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Mechanisms and Contexts of Quality Assurance in the Construction of a Gulf Cooperation Council Higher Education Area

Clare Walsh

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in
accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of
Doctor of Education (EdD) in the Faculty of Social Sciences
and Law.

School of Education

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Fifty Seven Thousand Words

Abstract

Drawing on realism and critical cultural political economy of education this dissertation attempts to theorise the mechanisms and contexts which frame the development of Arab higher education, with a particular focus on the role of quality assurance networks in the construction of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) higher education area.

A realist methodology is utilised as a means to explain the phenomena under investigation. Empirically, the research uses a combination of interviews and document analysis to provide a detailed approach to explanation and findings.

The dissertation shows how, within the space occupied by the quality assurance networks, different material and symbolic interests and ideologies interact (Nefissa, 2005). The findings indicate that state approval of non-governmental (NGO) status grants the quality assurance networks legitimacy to operate. Informal political patronage creates the opportunity for state quality assurance agencies to undertake governance roles within the quality assurance networks. These governance relationships support quality assurance networks to function as conduits between the state quality assurance agencies and offer a pathway for agencies to push their agendas which includes an orientation towards bilateral arrangements as a preferred route. GCC intergovernmentalism lends itself to a competitive nationalist view of quality assurance. National competitiveness and power relations between GCC states detracts from convergence as a strategy towards a GCC higher education area.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:

DATE:

Publications arising from the research

Presenting at a range of conferences during the course of this research has resulted in the publication of the following articles:

Walsh, C. (2017) Putting Culture in its Place in the Political Economy of Arab Higher Education: Civilisation Analysis as a Means of Accessing the Cultural Questions. *International Journal of Diplomacy and Economy*, 3 (4), 348 - 358

Walsh, C. (2017) Civilisation Analysis: Unlocking the Social, Cultural and Political Contexts of Arab Civil Society paper presented at the *First Asia Conference on Advanced Research (ICAR 2017)*, 25-27th January, Manama, Bahrain. ISBN: 978-0- 995398-016.

Walsh, C. (2016). Bringing civil society into a moment in the politics of education in the Arab Gulf: Civilisation Analysis as a means of interpreting Arab modernity, culture and society. In C. Paris et al (Eds.). *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Science*. Dubai, UAE: Middlesex University Dubai. ISBN 9789948189848

Walsh, C.V. (2014) A 'Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education': A theoretical framework for understanding and explaining how the structures, mechanisms and processes of the global, georegional, national and local assimilate in GCC higher education. *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Gulf Comparative Education Society Symposium*, Dubai, UAE: GCES

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Chapter 1 Research Rationale

1.0 Introduction

This research focuses on the identification of mechanisms and contexts framing the development of Arab higher education, with a particular focus on the role of quality assurance networks in the construction of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) higher education area. I attempt to explain the complex interactions of quality assurance networks and to understand how and under what conditions they contribute to the construction of a GCC higher education area.

The desire for a higher education area precedes the formation of the GCC. The development and implementation of mechanisms to enhance mobility of students between institutions in and across national borders has been on the wider regional agenda since 1945 and the GCC Supreme Council agenda for the last 28 years. The UNESCO Regional Convention on Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the Arab States has been in place since 1978. However, it remains unrevised since publication unlike Europe, Asia Pacific and Africa regions. With over 2 million students enrolled in tertiary education in the GCC states, the total number of tertiary students from the GCC studying in another GCC state expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in the GCC is less than one per cent (0.7% or 14,106 students) (UIS, 2018). The presence of a 'Bologna' or European Higher Education Area (EHEA) process is absent within and across the GCC. The absence of a GCC higher education area and its associated tools may be one of a range of contributing factors associated with the low levels of GCC student mobility in and between GCC states.

1.1 Research Aims

The research focuses specifically on the development and implementation of a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding how and under what conditions quality assurance networks contribute to the regionalisation of quality assurance in the GCC. In particular, the research identifies and operationalises a realist ontological, epistemological and methodological frame of reference in an attempt to explain the complex interactions of the networks and the cultural political economy within which they operate. In doing so, the research draws on and adapts aspects of Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) (Robertson and Dale, 2015) and is grounded in realism.

The purpose of this undertaking was as follows:

I wanted to focus on the GCC region—which lacks a regional approach to higher education in general and quality assurance in particular— and the role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap.

Secondly, I wanted to understand under what conditions this regionalisation approach to quality assurance in GCC higher education space happens, to whose benefit and why?

Thirdly, I wanted to establish if and how quality assurance networks are closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why?

Finally, I wanted to add to the theoretical body of knowledge related to critical cultural political economy of education.

1.2 Research Approach

By engaging a realist approach, I took the position that a real world exists independently of my perceptions and theories. Realism provides value in addressing the methodological and practical issues in seeking connections among the phenomena under investigation: quality assurance networks and regionalisation of quality assurance. Realism is argued (Sayer, 2000) to be well suited to exploring research questions that seek to understand complex issues and explain outcomes. In keeping with a realist approach, the research attempts to explain the complex interactions of quality assurance networks, to understand how and under what conditions they contribute to the regionalism of quality assurance in the GCC. In doing so I identify and explain what works for whom, in what circumstances and why. I achieved this by identifying and explaining various combinations of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs). Mechanisms are important because they generate outcomes; contextual elements need to be taken into account as they influence the processes through which outcomes are produced.

In keeping with a realist ontology, I began the research with the aims as identified in the paragraph above. This is followed with the development of a series of realist questions (see p.30). These questions helped me to identify causal responsibility in complex open systems by distinguishing between what can be the case and what must be the case, given certain preconditions. These questions are concerned not with what happens to be associated with what, but whether associations could be otherwise. Thus, quality assurance networks might always regularly be associated with culture or the political or the economy, but it doesn't follow from this that they have to co-exist as mutual preconditions. In order to answer these questions, much depended on how I conceptualised the objects. Objects can be physical, social or mental phenomena (Sayer, 2000) for example what do I mean by culture, political or economy and what is included in these. In order to conceptualise these objects, I utilised Robertson & Dale's (2015) Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE). Use of the CCPEE allowed me to specify what it is about culture or the political or the economy I needed to interrogate regarding the status of their relations. Pursuit of questions about

the conditions of existence of the quality assurance networks is fundamental to theorising. By relying on abstraction and conceptualisation, I attempted to abstract out the various components utilising my conceptual framework of cultural patterns, power and wealth (see pg. 38). By doing this I considered how the components combine and interact. CCPEE is used as an abstracting tool. Methodologically I utilised interviews and document analysis. The abstraction of culture, political and economy allowed for the development of interview questions. Theory led interviews are useful in terms of abstraction, as they can construct a model of potential mechanisms, while document analysis is considered important as it contributes to theory building. In terms of inference, I used retroduction as a way of discovering meanings and relations and obtaining knowledge of structures and transfactual conditions therefore enabling me to search for mechanisms. The first interview allowed for the distinction of possible contexts, possible mechanisms and possible intended and unintended outcomes. I used Pawson and Tilley's (1997) realist evaluation contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs) to identify and explain how the quality assurance networks work, how outcomes are produced, among whom, and in what circumstances.

This approach to my research is unique and is notable by the fact that within the field of quality assurance it is recognised that there is an absence of methodologies and reliable knowledge of the effects and mechanisms of quality assurance measures (such as quality assurance networks) in higher education, with Leber, Stensaker & Harvey (2015:289) advocating a general need for "knowing cause-effect relations and mechanisms to understand what is going on".

In the next section I present the key perspectives of the terms quality and quality assurance as they relate to higher education and this research. The chapter then moves on to give an overview of regionalisation and approaches to studies within the field. The chapter progresses to put in context the field of higher education and quality assurance from a regional perspective. The final stages of the chapter focus on the measures in place (or not) for a regional approach to quality assurance and an overview of the current position of quality assurance networks from both a global and regional perspective.

1.3 Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality is considered a nebulous concept (Harvey & Williams, 2010). Five concepts of quality have been identified (Brockerhoff, Huisman & Laufer, 2015). These five concepts include quality as exceptional; as perfection or consistency; as fitness for purpose; as value for money and as transformation. These quality perspectives can be operationalised by asking: to whom, by whom, by which standards and against which values. These five concepts have been used to clarify rationales of quality assurance. Quality assurance refers to national qualification frameworks, including quality assurance agencies, formal quality standards and specific review processes and

procedures. These can be considered at the regional, national, higher education institution and academic program level. The position of quality I applied here is that it is a multidimensional concept that touches not only upon quality assurance procedures, but also accessibility, employability, academic freedom, public responsibility for higher education and mobility (Galan Palmores & Todovosky, 2013). The position of quality assurance I have taken is that it serves multiple purposes such as enhancing learning and teaching, building trust among stakeholders throughout higher education systems as well as increasing harmonisation and comparability. Regional developments in higher education, such as the Bologna Process have led to the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Regional developments such as the EHEA have also significantly influenced developments in the area of quality assurance. In Europe, and more recently in the ASEAN region, quality assurance is considered an important harmonization tool. The regionalisation and the harmonisation of the member states' education systems in ASEAN, has seen intra-ASEAN collaboration among universities grow considerably over the past two decades. It is the concept of quality assurance as a harmonization tool that I applied to this research.

1.4 Regionalisms and Regionalisation

While the concept of regionalism is contested, it is also a term used interchangeably referring to region, regional co-operation, and regional integration amongst others. Regionalisation refers to the "outcome of integration processes involving the coalition of social forces: (i) markets, private trade and investment flows; (ii) policies and decisions of companies or organisations; and (iii) state-led initiatives" (Robertson, 2008:720, citing Hurrell, 1995). Regionalism is considered as a general term covering a broad range of different developments and processes. Five distinct processes including regionalisation; regional awareness and identity; interstate cooperation; state-led integration and regional consolidation have been identified (Hurrell, 2008:242). As Hurrell (2008:243) suggests, regionalism "is best viewed as an unstable and indeterminate process of multiple and competing logics with no overriding teleology". As well as a range of distinct processes, a number of approaches have been used in regionalism studies.

Traditionally, three approaches have been used in regionalism studies: EU studies, open regionalism and regulatory regionalism. Regionalism studies in the Arab region tend to be from neorealist and dependency perspectives, where the focus lies on the power asymmetries between global actors and the pursuit of their interests and that of the states of the region (Legrenzi & Harders, 2008:1). The constructivist, institutionalist and liberal approaches lean more towards regional and national autonomy instead of dependency. However, regardless of the theoretical approach to studies of the Arab region, there is a general agreement that despite the high degree of social, cultural and religious similarity, the spatial proximity and interaction from a political, economic and military perspective, there is a "low degree of institutional cooperation and integration" (Legrenzi & Harders, 2008:2). Specifically, cooperation and collaboration in Arab region higher education has been described as

moving towards a “state of isolation“ or “balkanization”, with Hafaiedh (2010:102) suggesting that Arab cooperation can be considered a “bouquet of noble projects, suffering from the lack of resources, opportunities, and means of implementation”. El Hassan (2013) notes that while efforts have been made to address the regional quality of education challenges (curricula, student assessment, governmental roles and faculty), few tangible results are identifiable. There are a range of intergovernmental higher education organisations including Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS). Since ABEGS inception in 1970, it has been tasked with facilitating GCC wide student and faculty exchange through regional cooperation in the form of joint universities. This has yet to be brought to fruition (Findlow & Hayes, 2016). Even where national and regional quality assurance initiatives related to quality assurance policies and processes exist, many have not been implemented in practice and often exist on paper only. One important example can be seen in relation to the UNESCO Regional Convention on Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the Arab States. The convention remains unrevised since publication in 1978, unlike Europe, Asia Pacific and Africa regions. These shortcomings pose the question as to why some regional conventions on recognition of qualifications are functioning and why others, like the Arab region, are not.

There has been a proliferation of quality assurance networks across the Arab region since 2007 making substantive claims that their areas of responsibility include coordinating and cooperation approaches to regional and international quality assurance. For example, the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) aims to strengthen the quality assurance of higher education institutions in the Arab region and to enhance the cooperation between similar quality assurance bodies or organisations in the Arab region and with other regional and international quality assurance organisations. In the case of the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW), goals include enhancement of the capacity of quality assurance agencies in countries of the Islamic World as well as facilitate collaboration and exchanges of best practices, experiences and expertise among quality assurance agencies of countries of the Islamic World; and to encourage cooperation with regional and international quality assurance organisations. Of the approximately 15 networks—many of which are claiming to engage in regional cooperation and coordination—the research intended to establish if and how quality assurance networks are advancing a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why?

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is estimated by Abu-Orabi (2016) to be home to more than 700 universities, accommodating 13 million students and 250,000 faculty members. The GCC has 860 institutes of higher education distributed between universities, colleges and institutes with 1,551,552 students enrolled and faculty of 72,335 (excluding UAE¹) for 2011/2012 the most

¹ GCC statistics exclude UAE data

recent GCC statistics available (GCC Statistics, 2018). Within the MENA region, 14 of the 22 economies have established national bodies for quality assurance and accreditation (El Hassan, 2013). In relation to regional integration Herrera (2007:416) identifies a number of inter-government, non-government and international organisations that have been involved in aspects such as accreditation and co-operation for joint higher education region wide programmes, training and funding for example.

Education in the Arab region can be viewed as a complicated plethora of human and political influences that has multifaceted spatial articulations, be it analysis of educational processes within the borders of a nation state, or wider spatial contexts such as the regional-geopolitical, civilisational and transnational (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010). From a spatial perspective, the Arab region is not a homogenous and harmonious ethnic, national or linguistic geographic space (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010), which is no less the case for higher education across the region. However, despite an abundance of diversity and apparent differences, a number of common characteristics such as majority Islamic religion, shared Arabic language, political systems, and common history as well as the presence of various pan-Arab political, economic and civil organisations support a comprehensible analysis of the Arab region (Herrera, 2007:409).

In work on regionalisation of higher education in the GCC, Aljafari (2016) noted that higher education initiatives tend to remain located within national spaces with an absence of initiatives with regional characteristics. As a regional arena, Aljafari (2016:291) argues that “very little is institutionalised and embedded at the regional scale” primarily as a result of historic tensions and competition between the GCC member states. In further support of this argument Mazawi (2005: 178) remarks that while organisations may try to work on a regional basis, “a concerted and pro-active regional policy on higher education governance remains largely lacking” and that trying to achieve a GCC academic region is multifaceted in terms of the linkage between institutions at a “local, regional, Arab and global level” (Mazawi, 2008 chapter 3, para 17), while regional agencies in the field of education do not have a binding role (Mazawi, 2008). Finally, Hafaiedh (2010) argues that institutions and associations such as Association of Arab Universities, the Arab Bureau for the Gulf States (ABEGS) and Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALESCO) are characterised—in terms of their links to public and semi-public organisations such as ministries—as being unable to “involve public universities as active or consultative players in their activities” (Hafaiedh 2010:100) and that there is a “lack of assessment of the actions of” these associations. Meanwhile, the appointment of government or ministry officials as association members, in Hafaiedh’s opinion (2010:101) influences the political and ideological functioning of these associations. The result of this is that associations lack an independent approach and tend to conform to the state agenda such as the example of the Federation of the Arab Research Councils, whose members were mostly Ministers of Higher Education, while the Arab Gulf universities were excluded. During the establishment of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Badrawi (2008) noted

major barriers as significant difference in education systems; low level participation; different languages and geographic locations; lack of awareness of the concepts related to quality assurance; lack of financial resources and absence of professional quality assurance expertise. These extensive range of barriers led me to question the ability of quality assurance networks to achieve their common goals of regional coordination and cooperation.

