well as managerial mechanisms within the institution. Certain strategic decisions which are made by higher authorities seem to be implemented by the university senior administration, irrespective of the resistance of KU staff, e.g. decisions to increase students admission. However, other internal academic business appears to be the responsibility of academic disciplines. But slight variations among power holders do exist between colleges, departments and even individuals, as exemplified earlier.

Informal power does also exist in different networking forms. Coalition building is one manifestation of informal structures. KU as a higher education institution fosters the development of coalitions. Coalitions are exemplified in the formation of the faculty association, which represents the voice of the teaching members, as it consists of members from the different colleges by election. The association, on many occasions, has immense accomplishments with regard to faculty rights, as members in that institution. It also has its own distinct stance towards various societal phenomenon and public policies, on which academics feel the urge to express their opinions. 'For the most part, the academic community deals with ideas and concepts within the confines of the academic disciplines, relating them to teaching and research. However, sometimes these concerns spill over into the realms of society and politics' (Altbach,1992:1438). The impact of the academics on society is evident in the professorial publications which represent a link between the role of 'academic as expert' and 'academic as politician'.

The parallel 'coalition' for students is the student union. It is involved in the relationship of student to staff, and students to other students (Becher and Kogan,1992). KU students do not markedly differ from other students in other parts of the world. As it is well known, there is a significant worldwide tradition of student political activism. However, students do not have a direct involvement such as oppositional action to public policies. Rather they are more inclined to demonstrate their opposition indirectly through petitions against certain university regulations, few strikes and publications. The recent Amiri decree regarding the separation of student females from males in KU colleges came as a consequent decision to the student fundamentalists' (the union leaders) outcry for such an initiative. However, many students in the two colleges disapprove it. A student respondent in education college believes that the union is not dealing with immediate concerns of KU students. Rather they are more involved with marginal issues such the seperation of male and female students in classes (interview, in April 6th,1997). But in immediate business to do with teaching/learning processes, the

union has accomplished very little indeed. This can be attributed to both a lack of maturity and information, which is due to the 'difficulty any student faces in knowing what he's buying and what it will do for him' (Winston,1997:35). Part of the explanation may also be that KU is a public institution where educational services are free, and this in turn reflects on the attitudes of both students and faculty.

But institutional power relationships between the different levels is not dysfunctional in terms of upgrading the standards of KU. On the contrary, senior administration permits academic departments to pursue their primary business of teaching and research in relative freedom. Also, it maintains a degree of balance and pursuit of common goals (Clark,1978). The department will normally be concerned with making satisfactory progress within its academic discipline while maintaining what it sees as a healthy balance between teaching and research. However, certain interventions by the higher administration into the internal affairs of departments seem to provoke resentment on the part of the staff due to their belief in their academic freedom. A point in case is the merging of departments in the science college. Teaching members think that the plan cannot be put into action without the approval of those concerned. Faculty members reactions about the pros and cons of such a move provoked varied views, depending on where individual interests lie within the same department. The plan involves cutting down resources guided by the state policy of 'tightening the belt'. It also implies the shift of power from a few key people to a wider group within an enlarged department. These procedures in fact underlie the QA policy focus on value for money and the closer alignment with the state's policy. However, Becher and Kogan (1992) argue that merging in subject curricula have consequences, that 'troubles frequently arise by either horizontal or vertical departures from the accepted norm of the single-subject curriculum' (P.90). Hence, conflict over subject boundaries within the merged departments will compound and perpetuate the threat to academics in their own specialisation areas, or interdisciplinary areas.

To protect their territories, the colleges and the departments within them tend to use a boundary management approach whether at the college or departmental level, either to integrate the unit with the outside world, or to isolate it so that it can function in an autonomous way. The quest for autonomy by individuals, groups and even departments is a powerful feature of organizational life, because many people like to be in full control over their life space. Boundary management promotes this quest, since it often suggests ways by which a unit can aquire the resources necessary to maintain

autonomy. It also points to strategies that can be utilised to fend off threats to autonomy (Morgan,1997). This is exemplified in the way the colleges of engineering and medicine are setting their own standards and evaluation mechanisms through gaining membership of international accrediting associations. This enables them to operate in an autonomous manner and refrain from conforming to local assessment policies. Lack of communication between different departments as well as different colleges is another indicator of the boundary management concept. The basic units tend to keep their internal affairs within the confines of their territory, creating thereby a feeling of uncertainty of what they are doing to outsiders. In doing so, they maintain their power control over their own academic discipline and operational policies, and also to acquire more resources.

However, the boundary management concept promotes uncertainty. Many respondents from the two colleges pointed out that communication is often poor between departments and colleges, which created a feeling of uncertainty among KU staff of what colleges are doing. The same also holds for the apparent uncertainty about the new QA policy in the two colleges. The faculty in education expressed feelings of dissatisfaction that the 'expert's account of the new strategy is ambiguous and vague. They see the new policy as a consequence of the fact that in the past KU QA procedures were not explicitly pronounced and were insufficient to assure quality in the institution at large. Such feelings of uncertainty seem to have encouraged imitation of what other well-established institutions are doing in this regard. 'When an organization faces a problem with ambiguous causes or unclear solutions, problemistic search may yield a viable solution with little expense.... Organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful' (DiMaggio and Powell,1991:151-152). 'In addition, those who see the power deriving from the capacity to deal with uncertainty often preserve their power base by ensuring that the uncertainties continue, and sometimes by manipulating situations so that they appear more uncertain than they actually are' (Morgan,1997:183). The communication tools thus appear to be ineffective. The information received by colleges about the new QA policy do not seem to reduce uncertainties (Rogers and Rogers,1976).

This uncertainty around the QA policy seems to have been created by a control of the information flow from higher administration to the colleges. However, the information was released to certain audiences and at certain stages. The only major document on the strategy was published in April 1995 serves such purpose. The document is written in Arabic. The effort I put into translating it was

very demanding in terms of trying to adhere to a literal translation of the content. It is addressed to a specific audience; which is the academic affairs committee, at the university level. My assumption is that those who are supposed to discuss its content are not well-informed about the new strategy. That means that it is not published for the use of other groups in KU for many reasons that is dealt with in a subsequent discussion. This was confirmed by the consultant (interview on April 17,1997).

The political nature of an organisation is not only conveyed in what is communicated but also in how. This is evident in the interpretation of the document. Following Fairclough (1989) analysis, the discourse of the document has a definite purpose which is to inform the committee about the following: a definition of the goals of the strategy; specification of the nine basic dimensions that the strategy is supposed to assess; a description of the plan of operation; and lastly explaining the detailed agenda of what has been accomplished since the initiation of the strategy.

The discourse also signifies the subject positions of who is involved in this situational context. The co-authors of the document are the consultant and his colleague in the engineering college. The consultant represents the expert who was an assessor for ABET for several years. The addressees are the committee, one of eleven sub-committees of the University Council. The committee answers directly the Minister of Higher Education. Hence the members come from different backgrounds: the Rector, the Secretary General, Minister of Education assistant, deans of colleges, three members from the public sector and three members from the private sector. Vice rectors, the Dean of student affairs and the Dean of admission are also invited to attend those meetings. In other words, all stakeholders in KU are present, except, of course, the students. The power relationship conveyed by the document appears to imply that the writers and the readers who eventually would be the listeners in a subsequent vivid presentation seems to be imbalanced in hierarchical language. Moreover, the consultant is clearly claiming power derived from his expertise, which exemplifies Foucault's term 'institutional and societal 'orders of discourse'. 'Statements position subjects - those who produce them, but also those they are addressed to - in particular ways, so that 'to describe a formation qua statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what he says; but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it'(Foucault,1972:95-96). This emphasizes the fact that knowledge and information are potential sources of power. However, there appears to be agreement than disagreement among the committee members, as the rector and the vice rector for planning assert (pilot interviews on December

15th,1996).

The language of the document 'is used in an instrumental way as a part of a wider institutional and bureaucratic objective' (Fairclough,1989:148) which is to introduce the new policy to the decision-makers at the highest level. The bigger task would be completed in the verbal presentation for open discussion (interview with consultant, on April ,1997). The role of the language used determines its genre which in this case depended mainly on bullet-points with few details. These were little more than headings which would be more fully explained at the meeting. The statements on what has already been accomplished are all in the active form. The phrases on goals and operation plans are agentless; whereby the use of the term strategy is used instead as in 'The strategy will..'. Verbs such as suggest, recommend, are frequently used to describe the communication that will take place between the implementers and the deans of colleges about future developments. The language used in the accomplishment section is in the simple past active form; it simply gives information about events that took place weeks back.

More important to mention here is the fact that there is a lot of terminology and phrases, which is so broad that it could subsume a number of meanings and interpretations. Phrases such as 'according to academic criteria', 'to found an effective organizational system','inviting international assessment bodies', 'reaching the highest international academic standards' are some of the elastic terms that could be interpreted in many ways. This view is supported by a head of a department in the education college, who mentioned that 'there is no clear interpretation of policies. They can be interpreted in different ways according to the way they are written' (interview in March 25th,1997). Ball's point (1994) on such ambiguity is relevant here. He argues that 'most aspects of a new policy defy policy-makers' attempts to articulate what is intended in unambiguous terms. In many cases, too, policy-makers are unsure or divided about exactly what is intended and so policy can be 'decoded' in a variety of ways' (Ball,1994). It is important to mention at this point that faculty in the different colleges do not seem to be granted the same right as the committee members to a full understanding of the new policy.

From this political perspective, it is noticeable hitherto that the colleges as well as individuals in KU are frequently involved in politics. They have a considerable impact on the university and on society. Hence, power play is not confined to the higher level of the hierarchy, it is also manipulated at lower levels, which makes the university a highly politicized institution, full of disputes and

controversies. However, political issues are not discussed in public and are never made explicit. But accepting these issues as part of the reality of an institution helps 'to recognize its constructive role in the creation of social order' (Morgan,1997:209).

In conclusion, if we prefer to think of an organisation as a political system, we focus on issues to do with the positioning of the organisation in its political context, with its own internal arrangements for distributing, sharing, acquiring and denying power, with conflicts and competing interests that are part of that process.

So QA policy is experienced as an instrument which permits some to expand their power, requiring certain behaviours of others. Thus the state gains more power over the university and the university over its constituent parts. However, the process is not one-sided. The inherently less powerful also have their strategies for both resisting and mediating the new policy so that it becomes something they can live with because in its modified form it is less damaging to their autonomy, less threatening to their traditional boundaries. Individuals also have a role in all this as members of formal and informal groups; the interplay of bureaucratic, academic and personal ensure that they respond to initiatives like the QA policy in complex ways.

Chapter Ten: Data interpretation:
KU as an unstable organisation

10.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the use of the political metaphor helps to interpret some of the organisational aspects that the system theory was unable to illuminate, such as conflict, interests and power play. Those are of close relevance to the themes brought up in my data. I suggested at the end of the chapter that there are certain characteristics of an academic institution which render it as unique and complex in its structure fitting only with difficulty into the unidimensional process envisaged within TQM procedures. One of these important characteristics is change. It is a constant feature of the academic life at the level of academic activities. The political metaphor deals with the change issue as an inevitable consequence of conflicting forces driven by multiple interest groups. This metaphor of an unstable changing organisation provides for a fuller exploration of change, that allows us to understand its nature as well as its impact on and in higher education. If one perceives KU as an unstable changing organisation, then the issue of how change is managed is bound to be crucial, i.e. There is not just the fact of change, but also its management. The extensive literature on change tackles many different issues. I will adhere mainly to themes relevant to KU. These include types of change; factors or forces driving change in organizations; and change agents. This chapter also looks into the impact of change on participants or actors in KU, especially when change is characterised by ambiguity or uncertainty. The chapter concludes with a mention of the fit and misfit of TQM within the unstable organisation metaphor.

10.2. KU as an unstable changing organisation

The literature on organizational change 'seeks to fathom the nature and source of change so that we can understand its logic' (Morgan,1997:298). Thus the employment of the change metaphor should contribute to our understanding of how organizations are managed. 'For if there is an inner logic to the changes that shape our world, it may be possible to understand and manage change at a new and higher level'. Morgan, argues that instead of just responding to distinct

incidences as new events, 'we may be able to influence the processes that produce them' (Morgan, 1997:294).

Change is a crucial characteristic of universities and colleges. Change in itself is neither good nor bad, what matters is the kind and degree of the change undertaken. However, the degree and extent of change in a complex system such as higher education, is dependent upon 'the intersection of interests, strategic behaviours, the norms and values, and the ideologies' of all concerned (Clark,1983:236). Those concerned are a variety of stakeholders whose demands and needs are both converging and diverging simultaneously. An important customer and supplier of higher education services is the state. Institutions thus respond to government-inspired policy initiatives which are enforced by the power of the state. My argument is thus that the most important type of change in KU is required by the state but has now been largely devolved to the university administration. Within that the significant issues seem to be; firstly, that this has encouraged a more managerial approach, not only from the centre down, but at all levels; secondly, within this managerial approach the significant role of QA is becoming inevitable.

Relating the above initiatives in KU to the change literature, we find that a wide range of theorists in the field perceive change in different ways. For instance, Becher and Kogan (1992) define change as 'phenomena occurring across a broad spectrum of human activity' (p.131). They attempt to relate those specifically to the academic scene which is our concern at this point. The authors distinguish between minor and incremental modifications at the different levels in the system which have minor or no impact 'on the prevailing value configuration or the overall operating pattern' (Becher and Kogan,1992:133). They referred to those as organic changes. Changes which make more significant revisions are termed radical changes. The latter, however, demand a noticeable shift in the prevailing normative presumptions or established practice, or both. However, they believe that, 'there is no single, generally accepted theory to explain the change process' (Becher and Kogan, 1992:131). Hence it is important at this point to investigate its origins in KU.

According to these, KU seems to have experienced both types of change identified by Becher and Kogan; the radical and incremental change. KU, in effect, has undergone a radical change when the educational system shifted from the Egyptian/British model, between 1966-1974, to the

American model from 1974 until present. The credit system is an example of radical change - it contributes to a perception of KU as an unstable changing organization. It follows then that the apprehension that KU staff expressed towards the new QA policy betrays a change fatigue resulting from recurrent changes in the institution at large. However, the university then suffered from an 'absence of a consolidated plan for university organisation and development' (Al-Ebraheem,1990:1044). With ever-increasing political and social pressure in 1974, KU had to double and triple student enrolment. 'These massive leaps in enrolment were characterised by a total lack of planning and a consequent drop in student quality' (Al-Ebraheem,1990:1046). This radical change required the university to unfreeze (Lewin,1947). It was a change in the structure, whereby 'who does what on a regular basis; and who decides regularly on who will do what'(Clark,1983:236) was modified in 1974. The relationship between the state and the university represents, in Van Vught's term (1991), the state control model. This shift was accompanied with changes in both normative values as well as established practices. The new educational mode required a different administrative and pedagogical set-up. The effect of the change was compounded by an absence of statistical studies on the experimental groups represented in the two colleges, political science and commerce, which pioneered this educational mode. Its implementation across the university brought to the surface many negative consequences, as KU faculty respondents confirmed. There was a lack of training sessions on how to manage student counselling, which is the core principle in this educational system (interview with lecturer in science, March 18th, 1997). The American graduate faculty did not seem to experience difficulties. However, the rest seemed to be in the dark, and this had a negative impact on their student advisees. The whole model with its modularity, franchising, multidisciplinary and semester set-up seems to leave very little for academics to control and enhance student learning. Furthermore, 'the specific features of the credit framework have compounded the negative effect caused by the intensification in workload, decline of resources, increases in student numbers and the increasing administrative responsibilities' (Trowler,1997:306). As for students, they felt that they could not identify with a particular discipline 'as disciplinary knowledge is fragmented and regionalised by modularity and there is limited time for personal relationships to develop' (Bernstein,1990:13). Both staff and students seem to agree on the flaws of this educational model, or better put, the way it is implemented. The decision had been made by the top management. Goedegebuure et al (1993) argue 'as demand increases and as higher education is asked to fulfil new needs and demands of

postindustrial society, change is likely to remain on the higher education agenda' (P.346)

The radical change example introduced above demonstrates that the system has 'little or no structure, generic to it, to guide interaction and change'. But as 'it develops it builds its own sources of continuity and change'(Clark,1984:121), KU gradually acquired its own structures of work, belief and authority.

Notwithstanding, the nature of this state/university relationship has developed over the last fifteen years from the control model towards one of steering the institution from a distance. The state sets the broad parameters for university development through its strategic planning mechanism while leaving most of the details and initiatives to KU itself. This trend has parallels elsewhere. The overall purpose is to give the educational establishments more responsibility to reformulate their own missions and goals, which inevitably will reflect on those institutions' innovation and responsiveness (Goedegebuure,1993). The new trend appears to be manifested in the new managerial strategies that many institutions have adopted in response to the previously mentioned reasons in chapter four. Most of these strategies incorporate the quality notion, derived from the accountability concept. The quality notion represents a major change of emphasis for KU, though it is a not unexpected consequence of the new style of management coupled with the influence of market forces.

It is clear that the new QA policy in KU is one aspect of those strategies. It is also an example of an incremental change in both the relationship between the state and the institution on the one hand, and between the different levels within it, on the other.

Turning to the factors of change, they appear to have accelerated the emergence of the new QA policy. The change pursued is driven by diversified causes, as introduced in chapter five. For KU, 'innovations are not neutral in their benefits and that there are many reasons other than educational merits that influence decisions to change' (Fullan,1989:28). However, as explained earlier, the accountability issue is one of the most powerful driving forces. KU hitherto has to justify the fulfilment of its goals and their relevance to the needs and demands of society.

Furthermore, the reduction in the university budget, accompanied by a dramatic rise in the

student intake, is clearly a feature of the post war era, which has brought cuts in funding for many public sector organisations. KU is expected to do more with less. The resultant outcome is a rise in staff/student ratio, which definitely affects quality (interview with associate professor in science, March 5th,1997). Yorke states that 'the pressure on staff from increased student numbers and a declining unit of resource is leading towards a culture of 'getting by'(1993:6). This is coupled with a deterioration in the infrastructure. Although this is becoming a common characteristic of many higher education institutions around the world, the dilemma is even more acute in KU because it is the only higher education institution in the country. The university administration is therefore attempting to diversify its funding sources from non-governmental sectors, a tendency which is highly associated with the emergence of the QA policy. At the college level, administrators devote time and manpower, not to academic matters but to engage in projects with private sector companies in order to fund college projects. This is quite evidenced by the inclusion of community service as one of the QA variables. Relevant to this is the fact that there is always an imbalance in funding between the natural science colleges and the social science colleges. The per capita expenditure of the former always outweighs the latter. This appears to be related to internal university policies. Apparently, the public expenditure budget has been rearranged to reinforce national interests, security interests, in the face of external threats. This demonstrates a transition from one phase to another in the development of higher education in Kuwait. The influence of economic factors is clearly strong and reflects the move from excessive expenditure to tightening the belt at the state level.

The internal factors, on the other hand, seem to some extent justifiable. The fact that the Rector occupies that position for four years is 'generally insufficient to actually accomplish any ambitious agenda'(Green,1997:140). Some faculty clearly support this view. However, the attempt of the current administration to document and formalise the QA policy at the institutional level may provide some stability for the future. It may also imply 'leaving one's thumbprint on the events'. Setting a precedent in such a crucial policy area may result in desirable outcomes in the long run. Nevertheless, some would argue that this notion has a counter effect if it leads to a standardization in assessment practices. This they say in fact goes against the tradition of diversity in higher education. The notion of disciplinary differences militates against standardization in assessment methods. Moreover, a good number of authors have argued that it is the very diversity of higher education that provides its stability. Goedegebuure contends that

'the thesis is that the division of labour in higher education based on professional knowledge and professional expertise produces diversity and structural disintegration, which in turn protect the equilibrium of the whole' (Goedegebuure et al., 1993:316). The QA policy recognises such variability between disciplines at its outset, as is shown in the different approaches implemented in the ten colleges. However, the intentions of the current administrators are not yet clear with regard to this issue. The drive for conformity makes administration easier but on the other hand it threatens diversity. According to Eurich (1981), 'procedures establish ways of doing things and can stifle innovation'(P.139).

Viewed from another perspective, the choice of the approach, the strategy of excellence, derived from the TQM, has as its underlying principle, the pursuit of quality in every aspect in the organisation. Hence, 'quality is a useful concept with which to link changes at the macro level of the system and policies of higher education with changes at the micro level concerned with curricula, teaching, student learning and assessment' (Brennan,1997:8). At the micro level, quality assessment scrutinizes student learning experience and achievement. At the macro level, changes seem to be unidirectional, which is top-down. That is changes flow from the higher authorities to the senior administrators. Therefore, changes that affect the state level are beyond the control of the academic administrators, as the rector for planning acknowledged (interview in March 4th,1997). Brennan argues that 'At the macro level, quality assessment is about power and control' (1997:8).