1.5 Arab Higher Education and Quality Assurance

Despite significant developments in the Arab region, the study of higher education specifically in the GCC member states remains under-developed (Mazawi, 2008). The emphasis on quality is a recent phenomenon with much criticism of quality standards (Hasan, 2015:40; Khan, 2017). A range of critics suggest quality standards of education are questionable; while comparisons with developing countries as well as other Arab states are challenging (El-Araby 2011; Tarawneh 2011; Carroll et al 2009; World Bank 2008).

Historically, hallmarks such as the articulation of Islamic values; foundational texts such as Qur'an and Hadith; promotion of Islamic theories in economics, sociology, politics and philosophy; promotion of science for the good of mankind; Sharia; and the establishment of a body of Muslim thinkers and educators to monitor and drive education were seen as factors determining quality in higher education systems in Islamic countries (Numan, 2015; Kuran, 2012). However, these values, as argued by Numan (2015:95) have diminished in favour of a focus on assuring that higher education institutes in Islamic countries meet western standards of education. This, claims Numan, is evident in practice with Islamic countries teaming up with foreign quality institutions; formation of the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies in the Islamic World (AQAAIW); as well as a recommendation from the *Quality Assessment of Education Programs in Arab Universities* (UNDP, 2006) that at a strategic level, reforms should adhere to external benchmarks.

Meanwhile, the first *Arab Human Development Report* (2002), authored entirely by Arab thinkers pointed to a human capabilities/knowledge deficit as a characteristic of the Arab world, in reference to low educational attainment, access to information and intellectual creativity. Consequently, a multi-dimensional crisis including poorly educated citizens and an intellectual life lacking vigour, have been identified as the catalyst for far reaching reforms, not only in education, but also in economic and political terms (Kuran, 2012). It is these political and economic reforms, identified in all six GCC states in their respective 2030 Vision's where the goal is to reduce dependence on oil and diversify their economies. These economic and political reforms across the GCC countries have been the impetus for education reform, particularly in light of the move towards knowledge economies and human capital being identified as the new oil wealth.

1.6 Harmonising Education

As noted on page 13, I apply the concept of quality assurance as a harmonisation tool to this research. The following section examines the approaches to harmonisation of education across the Arab region as well as the GCC. This is important to attend to as the Arab region precedes the establishment of the GCC.

1.6.1 Harmonising Education across the Arab Region

Two historic treaties are identified (Zand & Karrar, 2010) as having significant influence on initiatives aimed at harmonising education systems and facilitating the conversion and recognition of academic awards and have been identified as the origins of regional collaborations (Hafaiedh, 2010). The Cultural Treaty, involving member states of the Arab League was concluded in 1945 and was aimed at providing, across all types of studies and levels of education, the exchange of students and teachers and in essence could be viewed as a step in promoting mobility in and across the Arab region through cultural co-operation between the countries of the Arab League. The Cultural Treaty also endeavoured to harmonise curricula and stages of education as well as comparability of diplomas and degrees. A Commission of Equivalences (Article 3) was set the task of implementing the treaty by facilitating bilateral agreements between individual Arab states (Guiton, 1977). The Pact of the Arab Cultural Unity in 1964 was intended to continue the work undertaken by the 1945 Treaty. The 1964 Pact provided for the establishment of a cultural commission—The Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALESCO)—as well as the exchange of students and teachers (Article 23 & 24); equivalence of diplomas and degrees (Article 24); and the standardisation of education through the co-ordination of education systems with a focus on school attendance age, curricula, time-tables, school books, value of examinations, admission conditions, teacher training and administration of educational institutions (Article 4). Article 5 stated that Arab states would work towards unifying diplomas and determination of equivalences (UNESCO, 1974). While the Arab League predates the GCC significantly, it is important to mention the foresight and intentions the Arab League founding members had in relation to the harmonisation of education; but what is more significant is that almost 75 years later, many of the tenets have yet to be realised.

In the 1970's efforts continued amongst the Arab states. A special commission set up by the Association of Arab Universities in 1970 was tasked with producing a report on the standardisation of admission requirements by Arab Universities. Recommendations from the official report published in 1974 and endorsed by the Council of the Association of Arab Universities (Zand & Karrar, 2010:390) included that "Arab countries should recognise the secondary school diplomas if awarded by the respective Ministry of Education of each state". Furthermore, it also recommended that "every university student in the Arab world beyond the first year was to be entitled to transfer to another Arab University" to continue their studies. Finally, the most significant recommendation "was that

undergraduate university degrees awarded by any accredited university in any Arab country should be recognised by all other Arab countries” (Zand & Karrar, 2010:390).

1.6.2 Harmonising Education Across the GCC

The GCC continues to focus on education, which is documented in a number of resolutions, beginning with the seventh session of the Supreme Council in Muscat in 1985 to the 35th session, the most recent publication in 2009. The Charter of the Council, the Economic Agreement and the Strategy of Comprehensive Development include articles on education.

While education has been on the Supreme Council agenda, and achievements have been made in the GCC, sources such as the World Bank note that the countries of the GCC and the wider region continue to face challenges related to the development of high quality education systems, the promotion of life-long learning and the production of graduates that meet the needs of the labour market. The Comprehensive Development of Education Study (Almansour, 2006) reviewed the resolutions of the Supreme Council from the seventh session (Muscat, December 1985) to the twenty-fourth session (Kuwait, December 2003). In the study, the most prominent obstacle undermining the efforts at an individual country level and a GCC level was noted as political decisionmaking. Specifically, the report noted three principle impediments. The first impediment was identified as the political decisions required for providing enough financial support to be successful. The second impediment was the existence of an organisational gap between political decision making and implementation. And thirdly, the report emphasizes the need to translate political will into a tangible reality (Almansour, 2006:22-23). Specifically, the challenge therefore lies in the “inadequacy in transforming political decisions into practical plans and programs and the absence of an administrative organisational mechanism for monitoring and accountability, represent a gap and a real obstacle facing the leaders’ efforts to develop education” (Almansour, 2006:22-23). As an example of this challenge I noted in the Cooperation in Education chapter of the “GCC The Process and Achievements” document (GCC Secretariat General, 2014) that the resolution concerning equal treatment to GCC students in terms of admissions and treatment in public universities and higher education institutions of the GCC states took 27 years to progress from a resolution at the Supreme Council 8th session (December 1987) to an agreed proposal at the meeting of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in February 2014.

Moving back to the Arab region, the concepts of quality and quality assurance is a more recent addition to the regional agenda. The Beirut Declaration is generally accepted as signalling the starting point of quality assurance developments.

1.7 The Beirut Declaration - Quality Assurance on the Regional Agenda

The Beirut Declaration and Plan of Action was the output of one of five regional consultations held by UNESCO in preparation for the October 1998 World Conference on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century. Following the adoption of the March 1998 Beirut Declaration of the Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education, various states in the Arab region—in a bid to enhance the quality of higher education—began the process of setting up quality assurance agencies and/or initiating new quality assurance processes (Tarawneh, 2011:1117). They also began enhancing the affiliation between and across quality assurance agencies in other Arab states in order to improve quality assurance in conjunction with other regional and international quality assurance organisations and networks (UNESCO 2003). Quality assurance was also on the agendas of other Arab summits such as 8th Conference for the Ministers of Higher Education in Egypt in 2001; 9th conference in Syria in 2003; and the 10th conference in Yemen in 2005 (Zand & Karrar, 2010). More recent conferences—11th conference in Dubai in 2007, 12th conference in Beirut in 2009; 13th conference in Abu Dhabi in 2011; 14th conference in Riyadh in 2014 and the most recent conference in Alexandria in 2015—all addressed quality assurance aspects. In order to implement the processes of quality assurance, it was recognised that a regional mechanism was required.

1.8 Regional and GCC Measures for Quality Assurance

The following section outlines a range of measures introduced with the aim of improving quality assurance. These measures range from the establishment of committees; introduction and implementation of national quality assurance agencies; introduction of accreditation boards; universities undertaking the process of self-evaluation while the GCC SC proposed the establishment of a gulf network for quality assurance in higher education in the GCC.

Following the 1998 Beirut Declaration, the development of a regional measure for quality assurance came under the auspices of the Association of the Arab Universities (AAU). The AAU responded by setting up a Regional Committee for Assessment and Accreditation in Higher Education, of which UNESCO is a member. The Arab Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research made a call for establishing national quality assurance agencies in Cairo in 2001 (Arafeh, 2010).

Between the period 1996 to 2003, the implementation of quality assurance and accreditation agencies and processes had begun across the Arab region and the GCC. Jordan established a national board for accreditation in 1996 to license new institutes of higher education as well as approval of new HEI programmes. Countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and the GCC states of Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates were in the process of setting up quality assurance bodies and adapting quality assurance procedures, mechanisms and processes. Additionally, some universities were reported as having started the process of self-assessment with others embarking on the process of international accreditation (UNESCO, 2003).

By 2009, ten countries in the region had established quality assurance commissions or committees including the GCC states of UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait (UNESCO, 2009). Although not included in the UNESCO 2009 report, the GCC state of Qatar was also engaged in educational reform (Arafeh, 2010). Qatar established the Supreme Education Council (SEC) in 2002 as part of its approach to education reform. As part of this process it established three new divisions including the Higher Education Institute. The Higher Education Institute was responsible for the Institutional Standards Office which assumed responsibility for assuring quality of higher education institutions (Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2018). The SEC was abolished under the Emiri Decision No. 9 of 2016 and replaced with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOE-HE). The MOE-HE has responsibility for all aspects of education in Qatar.

Concerns however were identified (UNESCO, 2009) in the establishment of these quality assurance commissions which are primarily orientated towards accreditation of private universities; considered developmental in nature and do not all benefit from the authority and independence noted in other regions and finally some countries, including Qatar did not complete a national report. Other activities reported (Arafeh, 2010) included the publication in 2008 of the “Feasibility Study of the Forms of Cooperation for QA in HE in the Arab States”. This study was sponsored and endorsed by the Arab Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2003. The findings of the study recommended the creation of the Arabic Establishment for Program Quality Assurance. In 2010 the Doha Colloquium on Quality Education for All resulted in the Arab Ministers of Education requesting the three organising institutions (ALESCO; Qatar Foundation; and the World Bank) to develop a proposal and action plan addressing the challenges of improving the quality of education in the region (El Amine, 2013). This resulted in the 2010 launch of the Arab Regional Agenda for Improving Educational Quality (ARAIEQ). Officials from the World Bank worked “behind the scenes” to develop the concept (Morgan, 2017: 500); ALESCO launched ARAIEQ while the Arab Ministers of Education endorsed it. The World Bank funded ARAIEG to the value of \$4-5 million (Morgan, 2017), while ALESCO was responsible for management and coordination. ARAIEQ was viewed as an “umbrella initiative that links new and existing, private and public programs into a coherent and more effective regional network” (World Bank, 2012). It comprised five regional programmes – Arab Program on Curriculum Innovation, Qualifications and ICT’s in Education (APIQIT); Arab Program on Teacher Policies (APTP); Arab Program on Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis (APEEPA); Arab Program on Early Childhood Development (APECD) and Arab Program on Entrepreneurship (APEEI). However, in a recent case study of the organisation, Morgan (2017) found that ARAIEQ promotes globalised versions of educational quality while remaining blind to context and complexity. Three particular issues remaining unaddressed in their approach to quality were identified as: poor working conditions and low wages; inequalities and lack of resources; and the politics of educational reform.

Finally, the Supreme Council of the GCC, in a 2009 resolution, proposed the establishment of a gulf network for quality assurance in higher education in the GCC states (GCC Secretariat General, 2014). The aim of the network is to promote education cooperation as well as the establishment of a common set of regional standards for all professional programmes (Darandari & Smith, 2013). Ten years later, this has still yet to become an operational entity.

The final section of the chapter moves from the local and regional, to the more global context of quality assurance networks. The next section outlines the very recent beginnings of the quality assurance networks, their purpose, their global reach as well as their relationship with other stakeholders within the field of quality assurance.

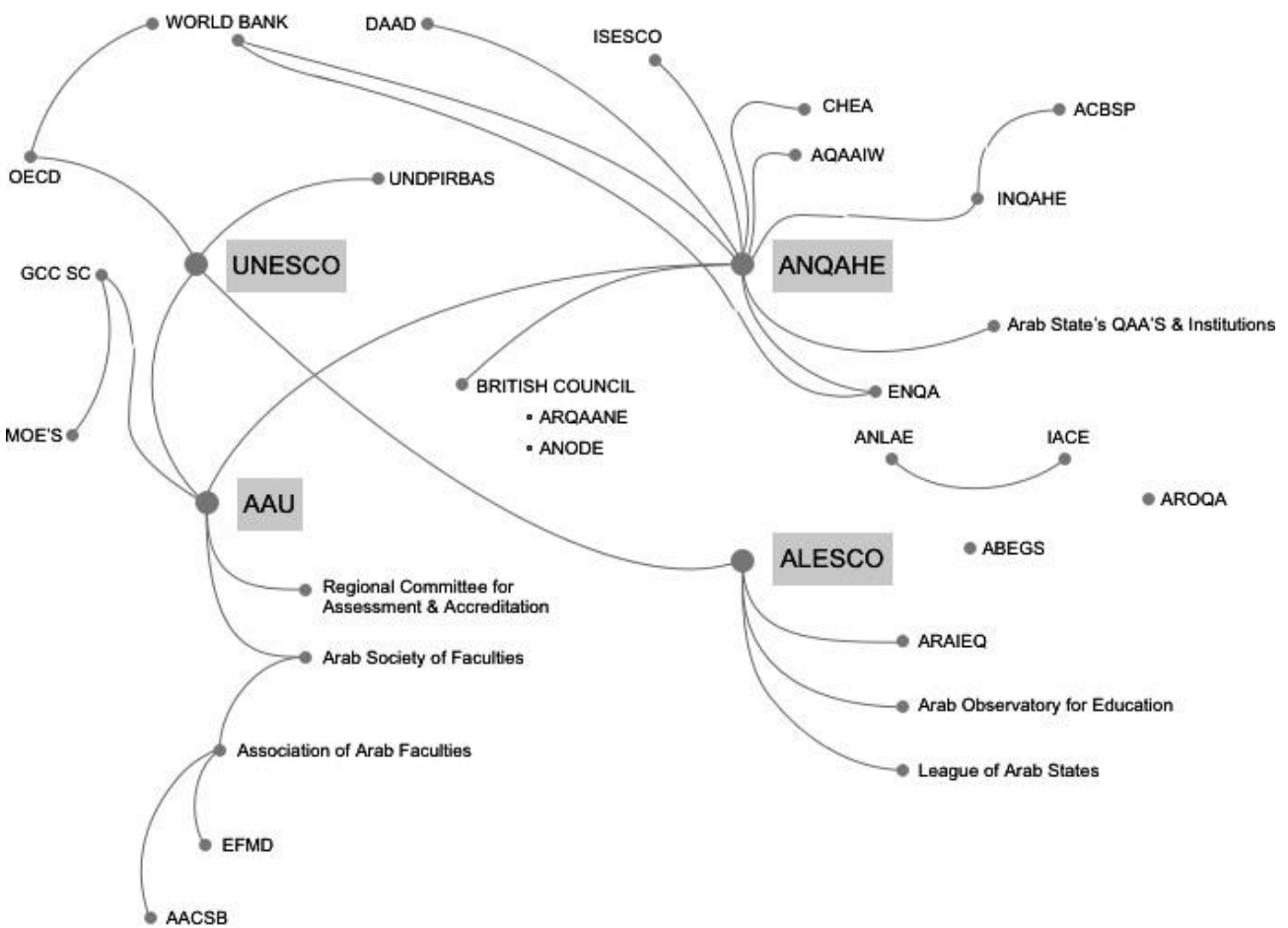
1.9 Quality Assurance Networks

Globalisation of higher education has led to the establishment of quality assurance frameworks in many countries as well as the adoption of external quality assurance and accreditation systems (Woodhouse, 2011). Following the first international conference in July 1991 of emerging quality assurance agencies in Hong Kong, agencies recognised the value of creating a network for mutual support and assistance leading to the set-up of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Many networks have since been set up, based primarily on geographic regions e.g. Latin America, Central America, Caribbean, Asia, Europe and includes the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE). Networks are described as having a range of purposes including quality improvement, exchange and sharing of information, dissemination of knowledge, increase understanding of international quality assurance developments, improve professional expertise, research and policy development and strengthen liaisons between quality assurance bodies in different countries (UNESCO, 2003). Priorities include capacity building through workshops, conferences, seminars and research data; outlining and communicating how external quality assurance is effective; dealing with different types and range of institutions; and the cost and efficiency of external quality assurance (Woodhouse 2010; Woodhouse 2011).

Across the Arab region and the GCC there is diversity in the definition of quality, quality assurance and accreditation systems, and quality assurance bodies (Woodhouse, 2012) leading global actors—such as UNESCO, World Bank, International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)—to recommend a co-ordinated approach amongst the Arab regional quality assurance bodies through the establishment and development of regional networks (Badrawi, 2007). Figure 1.0 outlines the range of organisations involved in quality assurance across the Arab region.

ANQAHE is an independent, non-profit, nongovernmental organisation (NGO), set up in 2007 as a result of the recognised need to enhance the quality of higher education in the Arab region following the publication of the 1998 Beirut Declaration of the Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education (Tarawneh, 2011). The main forces behind the establishment of the network—as suggested by Tarawneh (2011:1117)—included the motivation to improve higher education quality in the Arab region; the advent of “globalisation” and the rapid appearance of regional quality assurance and accreditation networks. Since then approximately 15 networks have been established.

Figure 1.0 Range of organisations involved in Arab Quality Assurance

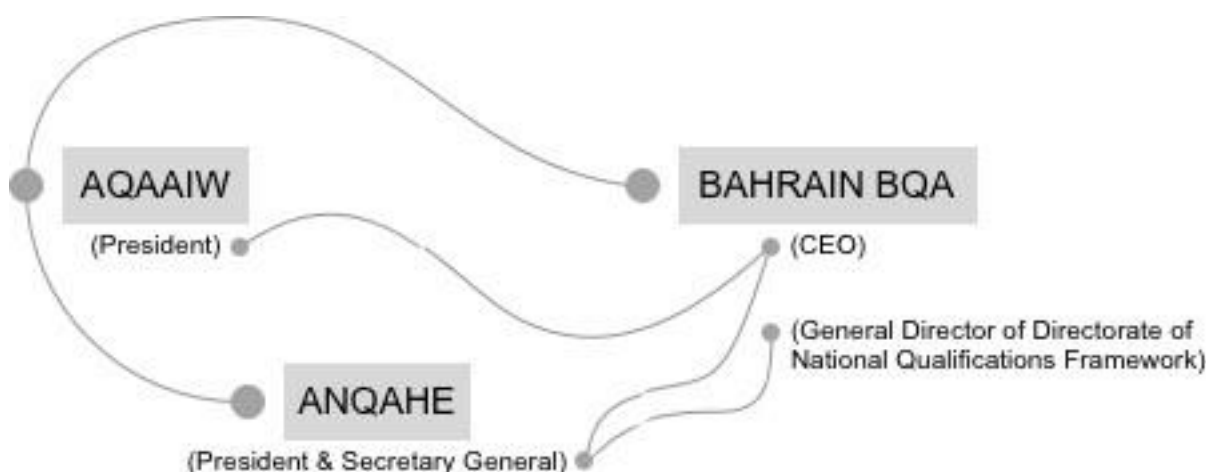


Since the establishment and launch of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) in 2007, multiple networks have emerged, driven by both profit and non-profit organisations. Challenges facing regional networks include the lack of independent bodies for quality assurance across many of the Arab states. The result of this is that the networks face significant political influence from quality assurance bodies, institutes of higher education and some networks that are all governmental (Tarawneh, 2011). Secondly, state owned HEI's are, in many cases, regulated and financed by ministries of education, resulting in political influence and domination as well as a lack of competition between HEI's in relation to student admission, staff recruitment, student support and quality standards (Badrawi, 2007). Thirdly, communication, lack of professional quality

assurance expertise and financial constraints are other challenges identified as hampering the influence of regional quality assurance networks.

There is no GCC quality assurance authority, although national quality assurance authorities have been established across the GCC states. National agencies, such as the Bahrain Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA) work towards national and international objectives without a focus on the regional. National achievements of the BQA include development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of which institutions and their qualifications are listed. Since 2015, 14 of 54 institutions and 41 of 831 qualifications have been listed; alignment of 2 of 132 foreign qualifications as well as the development of a credit framework. The BQA's international focus includes referencing the Bahrain NQF to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). BQA claim (Al-Sindi, 2018) to be the first country in the Arab region and the second country in the world after Hong Kong, to conduct referencing to the SCQF. The rationale for choosing to reference to SCQF is orientated in fact that the Scottish Framework is one of the first qualification frameworks developed (Al-Sindi, 2018). The SCQF has recently been referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) meaning that it is possible to draw comparisons between the level of qualifications from countries in Europe that have developed a qualifications framework as well as the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) also known as the Bologna Framework. The SCQF is also comparable to other qualifications across United Kingdom and Ireland. The purpose of these comparisons allows for clarification of national and international progression routes and credit transfer. This facet of information, presented at the BQA forum, was noteworthy, not in itself, but in the absence of any commentary on regional activity. The focus on activities by the Bahrain national quality authority, is twofold - national and international activities, with no reference to any regional effort. The current senior executives of the BQA and its NQF directorate are also the same executives responsible for the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education as highlighted in figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2 Two Networks and a National QA



This chapter has put into context the position of GCC higher education and quality assurance. It has also outlined the general approach to regionalism of higher education and the attempts to harmonise education beginning in 1945. The chapter also outlines the regional quality assurance measures in place and an overview of quality assurance networks. Table 1.0 below highlights some of key issues identified in this chapter.

Table 1.0 Summary of issues facing quality assurance across the GCC Higher Education Space	
Category	Description
Higher Education Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of independent quality assurance bodies resulting in political influence from state owned quality assurance bodies, HEI's and networks - State owned HEI's regulated and financed by Ministries of Education - Appointment of government or ministry officials as association members influences political and ideological functioning - Lack of competition between HEI's in relation to student admission, staff recruitment, student support and quality standards - Associations, in terms of their links to Ministries, are unable to involve public universities as an active player in their activities - Communication - Lack of professional quality assurance expertise - Financial constraints - Absence of a regional authority and a regulatory and policy structure - Low level of institutional cooperation and integration - Harmonisation of education systems on the regional agenda since 1945 - Political decision making - Organisational gap between political decision making and implementation at GCC and country level - Absence of organisational mechanism for monitoring and accountability
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the definition of quality - In quality assurance and accreditation systems - In quality assurance bodies
Emergence of multiple networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Driven by both profit and non-profit organisations; leading to issues associated with credibility of structures and activities

1.10 Conclusion

In the decade since the launch of ANQAHE it is timely to consider the role of quality assurance networks in the regionalisation of quality assurance across the GCC states, particularly in light of the growth of further networks. The development of additional networks within a sphere of existing

networks is not unique to the Arab region with developments also seen in Central Asia and South East Asia (INQAAHE, 2011). In the face of the challenges identified above, I intended to unlock the social, cultural, economic and political contexts of quality assurance networks through the lens of a critical cultural political economy of education (CCPEE) (Robertson & Dale, 2015). The next chapter focuses specifically on the development and implementation of a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding how and under what conditions quality assurance networks close the gap in terms of the regionalisation of quality assurance.

Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework²

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I identify and operationalise a realist ontological, epistemological and methodological frame of reference in an attempt to explain the complex interactions of quality assurance networks. I begin the chapter with a focus on why I used realism and then specifically on the development and implementation of a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding how and under what conditions quality assurance networks contribute to the regionalisation of quality assurance. In doing so, I draw on and adapt aspects of Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) (Robertson and Dale, 2015). CCPEE allowed me to specify what it is about the cultural, the political and the economic that I needed to interrogate regarding the status of their relations to quality assurance networks. CCPEE is used as an abstracting tool. I used Pawson & Tilley's (1997) realist evaluation contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs) to identify and explain how the quality assurance networks work, how outcomes are produced, among whom, and in what circumstances. In essence, realism is a valuable approach in that it allows for the problematising of quality assurance networks beyond the surface by identifying and explaining particular sets of contexts and mechanisms and their subsequent intended and unintended consequences.

I begin the chapter with a focus on why I used realism and how I applied it from an ontological, epistemological and methodological perspective. In operationalising a realist approach, I begin by discussing the three domains of reality and explain what these are in the context of my research. By applying the three domains of reality, I developed realist orientated questions. The section follows with a focus on the conceptualisation of objects using CCPEE. This is followed by the use of abstraction which is the activity of identifying particular components and assessing their processes. Retroduction was used as the means of inference. The chapter then progresses to explain how I rationalise the methodological use of interviews and document analysis. The chapter moves on to outline how and why I used realist evaluation CMOs to identify and explain particular sets of contexts and mechanisms and their subsequent intended and unintended outcomes. The chapter closes with an explanation of the conceptual framework and how it was developed.

The following paragraph focuses on the epistemological and ontological aspects of realism as I have applied to this research and begins with the rationale for engaging a realist ontological and epistemological approach.

² Based on: Walsh, C. (2017) *Civilisation Analysis: Unlocking the Social, Cultural & Political Contexts of Arab Civil Society*, paper presented at the *First Asia Conference on Advanced Research*, 25-27th January, Manama, Bahrain ISBN: 978-0-995398-016

2.1 Ontological and Epistemological Underpinnings

I used realism on the basis that realism as an alternative philosophical approach to the ontological, epistemological and axiological issues within the field of education research has gained increasing interest over the last decade. It has been advocated as a superior explanatory framework, particularly in relation to its ability to understand change mechanisms as they relate to educational institutes and educational systems as well as the overarching need to adopt a critical approach to the understanding of education (Scott 2010). As I attempted to explain the complex interactions of quality assurance networks and how and under what conditions they contribute to the regionalism of quality assurance in the GCC, the recognition of the ability of realism to operate as an explanatory framework is appropriate to the aims (see p.10). With foundations primarily located within the field of social science, realism has also gained prominence as an alternative to positivist and interpretive research in the field of information systems (IS) (Bygstad & Munkvold, 2011), organisation and management studies (Smith & Elgar, 2012) as well as marketing (Easton, 2010). Realism allows for gaining insight and understanding of the particular processes at work in particular situations and explaining in detail the role of mechanisms in shaping outcomes (Maxwell, 2004).

In a review of the literature I identified a range of education-based research applying realism. I thematised these papers into the following areas; social justice (Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016); learning (Tikly, 2015); methodology (Kahn, 2015, Scott 2010, Scott, 2005); educational administration (Mueller, 2014); agency (Gonzales, 2015), and teacher education (Cochran-Smith *et al*, 2014) amongst other areas. As noted earlier (p.12) there is an absence of methodologies and reliable knowledge of the effects and mechanisms of quality assurance measures, with Leber *et al*, (2015:289) advocating a general need for “knowing cause-effect relations and mechanisms to understand what is going on”. Using a realist ontology allowed me to conceptualise reality, while also having the ability to support theorising and guide empirical work (Sayer 2000; 2010; Maxwell 2012). Using realism allowed me to acknowledge there is a ‘real’ world that exists independently of my perceptions, my theories and constructions of it (Maxwell, 2012). Secondly, realism offers ways of thinking about key concepts such as culture, meaning, and causation. Conceptualisation, abstraction and retroduction can provide value in addressing methodological and practical issues in seeking “substantial connections among phenomena” (Sayer, 2000:27) and is particularly “well suited to exploring research questions that relate to understanding complexity...or seek to explain outcomes” (Clark, 2008:168). This is important as I noted causal processes in education are considered to be “complex, temporally and contextually variable and directly observable” (Maxwell, 2004:9). These two points are important as I attempted to explain the complex interactions of quality assurance networks and how and under what conditions they contribute to the regionalism of quality assurance in the GCC. Therefore, in these circumstances as outlined above realism has obvious benefits, particularly in terms of recognising the power of contextual factors while also gaining insight

and understanding of the particular mechanisms at work in particular situations and explaining in detail their role in shaping outcomes (Maxwell, 2004). The next section outlines the steps I took to operationalise a realist approach.

2.2 Operationalising a realist ontology

The section includes a discussion of how I implemented realism including the development of realist questions and the conceptualisation of objects (cultural, political, economic) utilising CCPPE. I then move on to discuss the process of abstraction, retroduction and the rationale for the methodological use of interviews and document analysis. The section closes with a discussion on how and why I used realist evaluation CMOs to identify and explain how the quality assurance networks work, how outcomes are produced, among whom and in what circumstances. Before discussing these aspects, I refer briefly to the three domains of reality: the real, the actual and the empirical and give examples of how I distinguished these.

2.2.1 Three domains of reality: the Real, the Actual and the Empirical

Realism distinguishes "not only between the world and our experience of it, but between the real, the actual and the empirical" (Sayer, 2000:11 citing Bhaskar 1975) leading to the idea of the existence of the three domains of reality. The 'real' therefore is deemed to be whatever exists; the dimensions of which include objects (these can be physical, social or mental phenomena), their underlying relations, and 'structures and powers' (Sayer, 2000:11). The object, with its structures, gives it the capacity to behave in a certain way, while causal powers (or mechanisms) make the object "susceptible to certain kinds of change" (Sayer, 2000:11). The 'actual' refers to what "happens if and when those powers are activated, to what they do and what eventuates when they do" (Sayer, 2000:11) or in other words, referring to "events and outcomes that occur in the world" (Clark, 2008: 167). These can be explained by hierarchy of experiences (the empirical), events (the actual) and "events that generate events" (the real).

The explanation depends on identifying causal mechanisms, how they work, how they have been activated and under what conditions (Sayer, 2000:14). Under a certain set of circumstances (which need to be identified and explained), factors in the real dimension "can act together to generate causal changes in the actual dimension" (Sayer, 2000:14). Importantly, these "causal changes are neither uniform nor chaotic but are somewhat patterned" (Sayer, 2000:14). The empirical dimension of reality considers the human perspective and experience of the world, with respect to either the real or actual, whether we know them or not. The existence of the real or actual is not dependent on observability, as "observability may make us more confident about what we think exists, but existence itself is not dependent on it", keeping in mind, "some structures may not be observable" (Sayer, 2000:12).

2.2.2 Explaining the Real, the Actual and the Empirical in the context of this research

In terms of explanation the following puts the above theoretical paragraphs into the context of how I applied the three domains of reality to this research. The 'real' in this case is the absence of a regional approach to quality assurance in the GCC, which is explained in terms of the absence of a common approach to qualification frameworks, mobility of students, recognition of qualifications and so on. The 'objects', which exist in the sphere of the 'real' include quality assurance networks and culture (as an example), with both 'objects' consisting of structures and causal powers (mechanisms). The structures of the quality assurance networks could include legal constitution; relationship with global networks and access to resources with mechanisms possibly including status (civil society/nongovernment organisation (NGO)), funding sources, relationship with educational institutions and ministries. The structures of culture could include beliefs and values; temporal and spatial dimensions; social order; and symbolic and institutional frameworks of civilisation for example, mechanisms may include autonomy of the organisation, and the rules of the state, religious, and education system.