Moving now to the role of change agents, it is clear that the QA policy initiative was instigated by the senior administration. It appears that it is following both deliberate coercion and persuasion mechanisms to implement and carry out the intended changes. Coercion is an external mechanism represented in the three higher formal authorities, mentioned earlier, which Wolthius (1992) calls the political groups. However, despite the fact that the state is a highly significant agent of change, it cannot exercise power in an absolute sense. The state itself is part of the higher education and thus its policies are either 'constrained or furthered by the norms, values, and interests of other parties in the system' (Goedegebuure,1993:327). The persuasion mechanism, on the other hand, is internal to the system. It relies on collegiality as well as coercion. Collegiality is based on negotiation patterns, to carry out changes in general. The agents in this context are the senior administrators. Wolthius (1992) refers to those as the

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administrative groups.

Private sector groups and the employers can also be seen as change agents who exert some influence on the prospective changes. According to Wolthius' (1992) definition, 'they are formed from private groups that neither belong to the educational system nor to the political structure. These groups possess material facilities that may be exchanged with professional services. They may also influence public opinion in order to put pressure on the political authorities' (Wolthuis,1992:1867). Their presence on the university board is quite vital and noticeable. Their concern about the quality of graduates is just as serious as that of the academic community. Sometimes, they become competitive rivals to the university, by recruiting highly qualified academics for purposes of research. However, they do not appear to exercise as much power as the government.

Other agents of change are to be found at the grass-root level (Wolthius,1997). It is the faculty and the students who must actually implement and absorb change. The system is bottom-heavy, in Clark's term (1984). The interests groups consist of students and faculty. Virtually, academics are involved in reforms and innovations which strike at the most pertinent areas. These are basically; research, scholarship and teaching. They form the most immediate concerns of the faculty in both colleges. The majority emphasized the fact that the prime aim of those changes is to develop more efficient curricula and more reliable student assessment methods as well as effective teaching, in the pursuit of quality and high standards. Suffice to say at this point that developments at the departmental level are well-taken care of by the staff members. 'Academics have an implicit mandate to continue to make progress according to the rhythms of their own disciplinary and peer-group development and to assimilate external pressures on largely their own terms' (Becher and Kogan,1992:134). Other changes at higher levels seem to be beyond the control of the academics, a reality which appears to be so evident to the majority of the respondents.

Students as interest groups are less likely to bring about direct changes to the system. Their impact seems to be confined to administrative issues related to registration and disciplinary procedures, and probation. Nonetheless, their political role as a coalition represented in the student union is extremely striking.

Morgan (1997) stresses the need for managers in an organisation to create the conditions under which the new context can emerge, otherwise the power of the established context persists. The senior administrators hence attempt to create contexts that facilitate the emergence of the new QA policy. Their approach in relation to the new QA policy appears to vary between the different colleges. Their acceptance of existing practices in certain colleges such as medicine, engineering, and allied health reflects their understanding of the need to create an environment for the prospective change. A different approach was utilized with other colleges such as science which has been going through a self-assessment exercise for many years. The new procedures in the science college were a matter of more formalisation. Other units such as arts and law with no previous experience, were taken by the hand in a step by step process to help carry out the new procedures. If such consideration had not been shown there is a possibility that 'to the extent that the system remains locked into the old context, no significant change is possible. This is the key problem that blocks so many organizations that are trying to transform themselves. Because of the power of the established context, they end up trying to do the new in old ways' (Morgan,1997:269-270).

This point in fact leads us to another crucial issue which is the impact of change. The impact of change on those involved in it is highly emphasized in the organisational analysis literature. As stated earlier, there are many motives for change in higher education institutions. Authors in this area review the significance of change for those who are expected to carry out the process of change. In KU, the initiation of the new QA policy brought to the surface many different reactions. The most noticeable was a sense of threat to faculty in both colleges, especially education. 'When one of these institutions becomes unstable, its theory and ideology are threatened, and the anchors for identity which they provide are loosened. The net effect contributes to the assault on the stability of the self' (Schon,1971:20). The effect was compounded by the fact that it was accompanied with a feeling of uncertainty about the purposes behind the new QA policy. Such a feeling was expressed by the majority of the informants in the two colleges. The overall opinion of faculty in both the science and the education colleges is that there is a lack of clarity with regard to the new policy. Most of the senior administrators in the college of education asserted, in varying degrees, that the documents produced and the few orientation seminars are not sufficient. Senior administrators in science believe the higher administration attempts to integrate the new policy in the system. Further, faculty in the college

of education expressed their anguish and distress about the way in which the strategy of excellence was presented by the implementers. Their situation seems similar to that described by Schon (1971) that 'there is an information overload, too many signals, more than can be accounted for; and there is not yet theory in terms of which information can be sought or new experiments undertaken. Uncertainty is a way of talking about the situation in which no plausible theory has emerged'(P.13). Science faculty, on the other hand, were bewildered by the idea of new procedures every four years, to the extent that 'when processes embodying threat cannot be repelled, ignored, contained or transformed, social systems tend to respond - but by the least change capable of neutralizing or meeting the intrusive process' (Schon, 1971:49-50). This is true, at least, in the attitudes they expressed.

The impact on the science faculty seemed to be less marked than on the education faculty. The former perceive the exercise of self-assessment as a normal practice within their different departments, before the implementation of the new strategy. Hence it was not novel. For education, however, self-assessment is not part of college policy. 'New experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some 'familiar, reliable construction of reality' in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to the experiences regardless of how meaningful that might be to others' (Fullan,1989:32). Pressure from higher administration for the provision of assessment samples concerning individual faculty members made it more difficult for them to accept the new procedures. 'Some academics feel their autonomy and integrity are offended by requests for more transparency and by suggestions that the existing academic quality might be improved through a more deliberate enhancement policy' (Askling,1997:24). Hints were made by the dean and by two heads of departments about the weak position of the educationalists as compared with other disciplinary groups in the institution and this clearly added to the felt pressure. Boys et al. (1988) believe that 'it underlines weaker academic groupings - particularly if they are located in low-status subjects and marginal institutions- are more readily susceptible to wholesale organization, if not to virtual elimination from the academic scene' (P.120).

Students, on the other hand, appear to be in the dark in relation to the new strategy. My enquiries about the new strategy made little sense to them. When asked for their sign of changed policies, they responded with insignificant detailed information about registration and regulations related to courses and programs of study. To them, the only noticeable change was the evaluation forms

they have to fill out in the different sectors of the university, such as the computer centre, the courses and the laboratories.

It seems, therefore, that the threatening effect of the QA policy is largely due to a lack of effective communication between the different groups in the system. 'Communication is the basic process facilitating the interdependence of the parts of the total system; it is the mechanism of co-ordination. The role of communication is to be a 'harmonizer' of the organization, an orchestrator of its parts' (Rogers,1976:57).

Moreover, according to a head of a department, faculty in education view most recurrent changes in KU as increasingly restricting to staff members (interview in March 29th,1997). Another head wondered how the new policy is connected to the punishment and reward system (interview in March25th,1997). The notion of reward is tightly connected with bringing about desired change. Becher and Kogan (1992) talk about 'an offer of some form of incentive to those who carry them out'(P.138). Lewin (1952) also notes that group decision facilitates change in terms of the degree of eagerness that the group has to change from one practice to another.

These arguments may explain the verbal resentment expressed about the proposed change. In some cases this becomes 'overt' opposition to the new procedures, as stated by the dean of the education college. In his college resistance gradually developed into 'neutralizing the intrusive process' by delaying the implementation while the college undertook a longitudinal study on its output, in an attempt to defend the college reputation. Such an act is in Schon's term 'dynamic conservatism. In other words, minimal compliance with the demand for change' (Schon,1971:50). Marris (1974) provides the reason for such minimal compliance by arguing that 'people cannot reconcile themselves to the loss of familiar attachment in terms of some impersonal utilitarian calculation of the common good. They have to find their meaning in these changes before they can live with them' (P.156). The problem of attaching meaning to the change was expressed by many informants, who thought that the new policy is alien to the culture of the institution. To foster a culture of quality improvement and enhancement in an institution, actors in the change process need time, a condition which the rector of planning and the consultant assert as inevitable.

Nonetheless, the reaction of KU informants seems, in some ways, to have been justified. To begin with, there was a lack of information on the new policy such that many in the science college took it as ' another experimental method of evaluation'. Essentially, the communication channels between the different levels spread over the four campuses did not seem to have been very effective. To the education staff who are supposed to be 'well informed' about evaluation, the QA procedures appeared ambiguous. There was insufficient documentation and circulars for KU audiences to understand what the new procedures were about, despite the fact that good communication is an inherent principle of TQM philosophies. In a profit oriented organisation, it is usually achieved through functional and comprehensible management data as well as encouraging people at all points in the process (Warren Piper,1993). Hence policies and procedures on quality assurance must be clearly described and widely comprehended.

The implementers, on the other hand, seem to have their own argument against releasing enough information. They preferred to introduce the process in 'small doses' instead of providing a comprehensive account, in the hope of avoiding hostile reactions to the policy at outset. It was thought that some colleges have not had any previous experience with efficient forms of self-assessment and external review; this might result in opposition if too many details were provided. Organisational analysts such as Morgan (1997) view this as a technique for weaving 'patterns of dependency'. It also signifies the implementers' indispensability and 'expert' status. The education faculty believe that assessment and evaluation is at the core of their own discipline, and thus they were entitled to share in the design of the new QA policy. Morgan supports this view, he states 'there is also a tendency to break down dependencies on specific individuals and departments by acquiring one's own experts. Thus, departments often prefer to have their own specialist skills on hand, even if this involves duplication and some redundancy of specialisms within the organisation as a whole' (P.181).

Another aspect which the new strategy seems to disregard is the psychology of the people in the institution. Deming (1986) stresses the need 'to drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the company' (P.23). It is an important principle in his fourteen point philosophy. Although reactions differ in their degree, education faculty seem annoyed with the notion of more transparency in their assessment criteria and practices in general. The intervention appears to be quite stark at the initiation stage for people with long established practices, irrespective of

their efficiency. Coupled with that is their feeling that they are the 'denied lot' in sharing in decision making processes at the higher level. This feeling is well-supported by the fact that none of the education faculty have occupied the position of Rector in the history of KU.

In so far as the intervention is a threat to academic freedom in the education faculty and elsewhere, autonomy cannot be viewed as an absolute. It is regarded as relational. It involves a balance of power between the state and the university on the one hand, and between administration and the academic profession within the institution, on the other. However, the direction that the policy is taking seems to demonstrate that 'institutional autonomy provides no absolute protection of substantive autonomy' (Goedegebuure,1993:330). Therefore, it is most important for the colleges to sort out the issues involved in real autonomy and 'not raise the cry indiscriminately over every procedural change enacted' (Eurich,1981:136).

More important, though, is the whole concept of developing a culture for change, in other words, a participative culture, which is consistent with the managerial model. The KU faculty do not seem to differentiate between the different types of recurrent changes, nor their purposes, possibly due to their frequency. However, the Vice-Rector for planning and the consultant for QA are aware of the necessity for developing such a culture. To do that requires good communication between the structural hierarchies. Consultation with and feedback from those concerned, such as faculty, is quite vital. Bolton (1995) warns about dangers in the accepted view that 'TQM starts at the top, where serious obsessional commitment to quality must be demonstrated' (Oakland,1993), if that implies that leaders in HEIs will impose TQM philosophy and practice without consultation. However, the QA policy is a long term process. It takes five to seven years to yield results. It is to be hoped that this span of time will take care of the change in the culture of KU needed to support this and other innovations

To conclude, this metaphor of an unstable changing organisation seems very much part of the thinking of both senior administrators as well as faculty. The first group see the limitations of the new QA policy in terms of the coercive relationship between the university and the state. From the faculty's point of view, they view the collegium and coercive mechanisms rendering the university as unstable and in constant change. Both groups are apprehensive about change, as they feel they cannot control it. TQM, on the other hand, implies a truely strategic approach

to the alignment of the organisation with its environment and its changing needs. The change is driven by the market and the customers. It is defined by its step by step processes which aim for continuous improvement to reach a quality product. Change thus is expected and planned for by all individuals involved in it and TQM appears to promise a controlled and orderly procedure for achieving it.

There seem to be various factors to slow down the QA policy progress within departments as well as colleges. Obviously, the external political pressures are effective in pushing the new procedures forward. Internally, it appears that the policy is not fully embraced yet by the people within the institution. Academics seem to cling to their own traditions and established practices. The introduction of the new policy to KU staff brought suspicion about the administrators' motives. As is clear from my interview data, it represents a way of increasing managerial control and undermining autonomy. The college of education clearly sought to resist this. They saw the new policy as a criticism of the quality of their work hitherto and a lack of trust in the work force. Conversely, decision making of change processes within a TQM is the responsibility of all the experts at every level to whom great autonomy is given. They are oriented towards profit maximization and dividends. The levels of the hierarchy, however, are very limited. Thus the members of the organisation are fully aware of the environment in which it functions and responsive to its changing needs. The common goals that the individuals work collectively to achieve are visible and tangible. Therefore, resistance is almost unlikely to occur.

Change is more complex within an educational institution, as it involves several agents with competing interests, values and attitudes. What is even more important is that those actors need to 'assimilate to their experience, to argue it out, adapt it to their own interpretation of their working lives' (Marris,1974:156-157). The attitudes to change imply that change is unhealthy when it is resultant of an ad hoc decision. Nonetheless it is perceived as a healthy phenomenon as it is indicative of the capacity for adaptive behaviour. However, the case of the college of education represents how an academic group in an educational institution reacts to the process of change. It indicates an inherent characteristic of the academic community, which is fending off any threat targeted at its stability. This in fact should lead us to the next metaphor, which is; KU as an organisational culture: more specifically an academic community.

Chapter Eleven: Data interpretation:
KU as an organisational culture: an academic community

11.1. Introduction

The previous chapter concluded with the observation that change is not easily embraced by the academic community at KU. They perceive the implementation of the QA policy as increasing managerial control and undermining autonomy. The suggestion is that such a community tends to evade changes that may threaten its traditions and long established practices. This chapter further explores the characteristics of the academic community. Various images of the academic community are outlined demonstrating how its members share a common culture. This is followed by a particular mention of the disciplinary differences which separate the community into smaller divisions or 'tribes'. Then, I shall suggest that these academic cultures within the different disciplines tend to overstate a shared concern to maintain good academic standards. The employment of multiple evaluation mechanisms is reviewed. Among the most traditional mechanisms implemented in KU are the supervisory evaluation, the external examiner and student evaluation. With the emergence of the QA policy, an extension and formalisation of procedures occurred in most colleges. The new policy requires that each college conducts the three-phase self-assessment exercise, mentioned in chapter seven, which includes the external reviewer policy and data on student performance, and administers student evaluation, in addition to the supervisory evaluation. Further requirements concern research productivity and community service. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the adequacy of the QA policy (TQM) within this metaphor.

11.2. KU as an organisational culture: an academic community

Looked at from an academic perspective, the academic culture seems to be a distinctive feature of higher education institutions at large. Harman (1990:36) for example, broadly defines an academic culture as 'the symbolic dimension of organisational life which embodies the occupational life and work of academics in their different university worlds'.

She suggests that a more traditional view perceives academic culture more specifically as 'historically transmitted patterns of meanings expressed in symbolic form through the occupational commitments, belief and behaviour peculiar to members of the academic profession that are legitimised through certain traditions, mythologies, rituals, modes of discourse and other forms of expressive symbolism which have grown up about them' (Harman,1990:36).

The literature on academic cultures provides extensive accounts on the peculiarities or characteristics of higher education institutions. Presented below is a brief typology of how universities have been perceived. For instance, some organisational analysts perceive universities as values oriented or normative. This is exemplified in the way that their members share commitments and common ideals. These ideals predominate over other aspects of the organisational life. The collegium ideal presumably best illustrates this notion (Harman,1990:31).

Furthermore, decentralisation, democratisation and cohesion seem to characterise universities at the present time. Harman depicted the academic organisation as both a system of shared power but with a potential for conflict. It is also 'a non-hierarchical, cohesive community that had common needs, shared commitments and common ideals'. As this prevails, co-ordination substitutes both superordination or subordination . Such a process is achieved through 'a dynamic of consensus' among the community members (Harman,1990:32).

Another view advocates the notion of the university as a professional organisation. It relates to the professional norms of the community members. They value the exercise of a good degree of autonomy coupled with an authority that is based on the knowledge and expertise of members. They perceive their community as non-hierarchical with a shared control.

It may well be that almost all universities are viewed as professionalised organisations. They are defined as such because they create and transmit specialised knowledge and skills. The academic members become autonomous 'once their qualifications and competence

have been certified, and their bases of authority are determined by professional expertise as opposed to bureaucratic hierarchies' (Harman,1990:33).

It is worth noting that there is more than one level of culture in the academy that academic members are involved in. The most notable are those related to the academic disciplines; the university served; the academic profession and the higher education system of which the total academic venture is a part. 'Not only is academic culture influenced by, derived from, developed, maintained and perpetuated through these frameworks, but they also provide the institutional means whereby certain culturally defined ideals, moral imperatives and beliefs of academia are upheld and regulated' (Harman,1990:36).

However, within any university there has been some imbalance struck between the independence of the professionals and the authority of the senior management, exemplified at KU by the Rector. In many countries, this balance appeared to shift over recent years in favour of a more managerial style. The advent of the QA policy at KU could be seen as yet a further threat to this balance. Yet there is evidence that the colleges attempted to safeguard their boundaries against external interventions, in response to the new policy. Bailey's (1977) concept on academic tribes is relevant here. He describes universities as composed of different tribes. 'Each tribe has a name and a territory, settles its own affairs, goes to war with others, has a distinct language or at least a distinct dialect and a variety of symbolic ways of demonstrating its apartness from others'(P.212). Within the QA policy, there are variations in implementing assessment methods to maintain standards as well as to secure their autonomy in the individual colleges. This in fact divides the latter into seperate 'tribes'. Consequently, the practices are diversified. They are becoming more explicit and overt to KU audiences, as each has to justify why it is following certain mechanisms rather than others. Some demonstrated strong argument in respect of their long established practices in assessment. Engineering, medicine, and allied health act more autonomous than the other seven colleges. This is due to the fact that the first two are associated with international assessment bodies. Hence their standards are evaluated against international measures. Allied Health has its own long-standing mechanism of self-assessment. The Science college, on the other hand, is less threatened by the idea of new QA procedures. However, the situation is different in other colleges, as noted in chapter

eleven. Nonetheless, there has always been some kind of mechanism that must control the academic activities at the department level, but was never formalised. This in fact supports the view that academics''first loyalty is to their department and its traditional practices' (Bolton,1995:15).

Clearly the stronger position that some colleges are granted is attributed to the fact that the type of discipline does influence its status within an educational institution. This is related to the existing variations in the qualities of the bodies of thoughts and skills with which they operate. Natural sciences, such as engineering and medicine seem to be highly embraced by universities and colleges. These fields are viewed as well-developed and have relatively clear structures of knowledge. Becher (1989), for instance, attributes the engineers' highly surprising image to being 'in touch with reality'(P.28). 'But counterpart units labour with poorly integrated and ambiguous bodies of thought, as in the 'softer' social sciences, the humanities, and such semi-professions as education and social work' (Clark,1986:38). The latter, according to Clark, do not seem to be highly regarded. In general, such an outlook characterises the academic community hence creating more divisions within it. Hirst's proposition (1974) seems to set out a different argument. He attributes such differences between forms of knowledge to the distinctiveness of 'concepts and the logical structure propositions employ, the criteria for truth in terms of which they are assessed and the methodology employed for amassing true propositions in each form of knowledge' (P.85-86). Hence, he concludes that the 'importance of the disciplines must not be minimised'. He also emphasizes that 'the logical priority of intellectual objectives be recognised even if in terms of wider human values they are sometimes judged secondary'(P.99).

At KU, the heavy representation of engineering and natural science staff in the senior administration seems to support the above notion. Many of the education faculty pointed that out in their response to the new policy fostered by the academic administrators. The educationalists' perceptions of their contribution in initiating the professional development workshop, where the QA policy first introduced, had been undervalued by the implementers. However, its impact had been so immense that many faculty informants thought that it was very effective and that it should be followed up. Some science faculty

acknowledged that their teaching skills needed to be supported by guiding principles in teaching methodology, especially as most of them has spent their study years in laboratories. The decision in making the methodology workshop optional rendered its purpose so marginal. This example and others make the education faculty feel that they are in a weaker position than other disciplines. Taylor (1992), however, justifies this: 'it is perhaps understandable that, in the UK at least, the choice of Vice-chancellor or Rector is increasingly made from science or technology, rather than the humanities or social sciences'. His proposition is based on the grounds that they have 'relevant previous managerial experience'(p.1408).