The 'real' in this example refers to the 'objects' and their associated structures and power (mechanisms); the actual refers what happens if and when those powers (mechanisms) are activated, what they do and what happens as a result. Such as, the legal status of the network is recognised by a Ministry as an NGO, which grants authorisation to hold a bank account, rent a premises and employ staff; resulting in training programmes allowing for transfer of specialist knowledge from subject experts to a wider regional audience. Finally, the empirical can be thought of as a hierarchy of experiences - whether 'real' or 'actual'. I can observe some things such as the structure of a quality assurance network and what happens when they are granted funding by the World Bank, but I have to recognise that some structures may not be observable. The key point is that while observability may allow for more confidence about what it is that I think exists; existence itself is not dependent on observability (Sayer, 2000:12). In this case, if Ministry approval of NGO status is successfully acquired, I can't necessarily observe the structures or mechanisms that allow for this to happen.

2.2.3 Development of realist questions

Realist orientated questions help to identify causal responsibility in complex open systems which are noted to have "many interacting structures and mechanisms" (Sayer, 2000:16). By asking realist questions, I attempted to avoid the risk associated with attributing the effects of one mechanism and its structures incorrectly (Sayer, 2000:16). They helped me to distinguish between what can be the case and what must the case, given certain preconditions. These questions are concerned not with what happens to be associated with what, but whether associations could be otherwise. Thus,

quality assurance networks might always regularly be associated with some aspect of the cultural, the political or the economy, but it doesn't follow from this that they have to co-exist as mutual preconditions. In order to answer these questions, much depended on how I conceptualised the objects. Objects can be physical, social or mental phenomena (Sayer, 2000), for example what do I mean by culture, political or economy and what is included in these. Using CCPEE allowed me to conceptualise culture, the political and the economy.

1. What does the existence of this object/practice assume? What are its pre-conditions? e.g. what does the existence of quality assurance networks assume? (Exchange of information, dissemination of knowledge, increased understanding of international quality assurance developments, improved professional expertise, and strengthening liaisons between quality assurance bodies in different countries).
2. What conditions must be fulfilled to be successful? (political, regulatory, economic, social, cultural)
3. What are the basic conditions for the development of quality assurance networks?
4. What are the basic conditions for the regionalisation of quality assurance practices across the GCC?
5. What are the respective roles of quality assurance networks and Arab culture in accounting for the regionalisation of quality assurance practices across the GCC? e.g. Can/could object A e.g. quality assurance networks exist without B e.g. Arab culture (as a means of sorting out the conditions of existence of social phenomena)
6. What are the respective roles of quality assurance networks and political economy in accounting for the regionalisation of quality assurance practices across the GCC? e.g. Can/could object A e.g. quality assurance networks exist without B e.g. political economy (as a means of sorting out the conditions of existence of social phenomena)

The research method questions seek to explore "what works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?" (Pawson & Tilley, 2004:2). The research method questions as outlined above are positioned in order to seek out and understand causal mechanisms at play, within context, and which combine to produce a particular outcome(s). I explain the focus of these six research questions in chapter five, table 5.2. These questions were the starting point of the analytical movement of abstraction. The next section briefly explains the use of CCPEE as a means to conceptualise culture, political and economy. I expand this explanation in section 2.4 (p.38).

2.2.4 Conceptualisation of objects using CCPEE

The next section focuses on the conceptual and methodological use of critical cultural political economy of education (CCPEE) as a theoretical approach that offers a view of the complexity of the “structures, institutions and practices” (Robertson & Dale, 2015:150) within the education ensemble. The CCPEE does not align itself with Western modernity in the cultural form, or capitalism as a form of economic development or the Westphalian state system as the political organisation.

This conceptual tool offers the ability to:

1. Provide a systematic effort directed towards theorising and refining concepts aimed at addressing, in a contextualised fashion, questions related to if and how Arab culture (as one example) has a role in the process of change within Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) higher education.
2. Allows questions of power and impact of power to be addressed, looking beyond the traditional dependency, modernisation and rentier perspectives.
3. Consider the processes at play in education, and the means to investigate culture. The education ensemble and the education questions can be examined to determine, in particular the cultural scripts through which education is constructed and mediated but can also offer perspectives on education’s relationship with society, as well as the organisations that form the education system and the relationship between education and the economy (Robertson & Dale, 2015).

I used CCPEE to develop a conceptual framework. The CCPEE is an abstracting device to conceptualise the cultural, political and economic and makes use of prior theories (as they appear in chapter one, two, three and four). The conceptual framework is developed from the literature where the focus is on the underlying structures and mechanisms. The next section identifies the theoretical aspects of abstraction and how I undertook this from a practical perspective.

2.2.5 Abstraction

In the context of this research, what counts as contexts and mechanisms include intergovernmentalism within the GCC, the governance of the networks, comity and cooperation through committee, volunteer effort, financial resources, building capacity through workshops, political will, political turbulence as well as Arab and Islamic culture. The power of comity and cooperation through committee can enable or constrain, depending on the context; or the political will to strategise and prioritise education on the national and regional agendas. The volunteer effort of individuals within the governance structure of networks can act as a resource, but the potential of this is dependent on good will and capacity to undertake the commitment. In order to identify these aspects, analytical movement through abstraction had to occur. The critical cultural political

economy of education is an abstracting device to view power. The analytical movement through abstraction began with the development of realist orientated questions, which are outlined above.

Roberts (2014:5) summarises the principles of abstraction (Sayer, 1992:87) by suggesting that the analytical movement consists of “movement from a concrete context within which causal mechanisms are abstracted and analysed and then back to the concrete context to understand how these causal mechanisms operate”. Abstraction, as in “taken from” the concrete or empirical involves one-sidedly representing the different elements (political, economic, cultural) of the quality assurance network phenomenon in order to synthesise how they work in combination to affect events (Sayer, 1998). The analytical process involved describing findings as a mechanism or a process between related elements (political and cultural for example) which then serves to explain them. In order to do this, I described that which is observed from my interviews and documents in terms of the theory in order to explain the relations between things. It involved combining observations (from the interviews and documents)—although it is noted that does not always have to happen in conjunction with theory—to produce the most plausible explanation of the mechanism (Vincent & O’Mahony, 2018).

In undertaking this research, I addressed the process of abstraction in the following manner. As outlined above, the movement began with the development of realist orientated questions. These questions were the starting point of the analytical movement. The research required a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding how and under what conditions the quality assurance networks contribute to the regionalisation of quality assurance. The cultural political economy of education (CCPEE)—discussed in detail below—provided a means through which the analytical movement of abstraction can occur. The next stage required the development of a framework utilising the CCPEE. The framework, outlined below in more detail, consists of intertwining spheres. Cultural patterns (the cultural sphere) includes components such as beliefs and values, meaning, social groups and civil society, and social order as well as others. Power (the political sphere) includes components such as status and autonomy while wealth (the economic sphere) includes components such as funding, economic structures and dynamics and competition between educational institutions.

A common aspect of realist research is the priority given to conceptualisation and abstraction. They allowed me to look beyond the surface and “carve up” and define the objects (culture, political and economic); their use is important (Sayer, 2000). The conceptualisation and abstraction of CCPPE allowed me to develop the interview questions. Theory led interviews led to the construction of potential mechanisms, potential contexts and potential outcomes through the use of abstraction and retrodution. It has been noted that many researchers (Mingers, 2006; Ketokivi and Mantere 2010) for simplicity, treat abstraction and retrodution as one movement, often from qualitative data to the

theory that best explains the data. Combining these two forms has its place, as abstraction necessitates some form of retrodution, and vice versa (Vincent & O'Mahony, 2018).

In undertaking the analysis of both the interview and document analysis data, identification of contexts (C) and mechanisms (M) and their resulting outcomes (O) became possible. In doing so, and despite being described in philosophical ways, Sayer (2000:14) identifies mechanisms as *ordinary* (italics in original), being identified in ordinary language by transitive verbs such as “they *built up* a network of political connections”. It is also important to note that a mechanism can produce different outcomes, based on context (context in terms of spatio-temporal relations with other objects) with the objects having their “own causal powers and liabilities, which may trigger, block or modify its action” (Sayer, 2000:15). The process is described in chapter five p.89.

2.2.6 Retrodution as a means of inference

Researching open systems—such as the social systems within the quality assurance networks—recognises that generative mechanisms operate in “complex interaction with other mechanisms, which either cooperate with or work against the mechanism in question” (Danermark *et al.* 2002:199). In searching for mechanisms, Danermark *et al.* (2002:203) advocate the researcher resort to four modes of inference including induction, deduction, abduction and retrodution as a means of discovering meanings and relations and obtaining knowledge of social structures and transfacutal conditions. I utilised retrodution (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Olsen, 2010) as it is used in realist research (Rameses Project II, 2017) and it is a method used for finding the basic conditions for the existence of the phenomena studied. Retrodution refers to the identification of hidden causal forces that lie behind identified patterns or changes in those patterns. Retrodution allowed me to “investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what is experienced, what actually happens and the underlying mechanisms that produce events” (Danermark *et al.*, 2002:21). As a researcher, I asked myself “why things appear as they do” (Olsen, 2010). Retrodution entails the idea of going back from, below or behind observed patterns or regularities; in doing so this allowed me to discover what produces them (Lewis-Beck *et al.*, 2004). How I used retrodution is explained in chapter five p.89. I note that the explanatory and theorydriven focus of realist analysis means that detailed data need to be reported in order to provide enough support for inferences and/or judgments made (Wong *et al.*, 2013a). These are referred to in chapter five p.92 and can be found in appendix one.

2.2.7 Methodological use of interviews & document analysis

Qualitative methods such as theory led-interviews, can assist the researcher in abstraction by providing the means “to connect up enquiries and to place boundaries around them” (Pawson, 2013:88). It is the “thinking process that allows us to understand an event as an instance of a more general class of happenings” (Pawson, 2013:89). Interviews are identified as one of the most

common methods of data collection in realist studies (Manzano, 2016). I utilised theory led interviews as they give insights into knowledge of events, processes, examples, causes and underlying conditions as well as creating a mechanism that enhances the insight, nature and complexity of the accounts being developed (Smith & Elger, 2012).

I used document analysis as it is considered important in terms of contributing to theory building. It does this by helping articulate the formal theory in CMO terms and has a legitimate place (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). I made judgements in terms of selection and appraisal of the documents, including decisions on what data to include and exclude by actioning the two criteria of relevance and rigor to justify (Wong *et al*, 2013a). Relevance allows for judgements on whether the document can contribute to theory building and rigor in terms of the information or data contained within the document as credible and trustworthy.

2.2.8 Realist evaluation – Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes

In reviewing the literature, I note (Dalkin *et al.*, 2015) that there are numerous conceptualisations (Boudon, Chen & Rossi, Astbury & Leeuw, Weiss) and employment of mechanisms (Vassilev *et al*, Thoits, Greenhalgh *et al.*) which have in many cases been influenced by critical realism and scientific realism accounts of causation (Pawson, Bennett, Henry *et al.*). I made use of Pawson & Tilley's (1997) realist approach. Using this school of thought, mechanisms are considered as "usually hidden, sensitive to variations in context and generate outcomes" (Dalkin *et al.* 2015:3). Mechanisms, as I applied in this case, describe what it is about quality assurance networks that bring about any effects. Sometimes, mechanisms are hidden; while I may be able to see the outcome, I may not be able to see the workings, much like that of the internal workings of the engine. My use of a realist evaluation approach is not just looking at whether quality assurance networks work, but it also gives evidence of how they work, how they produce outcomes, among whom, and in what circumstances. The realist research then begins with where I posit the potential processes through which quality assurance networks may work as a prologue to testing them. This can be illustrated through the following. The quality assurance network is a measure that claims to facilitate the regionalism of quality assurance practices. The key aspect to understand is that "the measure" is not the unit of analysis for understanding causation. Again, using Pawson and Tilley (2004), a measure may work in different ways or using realist vernacular, they may trigger different mechanisms, for example M1, M2, M3. In essence, a measure i.e. quality assurance network, may work in different ways and trigger different mechanisms. A quality assurance network may improve the level of expertise by offering training programs (M1), it may act as a conduit between quality assurance agencies (M2), it may disseminate best practice through conferences (M3). Mechanisms also explain how a measure might also fail and therefore I can add some adverse processes. The status (M4) of the network may impact its ability to carry out day to day functions such as employing staff, renting premises and operating like an organisation; membership of the network might prove a

barrier (M5) because of high staff turnover in the field of higher education and the pursuit of employment of nationals. See appendix one for development of these stages.

The above section has distinguished a measure from a mechanism; it is important to highlight other potential misunderstandings of the mechanism concept. Higher education reform as it exists across the GCC contains multiple component interventions alongside quality assurance networks; including national quality assurance agencies; national qualification frameworks; new institutes of higher education (private and state owned); Ministries of Education; and Higher Education Councils/Ministry of Higher Education for example. The term mechanism is not used to distinguish these components; each one works through its own underlying processes. A mechanism then, refers to the ways in which any of the above components, or set of them, bring about change. In this case, mechanisms help to clarify the logic of quality assurance networks (as an intervention) by identifying the ways in which the resources supporting the intervention filter through to the reasoning of subjects (Pawson and Tilley, 2009). Identifying the critical mechanisms is the first step; however, it is assumed that they will only be active under specific circumstances, or in realist terms, different contexts. Context describes the features of the conditions in which, in this case quality assurance networks are introduced, and are relevant to the operationalisation of the mechanisms. Pawson and Tilley (2009) refer to this as realism utilising contextual thinking in order to address the issues of for whom and in what circumstances. Pawson & Tilley (1997:216) associate context with the “spatial and institutional location of social situations, together with the norms, values and interrelations found in them”. In this case, for whom will quality assurance networks work; it is understood that certain contexts will be supportive to the quality assurance networks and some will not. The challenge for me was to sort one from the other, keeping in mind, as is the case with mechanisms, contexts both enable and constrain (Sayer 2000:27). Therefore, as an example, the organisational capacity of the quality assurance network is relevant and so characteristics such as the culture of institutions, such as the Ministry of Education and the national Quality Assurance agencies (C1) may be crucial; the individual capacities of those conducting training is important in the context of how they are accepted as legitimate experts (C2); the individual capacity of those receiving the training is relevant in terms of having some aspiration to implement quality assurance practices (C3); the activation of learning may count for nothing on completion of training without further education and training (C4).

Another important factor to consider is that context cannot be confused with spacial dimensions. Depending on the nature of the quality assurance network (NGO/commercial enterprise), what is significant from a contextual perspective may relate not only to the place but also to the social world phenomena such as social relationships—powers emerge from certain relationships—interpersonal systems, the use of technology, and economic and political conditions (Pawson & Tilley, 2009).

2.3 Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) in the case of the GCC

The aim of my research was to explain the role of quality assurance networks in the regionalisation of quality assurance across the GCC states. Theories such as “world polity theory” (Meyer *et al.*, 1997), “world systems theory” (Wallerstein, 2004) and “structured agenda” (Dale, 2000) could be considered appropriate as they have been well utilised in explaining the globalisation of education. For example, the most prominent approach to explaining the globalisation of education—world polity theory—focuses on cultural aspects as a means to achieving transnational and transcontinental presence through the global spread of modernity which is bound in Western values and linked to issues of legitimacy. Legitimate institutions are also referred to as “myths”. For example, the concept of mass schooling is seen as a legitimate feature or myth of a “modern” society, regardless of its actual efficacy. In relation to non-Western societies, world polity as a theory sets forward the view that Western “myths” are victorious over any local attempts in which something happens.

These theories are difficult to apply in the context of GCC higher education. Western models focus on “efficiency, accountability and systemic growth” and neglect, for example, the impact of “power configurations on state-higher education relations” and the “internal formal and informal decisionmaking structures” in which “institutes of higher education operate” (Mazawi, 2005:134, citing Shaw 1996). If educational isomorphism exists and the knowledge central to the work of education is cultural, these theories therefore neglect the theory of agency and infer the existence of a world system (Robertson & Dale, 2015). Ultimately there is a general lack of “theories and concepts useful for analysing, in a contextualised and comprehensive fashion, processes of educational change” in the GCC (Mazawi, 1999:351).