Despite these obvious distinctions between disciplinary cultures one commonly observed charactersitic of higher education institutions is their tendency to make loud public protestations or statements about their concern for higher educational standards. It is not perhaps unreasonable to suggest that actual commitment to the maintenance of these standards in terms of established actions and procedures may vary between colleges. As has been observed, the respective structures of knowledge enormously influence the styles of operation in the different basic units in the university. That also includes the way academic standards are defined and maintained in the ten colleges and departments. Clark (1986) warns that 'analysis and policy need to take seriously the ways in which universities and colleges are internally differentiated around knowledge' (P.41). Thus the way that the science faculty operates to safeguard its academic standards is not the same as the faculty in education. Hence 'any attempt at universal standards for academia will impose a uniformity of activity and output which is inconsistent with the particular subject matter requirements of specific areas' (Clark,1986:41). Assessment methods thus vary between one college and another in KU. The grade inflation crisis in the college of education is associated with this. The views of those concerned in the college reflect the proposition that the nature of study in that college is not the same like other colleges. Their views were supported by some recent theories of student assessment in the social sciences.

Academics, generally, claim that they are the final arbiters of what passes for academic standards. The HEQC (1994a) defines academic standards as, 'explicit levels of academic attainment which are used to describe and measure academic requirements and

achievements of individual students' (P.vii). Vries (1997) argues that since they possess such power, 'their technical expertise weakens hierarchical authority, as it defies routinatisation and has allegiance to a professional rather than an institutional code' (P.59). At KU, there has been a tradition of action in this sphere, which has obviously varied between the various colleges. Until the advent of QA policy, however, this was not centrally mandated. Among the procedures variously adopted have been self-assessment in the college of science, external reviewing, and student evaluation in the past for an internal audience. The QA procedure entered this arena of varied practice by attempting to standardise practice and requiring feedback to the central administration via the three-phase self-assessment, explained in chapter seven, which includes the external reviewer, in addition to student evaluation and supervisory evaluation for an institutional audience. In doing so, it calls into question the preference of the constituent parts of the university for autonomy, democratisation and decentralisation which have already been discussed. It also pays little attention to the distinction between disciplinary cultures that has been described above.

Academics can deal with internal affairs related to their own discipline domain to maintain standards, but never beyond those. At least this is true of the situation at KU. But academic standards are influenced by other components beside those mentioned. Trow (1994) for instance, provides a list of features, which he claims establish and measure the academic standards to which a particular university will aspire. These features are the quality of teachers, the students, research and scholarship, curriculum, courses and instruction. These are coupled with the co-ordination and monitoring of the mechanisms of quality control. Other activities such as conferences, peer review in terms of refereeing journal articles and research proposals are also aspects that contribute to quality. Such an aspiration was expressed by most KU informants, be they faculty, academic administrators or students who showed great awareness of these more diffuse measures of academic quality.

I now turn to the first element in the new QA policy, i.e. self-assessment, like curriculum, is 'as much a question of disciplinary as institutional autonomy, with control remaining chiefly in the hands of subject specialists' (Tight,1992:1388). With the advent of the new strategy, however, a different outlook was developed. It underlies the concept that

institutional autonomy remains conditional on satisfactory performance. That seems however to be the motive behind the direct intervention of senior administration in the internal operations of departments in the education college. Variations in individual student assessments between courses within a department and between departments appear to raise questions about the standards of the college output. The demand for common exams, for instance, is one indicator of the attempt to impose a uniform model between colleges. Science college seems to have solved the problem of variations by resorting to common exams policy for beginning and prerequisite courses, yielding thereby to conformed criteria in each department of specified standards for student entrants. This policy seems feasible only as long as there is an agreement among the department members on how to assess quality in students' work (Becher,1997).

However, Becher (1997) directs attention to the complexity of judging academic standards. He argues that the latter are susceptible to contextual as well as intrinsic considerations. Thus he warns against 'any attempt to standardise the standards- to impose uniformity on assessment procedures and the resulting ascriptions of merit across the whole range of academic enquiry is doomed either to failure or to absurdity' (Becher,1997:164). There always exist shared notions of standards, and of comparability of judgements among disciplines. It is meaningless, however, to consider standards 'which relate indiscriminately to all'. Obviously there are broad universal sets of criteria which are agreed upon but cannot provide specific and localised judgements 'on matters of academic details to be operationally effective in their own right' (Becher,1997:164).

By accommodating these existing differences among disciplines in the policy making processes, the three-phase exercise of self-assessment in the university will inevitably have a positive internal effect. For the departments in the college of science, at least, the self-assessment exercise is generally implemented for normative and developmental purposes rather than summative and managerial. The self-assessment process helps to identify the set goals. It also underlines the work methods and analyses current and conceivable performance followed to 'enhance self-development and to lead to improvement' (Becher and Kogan,1992:163). Such a mechanism emphasizes the context and the quality of the process as much as the product. 'It is, accordingly, the mode favoured by those concerned

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with the evaluation of the less tangible and predictable features of the higher education system, and who have doubts and reservations about the impact of imposed external criteria' (Becher and Kogan,1992:159). This seems to be in line with what an associate professor in science thought of self-scrutiny. He viewed it as a necessity that all academics need to accommodate throughout their academic life (interview in March 18th, 1997). His view seems to be representative of other informants' who made similar remarks on this issue in both colleges.

Furthermore, within the self-assessment exercise the external reviewer mechanism serves the purpose of comparability in subject areas between KU units and the university that the external reviewer comes from. Although the motive behind the external examiner mechanism appears to be an admirable device for maintaining standards of performance, many KU academics showed some reservations about it. 'The external examiner, of course, is an instrument of quality control. But even more important, the external examiner is there to maintain comparability' (Trow,1987:204-205). Their reservations are based on the view that external reviewers are academics like themselves, that is to say, subject specialists. This appears to be a delicate issue for expatriate faculty who come from a range of different backgrounds of varying academic status , which they very often see as not inferior to those of the reviewer. Hence the issue of comparability to them is crucially concerned with who defines 'good standards'. Many Kuwaiti faculty think that external reviewers cannot help being biased in their judgements, as they bear with them 'their own ideological baggage norm, values, criteria and the like' (Vries,1996:195). It is thought that this has a direct influence on the judgements they make when they write their evaluation reports.

Overall, the self-assessment exercise will enable teaching staff to confront their own educational practices, and provoke reflection on change. Undoubtedly, however, it involves considerable work, which is a burden for the heads of departments and core staff. Nonetheless, such an exercise is essential because some of the departments seldom instigate such self-assessment procedures on their own initiative, as shown earlier. Some have to be compelled or motivated from the outside. So although self-assessment might be implemented as an independent and internal procedure as in the science college, for instance, it could be difficult to motivate the teaching staff for this without the context of

an external evaluation. Self-assessment thus has a positive impact. However, it may imply at the same time that the process is placed further beyond the reach of the department and higher administration. That is to say, that 'the final judgement of what counts as quality is placed outside the institution in the hands of the external examiner from another institution' as well as another country (de Vries,1997:60). However, such an exercise will not be possible if there is no collective agreement about 'the kinds and levels of attainment which are acceptable to the academic and professional community as a whole' (Brown,1997:129).

In short, the significance of the self-assessment lies in the fact that it reflects 'the standard against which the institution can measure itself. It provides a framework for building up a definition of quality, it helps the institution to decide how far it is achieving its strategic mission and goals, and it allows it to build an action plan for development' (Thune,1995:11).

Unarguably, the exercise is not a value-neutral activity as it is an integral part of the quality management thinking which suggests that academic activities in higher education should be managed (Brennan,1997). This in fact is evidenced in the report that each college has to produce every year for the higher administration. This implies that the power of management has moved to the colleges in this self-policing act.

Typical of managerial models, the QA policy lays strong emphasis on performance indicators as tools to assess efficiency in terms of self-assessment and reporting. They are useful in the sense that they provide information about what the basic units are doing and how they are utilising their resources. In sum, these procedures tend to evaluate institutional development. But the rationale of implementing them will be too simplistic if judgements are based on those alone, especially in a process like learning. Subjective processes of learning and innovation cannot easily be turned into objective, easy-to-measure processes (Barblan,1997). Undeniably, performance indicators cannot be relied on completely. Qualitative measures should support these tools to reach judgements, such as peer review and student evaluation.

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However, the purpose of employing these tools is to reach an understanding of the input and output at the end of each term. A student's profile is cumalative over the five years of his/her stay in the college. Faculty profile, on the other hand, is primarily used for promotion and renewal of contract. The latter is confined to expatriate faculty only. Statistical measures are also deployed to assess the effectiveness of other aspects in KU such as; curriculum, library, facilities, professional services and support staff. Becher and Kogan (1992) argue that 'performance indicators are used to assess the performance of the system and its components to make authoritative judgements on past and present performance' (P.159). Decisions can then be made for managerial purposes which KU academic administrators are aiming at in the present.

Another area in which performance indicators are utilised is research productivity. Being one of the determining factors for faculty promotion, it has the weight of 70%, in which case serious considerations with regard to disciplinary differences can help administrators in making policies. Becher (1994) cautions policy makers against stipulating uniform specifications across the whole range of departments, 'even where these are clearly inappropriate' (Becher,1994:157). According to him, the set criteria for research which are based on numbers of published titles is biased in favour of certain disciplines, e.g. chemistry, against others, e.g. history. Also professional subjects, such as engineering have less publications than non professional subjects. This is due to the fact that their academic staff are involved in either consultancies or in practice or both to maintain their credibility, at the expense of publishable research. 'Virtually every performance indicator for both research and teaching can in fact be shown to operate unevenly across the range of disciplines, leaving peer review as the only reasonably fair mechanism for performance evaluation' (Becher,1994:157).

The use of those tools seems to be guided by the purpose of ensuring a reasonable consistency across the university in its academic operations. Some of the measures were being developed before the implementation of the new policy. But there is no doubt that they were 'pushed along' by the QA policy (Baldwin,1997). The use of indicators represents 'a shift from the power of the invisible college, which tends to be more concerned with individual quality, to the power of management, which has been compelled

by the centre to regard productivity as the norm. By creating data about individuals in partly quantifiable or ordinal rating form the system has moved from the academic to the administrative and managerial elements within institutions' (Becher and Kogan,1992:166).

Student evaluation is another qualitative mechanism implemented to measure standards. The literature surveyed seems very scarce in this area; the publications are mainly American and Australian. However, most of the authors in the literature seem to agree on the fact that its effectiveness depends on the purpose of using such a method (Shingles,1977). According to Rowley (1996), student evaluation 'can be seen as a direct measure of consumer satisfaction with higher education' (P.243). However, a complete reliance on them in making judgements is a risky business; a conviction which many KU academic administrators spelt out. The QA policy establishes for the first time, a system of regular, compulsory student evaluation of the subject/instructor, although it is worth 5% out of 20% for the teaching component of faculty evaluation. This mechanism attempts to establish some broad common measures across the institution. But again the current methods do not allow for disciplinary and individual differences. Overall, however, such a mechanism has a positive impact on faculty as well as students. As a qualitative measure for assessing the effectiveness of instruction, feedback should be a good source for inducing change and encouraging innovation. This is essential because students form the primary customers of the institutions. In the current circumstance, little weight is allocated for students' views on their learning experience. Students tend to be excluded as the 'definitions of quality have become increasingly professionalised and remote from the student experience' (Hill,1995:67). However, there is a great debate about the validity and reliability of the evidence due to the bias in students' ratings of instructors, to the extent that at times they are misleading (Shingles,1977). 'Evaluation of teaching has received less emphasis in the literature than evaluation of research, partly because of a misplaced emphasis in academic life, where research is valued more than teaching, and partly because of the difficulty of assessing teaching performance. The usual method has been through student evaluation of professors' (Drew & Karpf,1981:315). They argue that the major problem with this tool is that it runs the risk of 'turning undergraduate education into a popularity contest, with professors giving easy grades in order to improve their own ratings' (P.315). However, as reported by faculty and students, certain initiatives need to

be considered to enhance the effectiveness of the student evaluation. These should involve the relevance of the items discussed, the timing of administration, and follow-up discussions with students.

Students responses reflect daunting concerns over quality standards, being main stakeholders in that institution. Their responses to the questionnaire exhibit an awareness of how things are managed in their university. They seem to be certain that their opinions are not taken seriously by the university administration. Quality assurance procedures to them mean more than an instructor and a course content evaluation. It includes all other aspects that they presently do not have the right to talk about; these include representation on decision making committees, decent buildings with proper classrooms, parking places, appropriate cafeteria and above all a unified campus with all kinds of basic and recreational facilities. Hence, the teaching experience is only one component of the total student experience. Rowley (1996) directs attention to other 'quality services' that KU student informants emphasized as vital. She sees these as other components of the learning experience of students. She stresses that feedback from students should include all those elements, since they shape the student's overall satisfaction with the service quality.

Another evaluation instrument is peer review. Peer review seems to be an optional evaluative tool in KU colleges, according to Al-Kandari (1998). He states that the substitute for peer review is supervisory evaluation carried out by the head of the department. Such evaluation scrutinizes the planning, the goals and the content of the syllabus; the teaching methodology; research productivity; textbooks used; the advisory role of student advisees and supervision of postgraduate students of each teaching member. 'Still, assuming that a faculty member has reached some reasonable threshold of competence with respect to the subject matter, course organization, and examination quality, there is little assurance that peer evaluation of these factors are related to other measures of quality instructions or to student outcomes' (Koon,1995:63). However, heads of departments tend to rely on the views of their colleagues in the department, when evaluating a staff member, especially if he/she is newly recruited. This is evident in the decision making process which is based on the collective opinions of the different committee members in every department. 'Thus our continued reliance on peer evaluations

may indicate that professional-political values play a more important role than professional-truth-seeking values in decisions on how to evaluate faculty teaching' (Koon,1995:63).

A component in the new QA policy was the development of community service, here new guidelines established for quality in these areas. It provided a taxonomy for community service activities; the establishment of a list of expertise and interests to be made available to the public and a survey of the activities of all the academic staff in this area. In making it one of the conditions for faculty promotion, the new policy is trying to encourage the institution to look at ways of approaching this whole area more systematically (Baldwin,1997). This emphasizes the new developing relationship between the university and the community it is embedded in.

Excellence in teaching has also been approved but not implemented in the new strategy. However, some doubts have surfaced recently about the feasibility of the strategy, given the difficulties in setting performance indicators for good teaching. At the college level, the excellent teacher scheme is an attempt to draw the attention of the academics in the colleges to the importance of excelling in that area. KU is after all more of a teaching institution than a research institution, as stated by most of the informants. Moreover, the institution's main activity is in the undergraduate studies. However, the concept of incentives implied in the scheme seems to engender negative feelings rather than promote competition among faculty in the two colleges studied. The same is also true of the excellent researcher scheme. With regard to the latter, the internal as well as external criteria set by external referees raise doubts about their feasibility, in terms of, who sets the standards for quality research for the different disciplines within the college?

With the different conceptions of the purposes of assessment and its varying instruments, evaluation remains an essential tool in higher education institutions. However, Becher and Kogan (1992) point out another dimension of evaluation. They argue that 'different modes of evaluation imply different considerations against which a particular judgement may be made. The nature of the comparisons implied by an evaluation is not simply a technical matter but entails issues of value and power' (P.158). This in fact underlines the recent

trend for most of the QA procedures in higher education institutions.

To sum up this chapter, to those who see KU as an academic culture, QA policy seems to be a threat to their long-standing academic traditions and a disruption to their values and beliefs in absolute academic freedom and institutional autonomy. However, although some of the TQM principles are not in accord with the traditional values and faculty autonomy, there are still some characteristics which would fit with the ethos of the academic community and have a place in higher education (Winchip,1996). To begin with, the concept of culture in TQM has a specific connotation in that it presupposes a participative culture. It underlies a total commitment to a quality culture whereby everyone in the organisation becomes responsible for it, irrespective of position. Efforts are thus unified to achieve the guiding goal of the organisation, which is continuous improvement and a quality product. In a broad sense, such a view of organisational culture adapts admirably to higher education institutions. However, in practice it seems that higher education culture is at variance with this concept. As pointed out earlier, the varied nature of disciplinary knowledge tends to foster multiple cultures in academia. Clark (1989) argues against this strongly held belief on the grounds that many disciplines appear to overlap in that they cover adjacent empirical domains and modes of reasoning. Goodlad (1995) also finds a substantial agreement within disciplines about what it is of merit to teach to learners once a course of study has been instituted. But at the level of practice general agreement about the appropriate division of effort between different areas of learning is hardly noticeable, at least at KU. There is evidence of this lack of agreement between the science and education faculties about course content. The science courses offered appear to be at a distance from what student teachers are going to teach in public schools; yet the education faculty expect the very same students to have a good grounding in the subject matter of the school curriculum.

Furthermore, working in teams is not a totally alien notion to academics. The emphasis on teams in the TQM model raises the issue of democratic and collegial models. In effect, the academic community is based on collegiality which involves shared decision-making among collegial groups. It also implies a mutual support in sustaining the academic integrity of members of the group. The reputation of a good college or university depends

on the sum of individual performance. 'It is the collaborative performance of teams and the development of individuals within them which makes the difference' (McClloch,1993:9). There is no doubt that the individual is subordinated to the organisation in terms of values but the TQM organisation then recognises the need to secure the commitment and personal involvement of the individual. That is to say there is no question of denying personal integrity. 'There is also a recognition that values are only given expression through individual action. TQM is located firmly in a human relations view of management. It may well be that TQM represents the next generation of thinking in management theory where the criteria are practical rather than ideological' (West-Burnham,1992:55).

The same also holds in the internal supplier/customer relationship. TQM stresses the satisfaction of customer need. In so far as the student is the 'customer', TQM concerns itself with the way in which the supply side, i.e. the colleges, co-ordinates its efforts to meet his/her needs, e.g. mathematics department. This implies that faculty must work together to ensure continuity and consensus between courses and modules.

Certainly this concept implies the need for a greater understanding by different groupings in the basic units, whether at the college level or the department, that they share a common purpose, namely the provision of an appropriate and enriching learning experience for every student. KU audiences need to spend time in order to reach a consensus on this point. 'This deceptively simple concept, once embraced, will help remove the barriers between departments, between academics and administrators arguing over points of boundary or procedure' (Taylor and Hill,1993:24).

In short, it is apparent that academics tend to draw boundaries within the academic communities; the disciplines and interdisciplinary areas and to resist the intervention of outsiders within those boundaries. This in fact influences the effectiveness of notions such as participation, involvement and integration between the different basic units in KU. Academics in fact could make use of some of the characteristics of TQM approach which are commensurate with the values of academy. These are exemplified in the value of the individual, the importance of team (i.e. collegial work), learning processes, and the interrelationships between suppliers and consumers.

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Chapter Twelve: Conclusions

12.1. Introduction

This last chapter recaps what has been discussed in the previous chapters. It attempts to integrate the different findings reached in this study on the QA policy in KU. And since the data reflect the different perspectives of the informants, I need to consider this fact in the answer to the last research question: what should be done in the light of these findings? However, this question is refined in the light of the process of interpretation to, what should be done to facilitate the QA policy at KU in this world of varying and conflicting perceptions?

The purpose of the conclusions is to discuss the different understandings contributed by the research and thus derive their implications for the future development of the QA policy in KU. I therefore begin by reviewing some of the early arguments related to the development of the quality theme within KU. However, the main thrust of this chapter will be on the lessons which can be learned through the application of ideas about organisational metaphor to the data presented in this thesis. I therefore emphasize that the insights generated by the four metaphors can provide guides to action. I further suggest that if the QA policy is to meet the demands of KU stakeholders, attention should be given to the implications hereby generated. These implications are concerned with the management of change; cultural change; communication between the different levels in the university, including students; professional development of human resources and lastly faculty collaboration.

12.2. Conclusions and implications

The first point I want to note is that KU as a higher education system is going through the same changes that other higher education institutions elsewhere are experiencing. I have suggested that the development of the theme of quality here as elsewhere originates in two emerging trends; one is economic and the other is political (Brennan et al,1997). The first is guided by the notion that quality is the route to economic success, given the presumed role of higher

education as a contributor to economic growth; while the second is driven by the notion of the evaluative state. The response to these developments has then to be worked out within the practices of each individual institution.

As discussed initially in chapter one, KU concerns about quality promotion issues are not exceptional. The international move towards increased socio-economic and political constraints on higher education institutions are exerting a tremendous impact on universities. The need to search for alternative policies and practices is, in a way, indicative of the educational organisations' inclination to cope with the changes in their surrounding environment. This is demonstrated in the change in the role of these institutions as part of the societies embedded in. The new role of these institutions attempts to align with the expectations of those inside and outside the higher education enterprise.

The current trend towards a more interactive system of higher education is not new. On the one hand universities are moving to a broader view of the academic ethic, and on the other hand a more instrumental thrust in learning. Such a pragmatic philosophy seems to match with public expectations of higher education and to some extent the current thrust of governmental policies (Birch,1988). Many authors in the literature are inclined to adopt this view. Maxwell (1984), for example, argues that 'far from giving priority to problems of knowledge, inquiry must give absolute priority to the intellectual tasks of articulating our problems, proposing and criticizing possible solutions, possible and actual human actions' (P.65). At KU the demand for more transparently 'useful' knowledge has been one of the factors shaping the QA policy.