Furthermore, research in the field of education has had difficulty in accounting for the “actions of the state apparatuses” and “social groups” in “local, regional, transregional and international contexts” (Mazawi, 1999:352). In the GCC context, the influence of the state through state apparatus; reliance on cross border education aspects of foreign expertise and consultants; and international commercial and non-for profit higher education institutes are all considered principle actors. The dynamics of culture, religion, values and traditions converge in complicated and not well understood ways. Sholkamy (2006) notes in this context the outdated, under theorised and undervalued nature of the study and understanding of cultures and social dynamics. The impact of this difficulty means that understanding role of quality assurance networks in the regionalisation of quality assurance across the GCC states remain difficult to explain.

The Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) (Robertson and Dale, 2015) offers an alternative to the above mentioned theoretical accounts which focus on either the political and economic, or political and culture, but to the exclusion of one of the trio and therefore offering only a partial understanding of the education ensemble. The education ensemble is a concept of education

that involves a range of actors and institutions reflecting the fact that education represents, and is embodied in “crucial multiple relationships with, and within, societies” (Robertson and Dale 2015:156). The value of the ensemble concept is not just that it identifies and registers the range of relationships, but that it allows analysis and identification of internal relationships between the components of the ensemble (Robertson and Dale 2015:156). The CCPEE allows for a bird’s eye view of education and provides a mechanism to understand who has power and where power relations exist. In order to understand the education ensemble, Robertson and Dale (2015) indicate the analyst should consider the presence of four distinguishable elements. The first of these is cultural, not in terms of discourse or semiotics, but as civilisation projects such as Western modernity or Islam for example. The other three elements of the ensemble include the relationship education has with global, regional, national, or local societies; the organisations that feature in the education system; and the relationship between education and economy. The relationship between education and the economy is not just the capitalist or market economy view, but the view that education is an intricate economy itself. This theoretical approach, in employing the political, cultural and economic in a critical framework can offer a wider view of the complexity of the “structures, institutions and practices” within the education ensemble particularly as it is informed by a critical realism view of the world, whose stratified ontology takes into account “those mechanisms and processes that are not observable, but have real effects” (Robertson and Dale, 2015:150).

In summary, the CCPEE framework gave me the means to develop an account of the quality assurance networks in higher education taking into account the cultural, political, and economic. The importance of this framework in the context of understanding the processes of quality assurance networks in Arab higher education is that, unlike other theories used to consider the relationship between globalisation and education, the CCPEE does not align itself with Western modernity in the cultural form, or capitalism as a form of economic development or the Westphalian state system as the political organisation. By employing the cultural, political, and economic in a critical framework the CCPEE approach firstly offers a means to understand the transformation of quality assurance in Arab higher education - in particular the role of quality assurance networks. Through identifying the resulting processes, mechanisms, and structures attributed to the quality assurance networks the CCPEE offers some certainty over how the transmission of quality assurance occurs in the context of the Arab Gulf.

The next section seeks to adapt the core elements of CCPEE into a theoretical framework which can act as lens in which to investigate the role of quality assurance networks in the regionalisation of quality assurance in the GCC. The framework—which combines cultural patterns with wealth and power—offers a means by which quality assurance networks can be considered. This can be treated as the first stage of analysis in realism research.

2.4 A Conceptual Framework through which the Quality Assurance Networks can be Viewed

In adapting the key tenets of critical cultural political economy of education, the framework below is a lens through which the quality assurance networks can be investigated. Figure 2 outlines in diagrammatic form the conceptual framework which includes power (political sphere); wealth (economic sphere) and cultural patterns (cultural sphere); this is in keeping with the CCPEE. Cultural patterns help define the cultural problematic and help to understand how civilisation constructs, represents and transforms social order. Cultural patterns, when combined with wealth and power, give a theoretical means to consider the quality assurance networks. Cultural interpretation of power allowed me to focus on the integrative, preservative and transformative potential. What I mean by this is that different traditions vary in regard to their ways of distinguishing and balancing sacred and secular and that contrasts can be drawn between cultural versions of concentrated or dispersed sovereignty. Secondly, the cultural framing of political and economic spheres has to be taken into consideration. In terms of the wealth structures and dynamics, various angles can be used including modes of accumulation, capacities used to sustain commercial development as well as Braudel's analysis of capitalism (Arnason, 2003). State power structure is engrained in Braudel's concept of capitalism and allows for analysis of the interplay between political and economic dynamics. The diagrammatic representation of the framework is explained, including examples from Interview 1 in table 2.

Figure 2.0 Diagrammatic Representation of Conceptual Framework

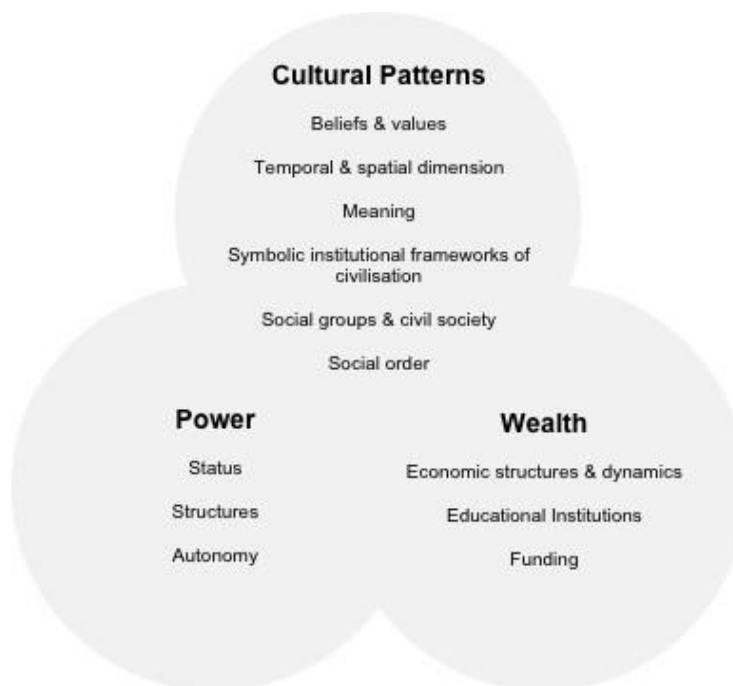


Table 2.0 puts into context the conceptual framework by explaining the components of the three spheres and giving examples from interview one to support (See fig. 6.0 p.108 for how this was developed). As described earlier in the chapter, analytical movements consist of movement from a concrete context within which causal mechanisms are abstracted and analysed and then back to the concrete context to understand how these causal mechanisms operate. As a reminder, the process of abstraction was addressed in the following manner.

The research required a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding how and under what conditions the quality assurance networks contribute to the regionalisation of quality assurance. The cultural political economy of education (CCPEE) provided a means through which the analytical movement of abstraction can occur. In this instance, the movement began with development of realist orientated questions. These questions were the starting point of the analytical movement. The next stage required the development of a conceptual framework that allowed me to specify what it is about the cultural, the political and the economic that I needed to examine regarding the status of their relations to quality assurance networks. I used the CCPEE as an abstracting device. The framework, as described above, consists of intertwining spheres. Cultural patterns (the cultural sphere) includes components such as beliefs and values, meaning, social groups and civil society and social order as well as others. Power (the political sphere) includes aspects such as status and autonomy while Wealth (the economic sphere) includes components such as funding, economic structures and dynamics and competition between educational institutions. The abstraction of these components allowed for the development of interview questions. Table 2.0 explains each component as well as examples as to how they are interpreted in relation to interview one. Chapter five table 5.2 p.81 outlines how the research questions are aligned to interview questions and the theoretical perspectives or purpose and means of asking these questions. The movement from abstraction back to the concrete context made use of Pawson and Tilley's (1997) realist evaluation contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (CMO) configuration as a means to consider both enabling and constraining mechanisms as well as the contexts that allow for the mechanisms to be activated and the outcomes of such interactions. The use of realist evaluation goes beyond an empirical account. Theories are produced in the form of generative causal propositions through mechanisms, contexts and outcomes. These theories are the reported findings. The power of the mechanism, context and outcome configuration is the simplification of a range of processes to an essential core of attributes with Pawson & Tilley (1997:122) indicating that "CMO configuration can thus be said to operate at the highest level of abstraction".

Table 2.0 Explanation of Conceptual Framework

Cultural Patterns		
Dimension	Explanation	Examples from Interview 1 (Oman Quality Assurance Network)
Beliefs & Values	The role of actors' beliefs and values in shaping outcomes. Can include Islamic values; foundational texts such as Qur'an; Western values linked to legitimacy; others may appear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust; • Tell us what you want us to do, tell us how you want to do it;
Temporal & spatial dimension	Temporal & spatial boundaries. Temporal - how cultural issues affect and are affected by the interconnections between the past, present and future. Spatial - exploration of the local-global connections that exist in relation to cultural issues (Hicks, 2003; Walker 2009).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial - QA is very different in Oman; • Muscat based QA, but what is happening in Niswa & Salaha? Not the same issues in Bahrain (due to small size). Special interest groups for QA may help with targeting. • Temporal - not a lot has changed since the British Council Report 2010;
Meaning	Cultural problematic issues addressed through probing of meaning through realism. Accessing practice and meaning allows for explanation of societal differences in education. Embed meaning to the inter-related aspects of political order and its relationship with social order, how political order and accountability is understood. Avoid semiotics and world polity. When meaning is combined with the concepts of wealth and power, a framework can be formed that allows for theoretical synthesis and comparative enquiry. Meaning can have temporal and spatial dimensions (shift in geopolitical and geocultural centres over time across successive generations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept QA as part of HE; • Seen as regulatory; • QA has become part of language; • Collegiality in terms of communication and sharing practice; • Learning by sharing workshops; • Executive Committee some members more active than others; • OQN members (VC's; Deans) not sure what they are getting from the network;
Symbolic & Institutional frameworks of civilisation	Islamic Umma (nation/community) and diwaniyyas (majlis) and their dynamics (Arnason, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE Minister For Education is Patron • Majlis culture - there is a lot of consultation, engagement and inclusion
Social groups & civil society	Civil society and how it is defined has to be understood 'within its own historical trajectory and studied within specific socio-cultural and political contexts' (Armstrong & Gilson 2011). Comprise of five sectors: the Islamic sector, nongovernmental service organisations (NGO's), membership based professional organisations, associations such as artists' or writers' societies or youth organisations and includes the <i>diwaniyyas</i> in the Arab Gulf and the prodemocracy associations (Hawthorne, 2005). Basic ordering of social groups and societies requires categories and compartments (Robertson, 2011).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary organisation • Patron - HE Minister for Education • Close relationship between OQN & OAAA

Cultural Patterns		
Dimension	Explanation	Examples from Interview 1 (Oman Quality Assurance Network)
Social groups & civil society (continued)	<p>The term 'relational subject' indicates individual and social subjects in that they are 'relationally constituted' e.g. they acquire qualities and powers through their internal and external social relations (Donati, 2016).</p> <p>The relational subject can be 'individual' or 'collective' (social). Individual relational subject is straightforward to describe; social subject is complex. Examples of relational subjects: Can be organised in a framework based on level, type and degree of mediation of the relations.</p> <p>Level - 3 levels - micro, mesh & macro</p> <p>Type of mediation - four spheres - mediations in spheres of family, friendship, acquaintances; mediation in sphere of voluntary associations of civil society, mediations in sphere of economic market; mediations in sphere of political administrative system and its apparatus. Degree of mediation - minimum (face-to face, direct relationships); to maximum (hypermediated, indirect relations, as in social mass moments).</p>	
Social Order	<p>Structured human inter-relationships in a society; Islamic form of social order (Arnason, 2003; Eisenstadt, 2000; Jung, 2017). The historical realisation of multiple forms of modernity is understood as attempts to actively shape social orders and identities in drawing on different cultural programs as interpretative sources (Eisenstadt, 2000). Consequently, historical paths to modernity are not characterized by radical ruptures with the past. To a certain extent, the evolution of different forms of modernity is dependent on the civilisational legacies of religious and imperial traditions (Arnason, 2003). Jung & Sinclair (2015) in constructing imaginaries of social order consider Wagners three types of modern social orders – restricted liberal modernity; organised modernity and extended liberal modernity and Reckwitz's three types of modern subjectivity formation and use them as abstract reference points, hegemonic cultural types for the construction of historically concrete forms of social order.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conversations with Ministry of Social Development; •There is a lot of conversations across the GCC. There is a lot of commonalities. I think one of the challenges is all the players involved. For example, the formation of the GCC Qualifications Framework, people that have been involved are people in occupation standards in the Ministry of Manpower and not necessarily the owners of the frameworks. •People are speaking to each other at ANQAHE. There is a formal mechanism through ANQAHE. But also, they know each other. You have formal structure through ANQAHE, but you also have personal connections. It is more a community of practice.

Cultural Patterns		
Dimension	Explanation	Examples from Interview 1 (Oman Quality Assurance Network)
Social Order (Continued)	Samad (2007:8) reasons that clan, tribal and religious affiliations and relations leads to a mindset that, instead of strengthening social capital actually prevents action and results in 'tribal, ethnic, or confessional relations that are stronger than state and local authorities' Gengler (2015) argues the basic assumption about citizens and their participation in politics may be flawed in relation to the GCC states. So instead of 'political appeasement through economic redistribution', Gengler suggests that the region has unique political and economic institutions which 'do not serve to preclude mass political coordination but rather to privilege a certain type of political cooperation, namely coordination on the basis of outwardly observable and relatively stable social categories such as ethnicity, religion, tribal or regional affiliation'. The result therefore is a 'structural tendency in the Gulf toward ascriptive group politics' (2015:35).	

Power		
Dimension	Explanation	Examples from Interview 1 (Oman Quality Assurance Network)
Status	In terms civil society/NGO organisations cannot form and act independently of state powers, while there is a lack of legislation at a regional level, limiting the establishment of civil society networks and coalitions (Watkins, 2009).	Patron - HE Minister for Education; Voluntary; handover to sector; collegial approach; supported by Oman Accreditation Council; difficult for accreditation body to be both the examiner and driving instructor at the same time; members are institutions/HEI's; AGM votes in new EC members; status is a problem - in the beginning it came under the OAC agency; to operate needs to be recognised as a social organisation (e.g. civil/NGO). Many rules and regulations which are related to the Ministry of Social Development. Status required to employ people, rent premises, have a website; in limbo as an association.

Power		
Dimension	Explanation	Examples from Interview 1 (Oman Quality Assurance Network)
Structures	<p>In terms of explaining why a particular mechanism exists, the researcher is required to identify the nature of the object (or structure) which possesses that mechanism or power (Sayer, 2000:14), which is dependent on social structures.</p> <p>For example, the educator's power to grade students' work depends on their knowledge and qualifications and being accepted as legitimate by the university and public (Sayer:2000:14) which is dependent on social structures, in terms of shared understanding, among other things, in terms of the acceptance of the educators right to teach. The <i>moment of the politics of education</i> provides the 'rules', in response to the above question – it may consider the individuals and institutions (state, religious, primary education system for example) responding to university and institutes of higher education admission policies, but is ultimately connected with social structures such as growing Arab youth population for example (Robertson & Dale, 2015).</p> <p>The importance of this notion of a multisocietal structure is that if multi-societal structures exist, then political fragmentation prevails, with Arnason contending that "political unity of a civilisational area can only be envisaged as a very exceptional state of affairs" (2004:109).</p>	<p>Training programmes as structures; staff turnover; structures in place to support QA as people move on (e.g. systems/guides); diverse workforce; academics not nationals; ministry of manpower; rules; consultant model adopted; principle of QA lies with institutions; empower institutes to take responsibility; achieved through training and collegiality;</p> <p>OAAA provided administrative support but no longer; E.C. made up of Ex Officio members from representatives of Ministry of HE & OAAA; close relationships between OQN and OAAA; British Council supportive of OQN - sees it as an empowerment of the sector and promotion of HE; competitors in the private sector; government and private institutions facilitated to sit down and share practice; development of guidelines; colleges and institutions take turns hosting OQN; Hosting model from the BC report; a list of recommendations from 2010 report has changed; committee does its best to keep on tract; challenge to respond to proposals.</p>
Autonomy	Autonomy of the individual; autonomy of the collective (Jung & Sinclair, 2015).	Institutions responsible for quality assurance as a fundamental principle of Oman Network; role of experts; Executive Committee

Wealth		
Dimension	Explanation	Examples from Interview 1 (Oman Quality Assurance Network)
Economic structures and dynamics	Patriarchy is a term that 'defines a specific kind of social-political structure'; specific value system and forms of discourse and practice', which are based on a distinctive mode of economic organisation, which in the Arab case is determined by Sharabi as 'dependent or peripheral capitalism, modes of accumulation, capacities used to sustain commercial development as well as Braudel's analysis of capitalism (Arnason, 2003)	
Educational Institutions	Many types and range of institutions. Relationships and inter-relationships	National workforce - 16% Omani - not being met; competitors in the private sector - may have some things they may not want to show.
Funding	Issues of funding weaken the participation of civil society groups in education (Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, 2009). In relation to quality assurance systems across the region, Tarawneh (2011) notes that there is still diversity with different education systems in place, lack of awareness of quality assurance concepts and various financial funding models.	Institutions pay a small membership fee (250 Omani Riyals); income is used to provide workshops where experts are brought in; E.C no financial reward for those on the Committee; comprehensive review carried out by BC in 2010; they are very supportive of the OQN because they see it as empowerment of the sector and promotion of HE. The proposal was carried out by David Wilkinson, they were sponsored by the British Council to come and carry it [the review] out.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the ontological, epistemological and methodological rationale for engaging a realist approach to my research. I discuss the operationalization of a realist ontology by explaining how and why I developed realist questions; how I conceptualised the cultural, political and economic objects using CCPEE; my use of abstraction and retroduction as a means of conceptualisation and inference respectively. I further outline the methodological use of interviews and document analysis in a realist setting, while realist evaluation is the realist approach to analysis. These are the steps taken in operationalising realism.

I moved the chapter along to focus specifically on the development and implementation of a conceptual framework for understanding how and under what conditions quality assurance networks contribute to the regionalisation of quality assurance within the GCC. I draw on and adapted

Robertson and Dales (2015) CCPEE—in an attempt to conceptualise the components of the cultural, the political and the economic. The chapter provides a conceptual framework based on adaptations of CCPEE. The framework provides a means in which to move to the empirical aspect of the research including the development of theory led interviews and document analysis.

The next chapter focuses on the globalisation of education. This is important, as the quality revolution (Harvey and Williams, 2010) has occurred as a result of fundamental changes in higher education due to massification, globalisation and marketisation. With almost 100 countries implementing higher education quality assurance systems or quality assurance regulatory bodies, it would be remiss not to examine the relationship between globalisation, regionalisation and quality assurance in higher education.

Chapter 3 Globalisation, Regionalisation and the Relationship with Quality Assurance

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the globalisation of education, which is recognised as causing changes in higher education. This is important in the context of this research, as the quality revolution (Harvey & Williams, 2010) has occurred as a result of fundamental changes in higher education due, in part, to massification, internationalisation and marketisation. With almost 100 countries (Martin, 2007) implementing higher education quality assurance systems or quality assurance regulatory bodies, it is necessary on the basis of scale and spatial aspects, to investigate the relationship between globalisation, regionalisation and quality assurance in higher education both in the wider context and in the context of the GCC. But more importantly and particularly in light of the intersection of global, regional and national organisations and institutions in GCC higher education, the driving force behind this chapter is the intention to unveil what these intersections mean, what they look like and what power they may have. This is important in the context of theory building.

I begin the chapter with an overview of the globalisation of higher education and quality assurance of higher education in general. I then move on to focus on the intertwining relationship between the global, regional and quality assurance in general. The chapter then moves on to focus on regionalisms and regionalisation with a view to appreciating spatial articulations as they relate to the GCC as well as a discussion of the concept of the GCC as an academic region. This is followed with a focus on the regional development of quality assurance networks across the globe and then a narrowing of the lens to view the Arab region. The chapter concludes with a section discussing the global, regional and professional reach of networks and how they have facilitated the internationalisation of quality assurance.

3.1 Globalisation

Globalisation is a “politically and theoretically contested concept”, referring to a series of changes that can occur across political, social, technological, economic and cultural spheres and is often considered in contradictory terms (Rizvi & Lingard 2000:425; Torres, 2009). Globalisation is recognised as causing changes in the characteristics and functions of higher education (Mok, 2009); in the context of higher education in the GCC globalisation is particularly important to analyse because the impact of these changes is not uniform across (Mok, 2009) or within different countries (Vidovich *et al.*, 2007) and how these changes occur is uncertain (Dale, 1999; Ozga & Lingard 2007; Rizvi & Lingard 2000).

Conceptually, globalisation is frequently viewed through, and often challenges, the frameworks of neoliberalism, capitalism and nation state. Globalisation, as envisaged by Sassen (2013) is not just the formation and growing interdependence of global institutes such as the Organisation for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) or the World Bank. The global can be categorised in an educational sense as an institution such as a branch campus, a process, discursive practices such as the discourse of professional educational associations (Briscoe, 2009) or an imaginary, the process through which individuals interact with everyday lives; or how they consider options or make decisions (Rivzi, 2006). The above characteristics transverse the borders of a national state but also emanate from and operate within that border. Globalisation therefore includes various actors, processes, sub-national spaces, the local, the immobile and more (Sassen, 2013).

Quality in higher education is also grounded in the globalisation debate. Definitions of quality have undergone significant change since 1980, which can be linked with the shift towards the mercantilisation of the university characterised by a neoliberal model of global capitalism (Santos, 2006). Secondly, the collaborations of industry and governments have caused the focus of higher education to shift from serving the needs of society to serving the needs of industry and governments, the result of which is, as Morley (2003) argues, learning how to learn has taken precedence over acquiring a body of knowledge. Thirdly, the rise of the evaluative and regulatory state which includes the implementation of new public management (NPM) tools has also impacted higher education. Overall, Harvey and Williams (2010) suggest that the “quality revolution” has been as a result of fundamental changes in the higher education sector as a result of massification, internationalisation and marketisation. The impact of these changes within the higher education sector mean that higher education has become increasingly subjected to regulation by agencies who set standards, monitor activities, and implement and enforce rules to achieve the required standards where the standard is deemed to be less than desired (Jarvis, 2014). With almost half of the worlds countries implementing higher education quality assurance systems or quality assurance regulatory bodies (Martin, 2007), the scale alone merits investigation. The next section moves on to discuss the relationship between globalisation, regionalisation and quality assurance in higher education.

3.2 Relationship between Globalisation, Regionalisation, and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Traditionally, the understanding of the relationship between globalisation and higher education consisted of studying international cross-border flow of students and staff, the transnational influence of dominant institutes and higher education models (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002), trade in international educational services as well as discourse on research and knowledge (Marginson, 2004). The most dominant feature of the literature has been the study of the relationship of governmental nation state policies and higher education, with globalisation processes in higher education under-studied and under-theorised. This has led Marginson and Rhoades (2002) to consider globalisation processes as progressively integrated systems and relationships that transverse the boundaries of a nation. These systems and relationships are not only economic, but are also political, technological, and cultural. This departure from a traditional analysis of national

policies to a new analytic framework capturing the dynamics and tensions functioning at the crossroads of the global, regional, national, and local (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010) allows for more than just identification of globalisation processes, but also encompassing how they occur; although there are numerous and opposing explanations as to how best to understand these processes (Robertson *et al.*, 2012). Globalisation processes aside, the structure of higher education in most countries has undergone momentous change primarily as a result of increased social demands for extended access to higher education qualifications, developments in technology and global market forces. Traditional concerns of access and cost, while still relevant today, have become part of a tripartite group that includes concerns related to academic quality (Brennan & Shah, 2000). With these changes, policy (as noted above, a dominant feature in the literature) on quality and new forms of quality assurance have emerged and dispersed across the globe (Dill & Beerkens 2010).

The transferability of quality assurance concepts from other parts of the world is a key issue for developing countries introducing quality systems (Harvey and Williams, 2010) with particular concerns identified around how European and American conceptions of quality assurance form the basis of developments around the world. Often there are only minor modifications in the methods adapted by quality assurance agencies. As well as transferring quality assurance concepts from other parts of the world with little adaption to local culture and values, developing countries are also importing western university systems with the advent of branch campuses. Instead of being producers within the education sector, Arab states can be seen as consumers. These issues are all relevant to the GCC countries as identified in the BQA European versus HEC American model of credit hours (Interview Participant 6) as an example in Bahrain; the education hubs and branch campuses of Qatar and Dubai; and the expansion of the American model across the GCC (Mazawi, 2008).

Approaches to regulation of quality assurance in a range of jurisdictions are, in the most cases, linked to domination of the state which retain direct regulatory control. Control is achieved through a range of tools; these are increasingly consolidated around the use of Qualifications Frameworks (QF) (Jarvis, 2014). A qualifications framework is a mechanism for the “development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels” (Tuck, 2007:5). Direct state regulation, through qualification frameworks, can be seen in Australia, Hong Kong, Brazil, UK, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Malaysia, Ireland, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Singapore and Philippines while a host of other countries are in various stages of construction or implementation. Qualification frameworks are becoming increasingly utilised as a meta structure for regulating the higher education sector and quality assurance. The regulatory logic includes the provision of a single system for education and training; common reference points, standards and benchmarks; support of sector reform; learning outcomes linked to specific qualifications; and the parameters for the assurance of quality (Tuck, 2007).

While the principles of regionalism were addressed in the opening chapter (p.13), the next section identifies the significance of spatial articulations such as “Arab region” and what is referred to as the GCC academic region (Mazawi, 2008: chapter 3; para 1).

3.3 Regionalisms and Regionalisation: Spatial Articulations

Use of spatial articulations such as “Arab region” is important to attend to as these articulations “form and inform in many ways the field of education in its local, regional, geopolitical and global engagements and resonances” (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010:1). As a space of politics, the appellation conventions of “Arab World”, “Arab Region”, “Arab Gulf”, MENA, “Arabian Peninsula” and “Gulf States” for example, can place boundaries around what is visible and deny the existence of “complex processes and dynamics” whether they are “located within the region or those which emerge as part of its interactions and convergences beyond” (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010:1). The nomenclature utilised situates the region by positioning it under a particular political, economic and cultural lens that determines its locations within a broader worldview and world order (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010:7). With these spatial intersections, some of the above terms represent political configurations; others portray cultural, civilisational or economic landscapes (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010:8). Therefore, it is necessary to understand these spatial articulations and how they are arranged if regionalism of higher education is to be understood and explained. Spatial intersections with their associated dynamics and power struggles

shape and impact the deployment of educational opportunities as well as practices, as contested political projects and as sites of struggles, in ways that articulate the multifaceted and multilayered ‘worlds’ of Arab education (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010:8-9).

This has important consequences in terms of research in the region. Should regionalism be considered in the context of the Arab World, Arab Gulf, the GCC, or MENA; each of these nomenclatures are immersed in multilayered spatial imaginings and invokes very different intersecting dimensions from a political, economic and cultural standpoint. For example, Legrenzi (2008:108) argues the rulers perspective in establishing the GCC was orientated in part around the development of a separate identity. Arabian as opposed to Arab. This separate identity serves as a conceptual boundary with the rest of the Arab world.

In the context of this research, I chose to focus on the GCC. The rationale for this decision was twofold: the resources required to extend a research undertaking across the MENA 22 countries or the wider Arab Gulf and Arab region is beyond the scope of an individual researcher from a resourcing perspective; secondly, areas such as Yemen and Syria are currently inaccessible. However, in conversations with a number of interview participants, there appears to be merit in research that extends to the wider region. It should be noted, that currently, access within the GCC is challenging in itself. For example, there are no direct flights between Bahrain—where I am

based—and Qatar. The twenty-minute direct flight now requires a flight to Kuwait and then onward travel to Qatar, while the complication of access to Saudi Arabia as a non-Arab female means challenges in organising a visit. Although it should be noted that it is not impossible to access either.

Regionalisation is not just within the region, but also about building relationships with other educational regions. In analysing quality assurance networks and their mechanisms, those processes can be located within the borders of a specific Arab nation state; spatial configurations of “frontiers” or what can be referred to as cultural regimes (civilisational or diasporic); or geopolitical spatial articulations (e.g. reflection of the standpoint of world powers such as UNESCO for example). Considering relationships with other educational regions also allowed me to consider the collaboration of ANQAHE with AAU and INQAAHE in its role of disseminating information, applying good practice, organising seminars, workshops and conferences, exchanging expertise and mutual recognition (Tarawneh, 2011). Furthermore, as Woodhouse (2012:12) notes, the role of networks is about enabling their member agencies to “progress in their confidence and ability in internationalisation by successfully engaging in fuller and closer interaction”. Woodhouse identifies the processes occurring within networks as creating the opportunity for agencies to acknowledge and talk with each other; share information about their organisation and their institutions. Interaction occurs through events, strengthening ability to carry out their activities. Finally, these interactions “lead to high levels of trust necessary to permit mutual recognition between the agencies of their respective quality assurance judgements” and “contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies themselves through capacity building” and by identifying good practices” such as practices that lead to improving the performance of external quality assurance agencies (Woodhouse 2012:12). For example, INQAAHE has published “Guidelines of Good Practice”; ANQAHE has published a “Glossary of Quality Assurance in Higher Education” and ENQA the European Standards and Guidelines.

3.4 Regionalisms and Regionalisation: GCC Academic Region

Concerns have been highlighted over two interrelated policy areas. Namely the intersection of higher education and citizenship and the intersection of political, economic and socio-cultural dynamics (Mazawi, 2008). For example, the synchronisation of American models of higher education may have an impact when considering a GCC academic region, in that it may create a ‘closed market’ in terms of the mobility of graduates of Arab universities. Specifically, that graduates of Arab universities recruited into faculty positions, policy making positions or as educational leaders in the GCC may be subjected to “stratified mobility and work opportunities compared to academics educated and trained outside the region” (Mazawi, 2008: chapter 3, para 14; Findlow, 2005). In relation to pools of academic labour, GCC higher education institutes are “territorialised” spaces in terms that GCC citizens are more likely to be employed within their own country’s universities and less likely in other GCC higher education institutes. This activity of employing citizens of the state is re-enforced with

state-level policies which seek to recruit faculty and academics from among citizens (Mazawi, 2008). Calls have been made for a regional policy review, the aim of which is to articulate visible and clearer linkages and better cooperation within and across GCC higher education systems, particularly in relation to accreditation and transfer. Despite attempts to integrate higher education policies through the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), schemes promoting student and faculty exchange and the set-up of regional universities such as Arab Gulf University there has been no significant increase in the mobility of GCC nationals across the region (Findlow & Hayes 2016, Mazawi, 2008). As mentioned in the opening chapter (p.20), Morgan's (2017) case study of ARAEIQ found that it promotes globalised versions of educational quality while remaining blind to context and complexity. Three particular issues remaining unaddressed in their approach to quality were identified as: poor working conditions and low wages; inequalities and lack of resources; and the politics of educational reform.