In Kuwait this shift in emphasis has been accompanied by a shift in the relationship between the state and the university. It appears that the state has moved away from detailed centralized planning for KU towards a more supervisory relationship. This model apparently provides a greater flexibility for the university to decide for itself what its priorities are and how they are going to be accomplished. The senior administrators can focus on the innovativeness of the university by creating new products and processes. It also enhances their capacity for adapting successfully to changing circumstances. This is manifested by more intensive planning at the institutional level via the strategic planning mechanism. In fact this is no easy task for an

institution such as KU which has no planning tradition. Such a process requires the assessment of both priorities, i.e. routine evaluation, and posteriorities, i.e. strategic evaluation. Greater responsibility for determining its own policy means that KU is also able to identify strategies for future development that fit the organizational characteristics of the institution (Maassen and Van Vught,1994). Planning is the responsibility of senior administrators working within the colleges as well as heads of departments. Heads of departments are expected to produce plans which contribute towards the attainment of the overall academic mission and objectives of the institution.

The QA policy as developed in KU is basically a quality assessment system, which is consistent with the state supervisory model. In exercising its supervisory role, the state depends upon a flow of information; and to ensure this it requires that the university should install mechanisms of quality assurance that will demonstrate that the needs of society are being addressed and legitimate societal demands are heeded. The responsibility for designing and operating the quality assessment system can be left to the university itself. Decision makers within the university can then decide on the specific targets for different teaching and research programmes that are performed by the colleges within the university. Among these judgements the issue of societal needs will be addressed. And if this does not happen, then the QA procedures themselves should alert the decision- makers so that they can seek 'to change their behavioural patterns without reducing their self-regulatory capacities'(Maassen and Van Vught,1994:49).

A further point which emerges from both the literature review and the data is that the definition of quality is multifaceted. The varying and conflicting perceptions of quality, as proposed in chapter two, indicate that the defintion of quality is context-bound. Quality in KU is problematic concept as it is elsewhere. Since the definition of quality is so elusive, the senior administrators, as the implementers and decision makers in the QA policy, could usefully make their assumptions about academic quality, outcomes, entry requirements, and the specifications of academic standards more explicit. The transparency of these to all affected by them in KU is quite vital (Brennan,1997). As in any other university, there exist varying views of quality and these were fully articulated by my informants. But further progress would seem to require

a collective consensus among KU staff on a clear definition about which concept of quality is to be reflected in the QA strategy. This can only be achieved through negotiation. The views of external groups about student outcomes should be incorporated. If quality is defined as meeting objectives, as many respondents noted, which is equivalent to the fitness for purpose notion, then this ought to be clear to all those concerned in the higher education enterprise, particularly students. However, within such a consensus it is unlikely that everyone's views can prevail.

The majority of respondents made it clear that they see quality in terms of meeting objectives. If this is the case then surely these objectives should be explicit at every level; the department, the college and the university. Students are entitled to know what they are getting from their specific areas, their colleges and most importantly the university. This includes the general and specific goals of each discipline, its learning programmes and its related assessment criteria. It would be hopeful to begin such an orientation at the secondary level education, so that students can make adequate choices upon their entry to higher education. This requires a closer collaboration as well as a continuing articulation between university academic programmes and secondary preparatory programmes. It should be manifested in the systematic design of the academic programmes in such a way that they explicitly build on the knowledge and abilities of entrant students (Dill,1995).

As shown in chapter three, higher education, having no specific management theories of its own, draws upon ideas about planning, organising and evaluating its activities from models developed in the business world. This was the source of TQM, which many people see as consistent with higher education values. In TQM they find pragmatic strategies, which appear to deal with their problems. The experiences of many colleges and universities worldwide demonstrate this fact. The adoption of such strategies will enable institutions to make explicit what they think important, who their customers are, and what their products are. This, it is argued, leads to a clear articulation and shared image of their fundamental purposes.

Hence, the TQM approach offers a means for the university to manage itself effectively at a time of a rapidly changing environment. It has helped KU to focus on the essential and

dominant purposes of education in meeting both the external demands of society and the internal demands of the academic fields and disciplines. Furthermore, the philosophy of the TQM approach seems to be consistent with what higher education often values: the importance of people, knowledge, and continuous improvement. In pursuing these goals, it is fending off threats from outsiders. Otherwise its future might be defined by political or business elites, which will be inappropriate for no-one. 'If we do not have our alternatives ready, we shall have no right to complain' (Bell,1992:135).

In the light of the insights set out in the interpretation chapters eight to eleven, it is clear that the QA policy cannot be understood as an independent activity. The story of its development and subsequent implementation cannot be seen in isolation from broader institutional questions. The varied views of KU informants demonstrate that we need to 'integrate structure, culture, and politics as key dimensions of organisational design' (Morgan,1997:351). Chapters eight to eleven sought to demonstrate how the QA policy was perceived within each of four organisational metaphors, and to point out which aspects of the KU strategy of excellence seemed particularly relevant within each. Each also highlighted different forms of tension for those who find themselves locked into a particular perspective. The most notable among these was the response of those who prefer the academic community metaphor. Such people cannot readily accept management strategies borrowed from business, which mean an erosion of their academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The metaphor frameworks generate different insights that help in understanding why reactions vary to the QA policy. These insights are not just theoretical, they suggest ways for an effective management of the QA policy. Each can improve the quality of decision making. One important implication of the change process is that an effective communication system among KU staff who are mostly affected by the new policies and procedures within the institution is extremely important. This facilitates processes of 'mutual accommodation through the exploration and resolution of differences, often in a way that pre-empts more subversive or explosive resolutions' (Morgan,1997:205). If this does not take place, 'the costs of implementation, i.e. costs of overcoming resistance and violation of rules, costs of conflicts and of job dissatisfaction' (Binsbergen,1994:233) are going to be very high. The tendency of

individuals and groups to resist change at the outset is an anticipated outcome. However, it should not be underestimated.

However, good communication is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for successful change. Beyond that the institutionalisation of the QA policy requires a change in the culture of the university. Effective organisational change always implies cultural change. Cultural change can never occur if the senior administrators fail to address it (Winchip,1995). Therefore, in order to effect deep and lasting change, senior administrators perhaps need to develop a greater realisation of the fact that changing the culture of a university is a long-term effort. The leaders' task thus is not to impose change, for it will be resisted, 'but to provide ways for people to see the need for change, embrace it, and to share the vision of the rightness of the change' (Green,1997:145). In rapidly changing circumstances and with high degrees of uncertainty, problems and errors are inevitable. Therefore, the senior administrators need to promote an openness that encourages dialogue and the free expression of conflicting points of view, especially that many decisions can only be taken by the professional experts.

A good starting point for opening channels of communication at both the college and departmental levels is the 'strategy of excellence committees' where orientation sessions can be held by those who are most familiar with the strategy. This intensive orientation will enhance effective communication between internal groups and provide feedback for the decision makers. Implementing new QA procedures would mean that the QA process would 'neither be a top-down or bottom-up process, but should be an interactive process, representing a combination of the two' (Bitzer and Malherbe,1995:50).

Enhanced horizontal communication within and among departments and colleges is also essential so that an increased integration within colleges and across colleges will develop. This would generate internal collegiate processes to review and maintain the quality of teaching and research and should encourage corrective actions and directions for development. The self-assessment exercise provides a good opportunity for such collaboration, especially when faculty develop a greater realisation of the fact that it will actually strengthen their colleges against threats of growing institutional managerialism and political interference by central

authorities, i.e. the state. This can be said because many aspects of higher education policy and purposes are seen as unclear and consequences are unforeseeable (Brennan,1997).

Communication could usefully be extended between faculty and students. More social and educational interaction between faculty and students is very important, since students are the primary customers of the educational service. KU academics are expected to 'empower' their students by passing the responsibility for learning over to learners and providing them with 'practical experience of active citizenship in a democratic society' (Coffield and Williamson,1997:18). Once this attitude is fostered, it is to be hoped that students will gradually develop the ability to be critical of their learning experience and this will be reflected in their evaluation of their university. In addition to the evaluation procedures already in place, further means could be devised to discover what quality education means to them. In practical terms, it should be possible to design methods that cater for the participation of the student learners in expressing their views about their college experience. Some representation of the student body on key decision-making committees would provide a good opportunity for students to play a more effective role in the university.

Another pertinent point to consider is the professional development of faculty, i.e. the human resources of the institution. Change from old to new practices requires a development of the skills of the people in the organisation so that they can fulfil the requirement of the new practices. The use of consultants in the early facilitation of the QA policy is extremely important for training purposes. In addition, it would be helpful to provide other professional development programmes. One example is in the area of teaching methodology. One such course had been run and it was very successful. It appears that more would have been welcomed. Staff development can be a useful tool for change and a means to improve the quality of higher education, by effecting change in teaching and improvements in learning and assessment. 'It can be considered an innovation in its own right' (Sashkin,1992:9). Dissemination of information about such programmes is vital so that the benefit can be maximised. Once these programmes are expanded, staff at all levels will be able to gain the skills to teach in different ways and to serve alternative clients (Tight,1989).

Within the context of the QA policy, an environment of continuous improvement is an essential requirement. Levels of collaboration between faculty in the different basic units need to increase. The traditional concept of collegiality within academic communities needs to grow and develop within the new environment of quality concerns. Harvey's notion of a 'new' collegialism (1995) is helpful here. He describes it as 'outward-looking and responsive to changing circumstances and requirements' (Harvey,1995:136). It is associated with professional accountability and co-operation. It stresses facilitating learning for students rather than teaching. It is also guided by the notion of continuous improvement. It prefers transparency to obscurity. In sum, these characteristics appear to stress a transformative notion of quality that embraces process and change rather than adherence to a static specification of product. To Harvey, 'the way forward for continuous quality improvement in higher education is through this new collegialism' (Harvey,1995:141).

To sum up this discussion, it is clear that the existence of rival points of view within the university in respect of the QA procedures indicate the need to reach a decision based on consensus about the extent to which resistance to TQM is justified. There are two possible lines of action in terms of future strategies for the development of QA procedures in KU. The first is to accept the existence of conflicting 'metaphors' and thus insist on adequate but not necessarily uniform QA procedures, as is the current state. The second is to make it clear that too much diversity is undesirable in the 21st century, and a common approach is essential for all KU colleges.

The detailed insights in this research provide some clues as to how the QA procedures could be more effectively managed and how some of the current disjunctions could be smoothed. However, it is still too early to make a confident judgement about the outcomes of the QA procedures. We need time for the dust to settle. It would not be appropriate to draw any definite conclusions yet about the future of quality assurance procedures in KU especially as the data reported and analysed here were collected two years ago. However, it is a complex process with far-reaching implications for many aspects of its structure, management and co-ordination.