Ultimately, in relation to the intersection of higher education and citizenship Mazawi (2008) suggests that a holistic approach should be taken when considering a GCC "academic region" which can be achieved by considering higher education in relation to political, economic and socio-cultural dynamics. Therefore, this means that I as a researcher needed to approach "the notion of a GCC academic region as a multi-layered and multifaceted construct that articulates sustainable linkages to institutions operating at the local, regional, Arab and global levels" (Mazawi, 2008: chapter. 3; para 14). This statement begs the question as to the need to address these issues. Do we actually want mobile citizens within the GCC or are there interests at play that do not want these things to happen? The analysis of the documents and interview data would suggest the "political will" context is lacking in terms of regional governmental efforts by the GCC countries to engage in Gulf recognition of qualifications and a Gulf qualification framework. "This is still an initiative that will take years" (Interview Participant 2), while Interview Participant 6 suggested that "I think we are a bit closer to a unified currency in the GCC than we are to a unified approach to quality in higher education", with the reason indicated as a lack of knowledge and that "governments and the ministries simply don't understand what the advantages of such a system would be". On political will, Interview Participant 3 suggested that "It is so important the political will. Apart from political turbulence, this is the second thing. Without political will there will never be quality assurance". Interview Participant 3 indicated that the lack of political will originates at the national level and how education is positioned on the national strategy "If they're putting education first thing in their strategy so there is a political will" but continues to state that "this is not their first priority in their strategic plan". Interview Participant 6 furthered the concept of national agenda "most of the problems are internal to the country...the obvious example in Bahrain is the relationship with BQA and the HEC". The interviewee goes on to describe the problem in more detail:

“When you have two agencies essentially regulating the same thing, they work very hard to try and convince you that they have a different agenda. But actually when you're subject to reviews by both, it's quite apparent that they are both looking very largely at the same thing. There's nothing else to look at. But they're looking at the same thing in different ways.

For example, we have by statute a national qualifications framework, which adopts a European approach to credit. It adopts the modified version of the Scottish levels, and the notion of learning outcomes is inherent in that. The HEC is still talking about American-style credits. That's a fundamentally different system, not just in terms of using a different scale. There's a different underlying philosophy. Credit hours are an input measure. Credits in the European sense are an outcome measure, so they're two fundamentally different and conflicting ways of conceptualising higher education which have essentially jockeyed for power in a state which is so small, and with such a small amount of higher education. There isn't room for the two agencies”.

The issues of national pride and competition has a part to play in the notion of a GCC academic region. “If you have a unified system, how can one nation be the best? We have to do it our way. It's our national system.” The problem then is “if qualifications can't be recognised by other states easily, then you will have a major obstacle to global mobility, to economic fluidity, at all manners of levels” (Interview Participant 6). In relation to education hubs of Qatar and Dubai, Interview Participant 6 suggested that “They've made a strenuous effort to become an education hub. Whether they have done it right way or not, is another question, but they have certainly tried to create an environment where a certain kind of education could become established seemingly easy. It has stimulated the local economy. It may be that's one of the reasons why more GCC wide collaboration would run up against a set of obstacles because, at that level, could Bahrain be in competition with UAE or Qatar or Oman”. The findings chapter addresses in more detail the multi-layered and multifaceted constructs of the GCC approach (or lack of approach) to quality assurance in higher education through the identification of a range of mechanisms (M) and contexts (C) and the role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap.

3.5 Regional Development of Quality Assurance Networks

Dill & Beerkens (2010) note that one of the consequents of the global spread of public quality assurance policies was the development of international associations of public and independent entities affiliated with quality assurance known as quality networks. These quality networks are a recent phenomenon, with the first international conference of the emerging quality assurance agencies held in Hong Kong in 1991. Notably, GCC or indeed MENA countries were not represented at this conference; proceedings are mostly related to Hong Kong and Europe wide quality assurance (Craft, 1992). During the conference the agencies involved recognised the value of creating a network for mutual support and assistance, and hence the formation of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which included 25 members from 17—

primarily “Westminster”—countries (Dill & Beerkens 2010:1). The initial tasks to be achieved by the network included the production of an international database of agencies; exchange of methods and best practice; bilateral and multilateral cooperation across borders primarily concerning the quality of courses, programmes and institutions. Other functions identified included development of a glossary of terms as well as an international service related to quality assurance in higher education (Frazer, 1992). Initial challenges included the development of membership criteria for agencies seeking to join the network, as well as the fact that there was diversity in agency structures across countries. This diversity ranged from the absence of agencies outside of the government in some countries; other countries only have one single agency; while in others there are many agencies as well as umbrella organisations (Frazer, 1992). In 2017, when INQAAHE held its international conference in Bahrain, it had some 280 organisational members from 79 nations, with extensive representation from every continent.

Many networks have been created since 1991, primarily based on geographic regions (Woodhouse, 2012) which can also add the benefit of similar culture and stage of development as well as perhaps similar problems. Regional neighbours may also be further advanced, where their experience can be drawn upon or “at the same stage of development with consequent opportunities for collaboration on system design” (Woodhouse, 2010:6).

Regional networks for quality assurance in higher education have been established in Latin America, Central America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Some have “been through several stages of form or title” (Woodhouse, 2010:6). Networks include, for example, in Latin America, the Latin America and Spain Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Red Iberoamericana de la Calidad de la Educación Superior (RIACES 1999/2003); Central America – Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA, 1997); the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE 2002/2003); The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA, 1993) and the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC, 1994). The acronym in brackets includes the year the network was formed. Where two years appear, the network experienced a change in form or title.

Asia has a wide range of networks including ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN 2008); AsiaPacific Quality Network (APQN 2003); Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CANQA, 2009).

The European networks include the following: Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEEN 2000/2002); European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation And Quality Assurance (EASPA, 2011); European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2000)/European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA 2004); European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA, 2003); European Network

for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAAEE, 2006); European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education (EQANIE, 2009); Eurasian Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQN 2004) and the Nordic Network of QA Agencies (1992).

African networks include Conseil africain et malgache pour l'enseignement supérieur (CAMES, 2000) (*African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education*); African Quality Assurance Network (AQUANet 2004), Quality Assurance Network for African Higher Education (AfriQAN, 2007).

Woodhouse (2012) suggests that many agencies are members of two or more networks. INQAAHE (2018) describe quality assurance networks as associations of organisations—professional or regional—of higher education quality assurance practitioners. The networks can sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with INQAAHE establishing objectives, criterion and resourcing of joint activities and mutual support. The quality assurance networks can participate in the INQAAHE General Assembly but have no voting rights.

3.6 Arab Region Quality Assurance Associations, Societies and Associations

In the Arab region, Arafah (2010) reports the presence of the Arab Society for Quality Assurance in Education (ASQAE); the Association of Arab Universities (AAU); the Arab Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network for Education (ARQAANE); the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE). Research indicates—in terms of active associations and networks—that the Association of Arab Universities and the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education are both functioning. Meanwhile, the ASQAE which is reported to be an independent Arab non-profit NGO responsible for supporting studies in preparation of “regional academic reference standards for teaching Arabic language and Islamic studies” (Arafah, 2010:445) appears to be a nonfunctioning entity. The privately owned ARQAANE was set up in 2007 and was reported by Chairman of the Advisory Board of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh College of Business, Talal Abu Ghazaleh that the “establishment of an independent Arab Network for quality assurance is a pressing need for the exercise of an institutional scientific activity geared towards promotion and upgrading of educational institutions in Arab countries” (AQIP, 2007).

Research indicates the following networks, associations and societies are active including: Association of Arab Universities (AAU); Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW); Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS); Arab Observatory for Education; Arab Network for Open and Distance Education (ANODE); Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALESCO); Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE); Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE); Arab Regional Agenda for Improving Education Quality (ARAIEQ); Arab Organisation for Quality Assurance in Education (AROQA); Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO); and Arab Society of Faculties of Business, Economic and Political Sciences. This list is not exhaustive, there are other less well known organisations.

International organisations continue to promote and contribute to quality assurance in the region including the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, and British Council. The World Bank has funded higher education quality assurance projects in Egypt, Tunisia, Palestine and Morocco. In partnership with UNESCO the World Bank launched the Global Initiative on Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) in 2007 to support the development of quality assurance in developing countries by facilitating the efforts of the participating inter-regional and regional quality assurance networks (UNESCO, 2011). This is achieved by sharing of good practice, promoting communication between agencies and professionals; support the production of analysis; while also instigating plans for network sustainability. “This initiative supported the development of ANQAHE. Their funding was fundamental to its origins” (Interview Participant 3).

3.7 Global, Regional and Professional reach of Networks

The quality assurance networks span from the global (INQAHE); regional (ENQA, APQN, RIACES, ANQAHE etc), to professional associations such as engineering (Washington Accord), architecture (Canberra Accord), nursing (International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists IFNA), and counsellor education (International Registry of Counsellor Education IRCEP).

Other networks focus on economic interests (APEC, ASEAN); institutional interests for example International University Alliance (IUA), European University Association (EUA), Association of African Universities, ASEAN University Network (AUN). Functional interests, for example University Mobility Asia and the Pacific (UMAP); University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region (UMIOR) and finally in-country interests such as American Society for Public Administration (ASPA); Association of Accreditation Agencies of Canada (AAC); Council of Validating Universities (CVU); and Shanghai Education Evaluation Society (SEEA).

In terms of the relationships between professional bodies and quality assurance bodies, Woodhouse (2010:9) suggests that there is evidence “of rapport with professional bodies and quality assurance bodies“. This is evidenced through various international guidelines as well as visits and exchanges between the bodies. However, very little external formal benchmarking is undertaken. This relationship has not appeared in the literature or the primary data for this research.

Quality assurance networks have, according to Woodhouse (2010:10) facilitated the internationalisation of quality assurance through capacity development in terms of collaboration and collegiality. This capacity development occurs through collaboration between external quality assessors (EQA's) as professionals in quality assurance whether that is “peer support”, “peer review” or “pride in one's performance amongst colleagues”, “mutual agency” help and internships. These factors are very evident in the GCC case. The data from the interviews indicate collaboration, coordination and collegiality as significant aspects of the Arab network philosophies, including their relationships with other networks outside the region. These relationships were touched upon in the opening chapter. Communication has also been identified as an important aspect in the role of

networks in the internationalisation of quality assurance, for instance the agreement of terms included in glossaries aiding the ability to talk to each other and understand each other. Secondly, communication in terms of the dissemination of principles such as the 2005 UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education; the 2007 INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance; the 2008 Chiba Principles: Higher Education Quality Assurance for the Asia Pacific Region developed by APQN. Other examples include 2015 Revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance developed by ENQA in conjunction with the European Students' Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group International Quality Principles developed in 2015 and finally, the ANQAHE quality glossary, published in 2011. The ANQAHE glossary is published in Arabic, English and French to enhance communication between the Arab countries. As explained by Interview Participant 4 "Quality terms do not exist in our Arabic language. There is a very big variation, for example, validation and moderation. In Arabic there is no difference in these words. ANQAHE take this task and put definition for all Arabic words and they take it from INQAAHE. This is a good contribution to the region". On a side note, the ANQAHE quality glossary can be seen in use at the institutional level. For example, the Bahrain Polytechnic institutional Quality, Measurement and Analysis and Planning (QMAP) department refers to the ANQAHE glossary for their definition of terms within their policies (Bahrain Polytechnic, 2018).

Other, equally substantial aspects include power. The idea that referring to "the network gives more authority"; and the "whole is greater than the sum of the parts" (Woodhouse, 2010:10). Equally there is the view that networks assist external quality assurance agencies and institutions "stand up to government" and is seen in the case of Australia Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (Woodhouse, 2010:10). Finally, in relation to power, there is the view that networks can provide international defence against national opposition or pressure, for example Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAA) (Woodhouse, 2010). The power of networks within the GCC region has been identified in the document analysis and interviews conducted. The framework identified in chapter two (p.38) referred to the political sphere as power and included the dimensions of status, structures and autonomy. While the power of ANQAHE is not as visible as the above global examples, it does have a certain underlying ability to draw together the national quality agencies, through professional relationships, with the aim of trying to close the gap on a regional approach to quality assurance. In particular, ANQAHE has an organisational objective to develop and implement a scheme to enhance mobility of students between institutions both within and across national borders. This objective is also on the wider Arab regional agenda since 1945 and the GCC Supreme Council agenda for 27 years. However, as the analysis shows, NGOs are undermined though the

State. Firstly, there is “blurring of boundaries between the networks and the state agencies” and achieving the “status” of not for profit, non-governmental and civil society organisations can be difficult, as identified in the case of the Oman Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Both aspects are drawn out in the findings section. Finally, Woodhouse identifies that proximity leads to mutual trust and mutual recognition; with mutual recognition making significant progress given that the first quality assurance network is just over twenty years old. The themes of trust and recognition were key outcomes from the INQAAHE conference in 2017 which I attended and presented at. Indeed, these aspects were articulated throughout the interviews conducted and are part of the conceptual framework under the beliefs and values dimension.

3.8 Conclusion

The quality assurance network movement is in its infancy in comparison to the medieval Europe origins of the contemporary university (Perkin, 2007). In fact, quality assurance as a concept is a relatively new feature in higher education, with the literature dating back to the 1980's and early 1990's when journals such as *Quality in Higher Education* began covering what was coined the “quality revolution” in a period that saw immense change and development in the higher education sector (Harvey and Williams, 2010).

With American and European concepts of quality assurance forming the basis of development on a global scale, quality assurance agencies are charged with making only minor adaptations. The impact of this action is to ignore local culture and values. An example can be seen in the case of the research undertaken by Morgan (2017) on ARAIEQ, which was found to be promoting globalised versions of education quality while remaining blind to context and quality.

The power of networks, while referred to in the literature as being able to assist quality assurance agencies and institutions stand up to governments or provide defence against national opposition, have a significantly different modus operandi as identified in this research. The status of nongovernment, non-for profit civil society organisations are challenged by the systems of state apparatus; by resourcing, both financial and human; the governance structures at institutional, national and regional levels while wrapped up in the context of cultural patterns of symbolic and institutional frameworks of civilisation (Arnason, 2004) such as the Islamic Umma and majlis and their associated dynamics. This leads to the next chapter, which focuses on the civil society and its application to the Arab region and the GCC. This is important in the context of this research as civil society is noted as gradually beginning to play a meaningful role in terms of regional governance and agenda setting and is seen as a means of educational change in regional, national and subnational educational spaces.

Chapter 4 Civil Society in the Arab Region and GCC

4.0 Introduction

In the case of this research, analysing organisations—in the form of non-governmental, non for-profit quality assurance networks—requires a deep analytical approach to better understand the mechanisms and contexts that enable or constrain the regionalisation of higher education quality assurance across the GCC. Quality assurance networks, as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have visible and hidden functions and as organisations they reside in an organised and regulated space. Within this space different power plays, legalities, material and symbolic interests and ideologies have roles to play (Nefissa, 2005). This is important to attend to in the context of this research, particularly as the political and economic systems of the GCC is such that the ruling elites hold the power and therefore control the space where the activities of non-governmental organisations are bound in legislation, and actions are managed through regulations. Therefore, in order to be considered a legitimate organisation, approval of non-profit, non-governmental status is required by the state. On this basis, it is necessary to consider civil society and its application to the quality assurance networks. Perspectives of Arab civil society can be placed into three categories (Carapico, 1998). These perspectives include the Western view that Islamic beliefs and the patriarchal tribal organisation restrict values such as tolerance and personal freedom. Political science takes the view that Arab states block civil society and civic participation which is achieved through the distribution of rents in the rentier economy framework. The third perspective associates civil society with non-government organisations (NGOs). The NGO literature suggests that the legitimisation of civil society occurs where governments set the parameters of action in a bid to achieve gradual social reform.