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Appendix 1

Student Evaluation Form in English for non-Arabic speakers

Instructor Evaluation

1- Instructor Encourages the students to state & explain their view points
2- Instructor is commited to cover course subjects listed & sylubus
3- Instructor invests class time in teaching
4- Grading system was explained
5- Instructor is professional in managing discussion & answering questions
6- Instructor seems well prepared
7- Instructor updates studentes with the new developments & view points
8- Grades are assigned fairly & imparcially
9- Instructor stimulates the students intrest
10- Instuctor is commited to the official class schedual
11- Instructor assigned assignments of educational values
12- Course materials are treated in depth
13- Instructor has stated course objectives
14- Most of the instrutors exams quetions are appropriate with the students level
15- Instructor explains clearly and logically
16- Instructor exams questions covers the exams requirements
17- Instructor states the importance of theories & principles in understanding & solving problems
18- Instructor encourages students discussions
19- Instructor encourages students to do their best
20- Instructor uses good teaching illustrative tools if needed
21- Instructor conects inter-related topics
22- Instructor makes learning easy & interesting
23- Instructor gives the students a chance to discuss their assignments
24- Instructor is available during his office hours
25- Instructor gives students freedom to ask questions in class
26- Instructor simplifies course materials
27- Instructor returns exams papers in reasonable time for feedback
28- Instructor encourages outside reading
29- Overall, this instructor is among the best teachers I ever had
30- I'd like to take another course with this instructor

Course Evaluation

1- Course has clearly stated objectives
2- Course materials cops with the developments in its field
3- Text book is suitable for course contents
4- Course builds challenge and desire to learn
5- Course contributes to my professional training
6- Course adds to my thinking ability
7- Course conents fit my previous scientific background
8- Course contents could be coverd in the allocated time
9- Course contents acheives stated objectives
10- This course is among the best courses I have ever taken

Student comments: (Please state general comments concerning instructor & course)

Student Evaluation Form in Arabic

1 أعترض تماماً	2 أعترض	3 موافق إلى حد ما	4 موافق	5 موافق تماماً	تقويم الدرس
○	○	○	○	○	1 ـ يحفز مدرس المختبر الطلبة بالأسئلة عن التجارب
○	○	○	○	○	2 ـ يعطي مدرس المختبر تقديرات الطلبة بعدالة وبدون تحيز
○	○	○	○	○	3 ـ شرح المدرس أهداف ونظام المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	4 ـ ينظم المدرس وقت المختبر بصورة جيدة
○	○	○	○	○	5 ـ يشجع المدرس الطلبة على بذل قصارى جهدهم في المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	6 ـ يشجع مدرس المختبر الطالب على الاطلاع الخارجي
○	○	○	○	○	7 ـ تحقق كتابة تقارير المختبر الفائدة التعليمية المرجوه
○	○	○	○	○	8 ـ يساعد المدرس الطلبة عند الحاجة أثناء المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	9 ـ شرح المدرس نظام تقدير درجات المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	10 ـ يبدو المدرس مستعداً للمختبر
○	○	○	○	○	11 ـ يشجع مدرس المختبر الطلبة على التعبير عن وجهات نظرهم
○	○	○	○	○	12 ـ يشجع مدرس المختبر الطلبة على المناقشة
○	○	○	○	○	13 ـ تتناسب معظم أسئلة الإمتحانات مع مستوى الطالب
○	○	○	○	○	14 ـ يعيد مدرس المختبر تقارير الطلبة في وقت ملائم لمناقشتها
○	○	○	○	○	15 ـ يلتزم المدرس بالمواعيد الرسمية لبده وانتهاء المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	16 ـ ينبه مدرس المختبر بإجراء السلامة اللازمة
○	○	○	○	○	17 ـ يتميز المدرس بالمهارة في ادارة المختبر والإجابة على الأسئلة
○	○	○	○	○	18 ـ تغطي أسئلة الإمتحانات الأجزاء المطلوبة للامتحان
○	○	○	○	○	19 ـ يعطي المدرس الطلبة حرية طرح الأسئلة في المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	20 ـ يحسن مدرس المختبر استخدام الوسائل التعليمية مثل الرسوم والأمثلة التوضيحية عند الحاجة لها
○	○	○	○	○	21 ـ يربط مدرس المختبر بين الموضوعات ذات العلاقة
○	○	○	○	○	22 ـ يتيح مدرس المختبر الفرصة للطلاب لمناقشة تقاريرهم
○	○	○	○	○	23 ـ يشرح مدرس المختبر بأسلوب متسلسل ومنظم
○	○	○	○	○	24 ـ يلتزم مدرس المختبر بتغطية التجارب المحددة في خطة العمل
○	○	○	○	○	25 ـ يتواجد مدرس المختبر في ساعاته المكتبية
○	○	○	○	○	26 ـ يوضح مدرس المختبر أهمية المبادئ والنظريات كخلفية للتجارب

المختبر

1	2	3	4	5	
○	○	○	○	○	1 ـ يتناسب عدد الطلبة مع تجهيزات المختبر
○	○	○	○	○	2 ـ الكتاب المستخدم ملائم لمحتوى المقرر
○	○	○	○	○	3 ـ تعتبر تجارب المختبر جزءاً مهماً من المقرر
○	○	○	○	○	4 ـ تتوفر للمختبر الإمكانيات اللازمة
○	○	○	○	○	5 ـ تتوفر للطالب فرص كافية لاستخدام امكانيات المختبر وقاعات التدريب
○	○	○	○	○	6 ـ محتوى المقرر يحقق الأهداف المعلنة
○	○	○	○	○	7 ـ يستطيع الطالب استيعاب التقنيات المستخدمة في التجارب بسهولة
○	○	○	○	○	8 ـ يساهم هذا المقرر في الإعداد المهني للطالب
○	○	○	○	○	9 ـ هل تشعر بالأمان أثناء العمل بالمختبر
○	○	○	○	○	10 ـ لهذا المقرر أهداف واضحة ومعلنة
○	○	○	○	○	11 ـ تبدو الأجهزة المستخدمة في المختبر في حالة جيدة
○	○	○	○	○	12 ـ يتناسب محتوى المقرر مع الخلفية العلمية السابقة
○	○	○	○	○	13 ـ يساعد هذا المقرر على تنمية المهارات
○	○	○	○	○	14 ـ يتناسب محتوى المقرر مع الوقت المحدد له

ملاحظات الطالب : (اكتب فيما يلي ما لديك من ملاحظات تخص الأستاذ والمقرر)

Appendix 2

GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

1. **FACULTY STRENGTH:**

   Assessment of individual faculty records as supervisors of graduate research and graduate teaching at the Master's level.

2. **RESEARCH:**

   Assessment of ongoing and planned research activities in the department as training grounds for graduate students. This is to be based on individual ongoing and planned projects, available research facilities and backup support.

3. **STUDENTS:**

   - Standard of current students relative to their back-ground and their participation in research and undergraduate teaching.

   - Space and teaching facilities available for Graduate Students.

4. **GRADUATES:**

   - Quality of thesis.

   - Duration of study (time spent until obtaining the degree).

   - Overall achievements.

5. **LIBRARY RESOURCES:**

   This assessment would be optional depending on whether available information provided by files and visits is considered sufficient.

6. **CURRICULUM:**

    Assessment of curriculum design in terms of coherence and compatibility with undergraduate curriculum. Available faculty strength as well as with research programs.

7. **OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

a) Estimated value of program in terms of training of students and relevance of such training to the need of society.

b) Optimum number of graduate students the program can annually absorb.

c) Main lines of research and graduate instruction that the program is presently capable of supporting.

d) Main obstacles or weakness in the program that the department and university should try and overcome in the future before or after the program starts.

To be completed by head of department

Kuwait University
Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
Academic Development Center

FACULTY PROFILE

Department _____
College _____

Faculty Member (Name)	Age	Rank	Nationality	Highest Degree Institution and Year	Years of Experience				Level of Activity (High, Med, Low) in		
					Govt. / Industry Practice	Educational (Total)	Educational (at Kuwait University)	Professional Societies & Organisations	Research	Consulting / Summer Work	

Instructions :
Complete table for all members of the faculty of the program. Use additional sheets if necessary.

ADC-F3

To be completed by head of department

Computational Facilities

Department _____

College _____

Users	No. and type of workstations	No. of Workstations connected to Mainframe		No. of terminals connected to Mainframe		Total
		IBM	VAX	IBM	VAX	
Faculty Members (Offices)						
Faculty Members (Pool)						
Students						
Research Activities						
Support Staff — Secretarial						
Support Staff — Technical						
Total						

ADC-FA3

Kuwait University
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Academic Development Center

Course Syllabus
Course No.; Course Tilte
Department _____
College _____

1994 - 1995 Catalog Data :

Textbook :

Reference :

Coordinator :

Goals :

Pre-requisite by Topic :

Topics :

Computer Usages :

Laboratory Projects :

Course Projects :

ADC-C3

To be completed by head of department

Kuwait University
Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
Academic Development Center

LABORATORY FACILITIES

COLLEGE _____
DEPARTMENT _____

Physical Facility (Building and Room No. (1)	Purpose of Laboratory Including Courses Taught	Condition of Laboratory (2)	Adequacy for Instruction	Number of Student Stations	Area (Sq. mt.)

Instructions :
(1) If the same facility is used for more than one laboratory course, describe all under the "purpose" column. Do not count the same more than once in the "area" column.
(2) Condition includes but is not restricted to housekeeping and safety considerations.

ADC-FA1

To be completed by head of department

Kuwait University
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Academic Development Center

Support Staff Profile (Secretarial and Office Staff)

Department _____
College _____

Name	Highest Degree	Job Title	Total Years of Experience	Duties

ADC - SS2

Appendix 3

Kuwait University Goals

1-To prepare and develop specialised human calibre who will be aware of their society's values and heritage and will be trained to overtake leadership positions.

2-To follow up scientific advancement and contribute to it through research, in order to solve the Kuwaiti society's problems and develop the state economically, socially and culturally.

3-To serve the community in developing its values, needs, and disseminate scientific methods to solve its problems.

4-To promote awareness of the Arabic and Islamic heritage in order to empower the young generation spiritually.

5-To develop scientific research in the different branches of knowledge, in an attempt to contribute to the Arabic and human civilisation at large.

6-To expose the new generation to the worldwide culture, in response to the technological revolution in all sciences.
7-To maintain good standards of the institution at large equivalent to those in well-reputed universities around the world.

Reference: Five-Year-Plan of Kuwait University, 1995.
Translated by N. A.