I begin the chapter with a focus on a conceptual definition of civil society and its application to the Arab region and the GCC and move to consider Arab based views of civil society. The chapter then moves on to place civil society in the context of its environment by considering the rentier phenomena and the move towards political and economic liberalization and is followed by cultural elements of civil society using the broader framework of Eisenstadt's (2000) perspective of multiple modernities. The latter part of the chapter focuses on Arab civil society and the relationship with higher education.

4.1 Conceptual definition of Civil Society and its application to the Arab Region & GCC

Definitions of civil society are considered complex (Armstrong & Gilson, 2011) and are full of contradictions (Hann, 1996) with the term and concept remaining nebulous (Bardhan & Wood, 2015). One of the more significant concerns addressed with the term is that prominent conceptualisations are reflected from a Western ethnocentricity and a European tradition, the implications of which include viewing the world from a European perspective and thereby legitimising the pre-eminence of European culture and its theories (Patel, 2013). Traditional Western analysis of civil society

separates it from, and places it in opposition to the holders of power, creating a space that is defined in a euro-centric manner. However, as noted by Armstrong & Gilson, (2011:6) the objectives of civil societies in non-Western states are different from those pursuing democratic change, therefore civil society and how it is defined has to be understood “within its own historical trajectory and studied within specific socio-cultural and political contexts”. The impact of the exclusion of a civil society defined in these terms obscures how political processes, influences and change are understood (Krause 2008:4). Furthermore, theories have been developed arguing that Arab countries cannot develop or sustain civil society due to deeply imbedded cultural values and social structures, however empirical work (Krause, 2008; Carapico, 1998) offer evidence to the contrary. Bardhan & Wood (2015) argue that the concept of civil society is not strictly emblematic of the West, but equally, the Western paradigm of civil society cannot adequately define Arab civic culture. Arab civil society should be approached in a cultural and context-specific manner as “civil society in the Arab region is characterised by its distinctive origins, a unique trajectory of development and is idiosyncratic in its nature, scope and functions” (Bardhan & Wood, 2015:119).

Secondly, it is recognised that civil society can develop in different ways. Factors such as key symbols can be ascertained and with those symbols important “religious, ideological, primordial and historical aspects” (Eisenstadt, 2002:159) can be considered. Furthermore, the development of civil society can also evolve in different ways depending on inter-related aspects such as how political order is conceived, and the relationship of political order to other social orders; how political authority and its accountability is conceived; as well as the conception of the subject; and the “modes of centre-periphery relations” (Eisenstadt, 2002:159). Thirdly, globalisation has led to complex changes; traditional views of civil society and its democratic functions may need to be re-evaluated in light of an emerging global public space that has many state and non-state actors. The traditional analysis of civil society separates it from and places it in opposition to the holders of power. In an era of globalisation, power has become a complex and complicated phenomenon. Traditional theoretical frameworks and forms of analysis may not be the most effective methods to understand the role of civil society (Spini, 2011). On the basis of these considerations, I needed to utilise a broader theoretical approach which would allow me to take into account religious, social and political forces.

4.2 Arab Based Views of Civil Society

In the context of the Arab region, previous work on civil society, written from dependency, modernisation and rentier perspectives, views independent groups as unimportant, with weak associational life and a sparsely populated public space sitting between the family and state (Crystal, 2001, 1989; Krause, 2008). Krause (2008:2-3) expanded the theoretical concept of civil society, moving away from dichotomous frameworks that view the “state as an entity [that is] completely separated from society” and a second construct whereby a “power struggle against a dominant force is categorised as either resistance or compliance orientated” to take into account religious, social,

and political forces. The significance of a broader theoretical civil society concept allowed me to take a deeper approach to the theoretical requirements associated with developing the conceptual framework as explained in chapter two p.38 as well as lending theory to the development of analysis of documents and to the development of questions for the theory led interviews.

Historically, the Arab region has been identified as having four main phases in the development of civil society (Hawthorne, 2005) and today is deemed to comprise of five sectors: the Islamic sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), membership based professional organisations, associations such as artists' or writers' societies or youth organisations and includes the diwaniyyas [majlis, a place of sitting, often in the context of a council] in the GCC and finally the prodemocracy associations. Hawthorne (2005) identifies these four main phases of civil society development as beginning late 19th and early 20th centuries (Nefissa, 2005) and consisted mainly of religiously orientated charitable and educational institutions, as well as community-based groups and guilds. Colonialism of the Arab region witnessed a move towards "modern" forms of civil associations, with professional associations, cultural clubs, secular charities and Islamic organisations emerging across the region. Arab independence witnessed a third phase in the development of civil society whereby civil activities were brought under state control, while the fourth phase, beginning in 1980's and continuing to the present, has witnessed diversification of the civil society sphere.

Arab intellectuals use the term *Al mujtama' al madani* which translates to civil society. The region is lacking research in relation to how civil society is understood as well as the challenges facing civil societies (Krause, 2008). Nonetheless, some theoretical work has been done and the field is recognised as growing in importance (Karajah, 2007). The concept of family as the "third border" to civil society (Samad, 2007:5, citing Anheier 2004) raises challenges and when intertwined with societal relations—which are monopolised by tribal, clan, family and cultural and religious dimensions—is argued as leading to weak civil society. Nefissa (2005) argues that associations and their work are closely linked to religion, but can also be combined successfully with regional, family and tribal components. This is a relevant consideration, when taking into account Islamic associations, such as the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW) are run by players involved in Islamic political movements, such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC); those functions can have a political dimension (Nefissa, 2005).

Using social stratification as a means to comprehend the civil society concept, Crystal (2001) identifies an array of groups and mechanisms that connect independent groups to each other and to those in power. Broken into an economic, social and politically orientated ensemble, Crystal (2001) identifies a number of dimensions that constitute civil society. From an economic point of view dimensions such as class and sector and the emergence of new middle class become important. Membership of social groups such as tribes or sects, extended family, gender, age and generational changes are significant. Finally, political groups in terms of those with access to state resources—

which includes those with direct access to rulers—and the bureaucrats and technocrats that work for the state all intertwine in terms of “how they connect to each other and to those in power” (Crystal, 2001:261). The significance therefore is of a broader theoretical civil society concept that allowed me to take a deeper approach to the examination of the power and role of civil society within a critical account of education. By understanding the concept and structure of Arab civil society in its context, I was better enabled to take a deeper analytical approach in order to better understand the quality assurance networks as a measure. It also assisted me in terms of identifying the mechanisms and contexts that enable or constrain the regionalisation of higher education quality assurance across the GCC.

In order to understand civil society, I needed to understand the context in which civil society is located. In the next section I outline the rentier phenomena and the move towards political and economic liberalisation as it appears in the context of the GCC. This is important to attend to, as it places civil society in the context of its political and economic environment.

4.3 The Rentier Phenomenon

In defining the rentier concept, Beblawi (1987) focuses on two terms: rentier state and rentier economy. The rentier economy is an economy which is largely supported by expenditure from the state, while the state is itself sustained from rent accrued from abroad or in more general terms an economy in which rent plays a significant role. The rentier state is a subsystem associated with a rentier economy. In this sense, the creation of the wealth is centred around a small section of society; while the majority of society are engaged only in the distribution and utilisation of wealth. Meanwhile the consequences of the role of a few—the government [or the political elite] as the principal recipient of the wealth—is that they are bestowed with economic and political power, with the rentier state playing a key role in the distribution of wealth to the population (Beblawi 1987, Abdulla, 1999).

The rentier state and rentier economy concepts may have been misjudged as a paradigm in terms of the Arab region with Gengler (2015) suggesting that the rentier state concept suffers from basic methodological and theoretical limitations. While there has been much debate over the macro correlations of the negative impact of rents on levels of democracy, quality of institutions and economic growth (Hertog, 2010:1) there has been little research dedicated to the causal mechanisms involved and an absence of political sociology of rentier states in the literature.

Gengler (2015:35) argues the basic assumption about citizens and their participation in politics may be flawed in relation to the GCC states. So instead of “political appeasement through economic redistribution”, Gengler suggests that the region has unique political and economic institutions which

do not serve to preclude mass political coordination but rather to privilege a certain type of political cooperation, namely coordination on the basis of outwardly observable and relatively stable social categories such as ethnicity, religion, tribal

or regional affiliation. The result therefore is a structural tendency in the Gulf toward ascriptive group politics (2015:35).

This institutional tendency is re-enforced by two factors: politico-religious schism between Sunni and Shia Islam and the promotion of intergroup contestation (Sunna/Shi'a; tribal formations, other social groupings) by the ruling families for economic and political gain. Hertog's (2010:2-3) "brokerage of state resources through individuals in privileged positions" as one feature of state-society relations allowed me to comprehend on a micro level how the rentier framework influences and impacts social behaviour and the resulting state-society interactions. For example, access to state provided higher education is sometimes dependent on intermediaries with privileged access (wasta) due to admission bureaucracy and an absence of meaningful appeals apparatus as well as scholarships to study abroad or for access to perceived prestigious programmes at home. The variety of actors involved in brokerage include hierarchal structures involving ruling family members and senior bureaucrats or through links of "tribal identity, friendship, or shared regional background among individuals with differential access" (Hertog, 2010:24). While this is a brief snapshot of state-society relations and political sociology of the rentier environment, it does give context to the structures in place that civil society organisations need to navigate in terms of power. An understanding of state-society relations and political sociology was necessary in order for me to move through the layers of analysis. The next section moves on to outline the lack of institutionalisation of political and economic reform.

4.4 Political and Economic Reform

Understanding the power structures within the GCC states can help determine influences over civil society. The ruling tribal elites hold the power and therefore control over civil society. Monopoly of power secured through a largely expatriate armed forces and internal security which excludes certain tribal or religious factions from their ranks. Loyal armed forces ensure that the ruling elites secure their positions in relation to civil society. Secondly, the activities of civil society are bound in legislation, which curtail activities through regulations. Thirdly, if the internal country environment becomes unstable and difficult to manage, the ruling elites can rely on support from each other. This belief is based on the view that if one ruling tribe was overthrown, this would undermine the position of the other ruling tribes. Survival is interlinked (Ehteshami & Wright, 2007). The contextual factors at play include increasing youth population and unemployment. Increasing population growth also increases the strain on public resources such as education. Globalisation is also having an impact on contemporary thinking. In the past, tribalism has been the defining feature of political order, but there is now an emphasis on citizenship, gender politics and the participation of women, challenging the traditional role of women in society as examples.

As a result of the tribal ruling elite hold on power, top down reform is seen as the only viable course of action (Crystal, 2009). The tendency, therefore is for the ruling elites—in a bid to retain this historical hold on power in the long term—is to liberalise instead of implementing actual reforms that challenge the patriarchal power structure (Nonneman, 2006). Liberalisation can be viewed as a transitional stage of enfranchisement, whereby power shifts to civil society. In this position, reform can be led from below (Ehteshami & Wright, 2007).

Whatever political and economic liberalisation and reform has occurred across the GCC states, it has not been institutionalised in the most case (Crystal, 2009). The key characteristic of the political and economic liberalisation is that of a top down approach, allowing the rulers, in a way to maintain power. Kuwait is viewed as having the most established pro-democratic institutions. Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and UAE have been more cautious in their political endeavours (Crystal, 2009:37), while Saudi Arabia, in comparison to the other GCC states, has witnessed more muted reforms. In explaining liberalisation—both economic and political—Crystal (2009:37) focuses on the fact that the process of both political and economic liberalisation “have many supporters and few opponents”. Driven by demands for reform, Crystal analyses these reforms from four perspectives: business community, women, youth and expatriate community. From the perspective of the business community, who it is argued, can help shape policy formulation and implementation; they continue to support the rulers. Women’s suffrage is viewed as a legitimising move; youth unemployment is a driver behind economic liberalisation and nationalisation of public and private sector. Finally, the powerless expatriate community sit outside the GCC political framework.

In terms of the economic and political liberalisation, the GCC is divided ideologically between liberals and Islamists. The liberals, originally committed to Arab nationalism and socialism, have shifted to economic and political liberalisation in more recent times and the Islamists operate as the major source of political competition. The Islamists initially emphasised an “ideological rather than an interest-based politics, taking over the moral void left by the decline of socialist ideologies and the rise of rampant materialism” (Crystal, 2009:51) appealing to their audiences using recognised attributes and symbols of Islam. Using the extremes of the political openness of Kuwait compared to the political closure of Saudi Arabia, Crystal (2009:52) describes the Kuwaiti Islamists as showing political skill by taking over associations and forming alliances as well as developing a political agenda orientated towards sharia and education (see also Al Nakib, 2015, who argues that Kuwait continues to promote nationalism and Islamic conformity through its education system). However, following the Islamist defeat of the liberals in 1980, the government—out of concern over the Islamic political agenda issues such as wearing of the hijab or women and men mixing in public (particularly at Kuwait University)—turned to the liberals to form a government. In this way, the Kuwait government has, accordingly, handled the Islamists “in more or less the same way it has handled the liberals: approaching them when the liberals seem threatening, distancing themselves when the Islamists become too strong” (Crystal, 2009:52).

Interpreting these changes and their related mechanisms is challenging due in part to the diversity of GCC politics. However, similarities do exist. One significant theme is that change has been identified as being established by the elites and is described as a “controlled liberation” with the absence of any actual shift in power relationships (Ehteshami & Wright, 2007:930). This motivation for change lies with the desire of the elites to protect positions of power through legitimacy. The term legitimacy, as applied in this context is the political science view that legitimacy denotes a system of government which in turn denotes a sphere of influence. There exists a balance between liberalising for the sake of legitimacy and liberalising to change the structure of power in society. Within the GCC states, political and economic reforms are at different stages. This variation is reflected in the relative power civil society experiences in each state (Ehteshami & Wright, 2007).

The next section makes use of the broader framework of Eisenstadt’s (2000) perspective of multiple modernities as a means to consider the cultural questions. The section also outlines the merits and limitations of competing approaches to which Arab society and culture can be understood.

4.5 Cultural elements of Civil Society

What is understood by culture is open to different interpretations derived from various ontological and epistemological positions. In order to find and address the cultural questions, I needed an epistemic space in which to consider Arab culture and society. In this instance, the basis on which Arab culture and society is interpreted in the modern age, is viewed through an epistemic space that considers and engages the broader framework of Eisenstadt’s (2000) perspective of multiple modernities. Multiple modernities is where modernity is linked back to tradition and where tradition has been reconceptualised as not static but changing. This reconceptualisation of tradition, whereby, literati, intellectuals, and clerics for example, act as institutional agents for changing tradition; where change is regarded “as primarily preservative of the tradition’s essentials” (Arjomand & Tiryakian, 2004:6 citing Singer, 1972).

In relation to analysing modernity and modernisation in the Arab world, Eisenstadt & Schluchter (1998:2) consider a world of multiple modernities; rejecting the view of a homogenous modern world inhabited by a single civilisation as is common in the fifties and sixties theories of modernisation and modernity. In seeking to avoid the misconception that there is a single modernity; the constraints of Western models such as Orientalism are recognised. A new approach is required when dealing with modernity from a comparative perspective (Eisenstadt & Schluchter, 1998). This comparative approach, from a methodological point of view, is not grounded in evolutionary or historicism ideology. This view also does away with the notion of value judgement differences being recognised as deficiencies. If expansion of modernity beyond Europe leads not to global homogeneity but to new civilisations and this expansion combines structural, institutional, and cultural factors, then the assumption within this comparative approach is that “each civilisation has developed distinct institutional formations (e.g. nation state) and cultural foundations” (e.g. identities bound with

institutional factors) and is “embedded in a cultural program that entails different modes of structuring the major arenas of social life” Eisenstadt & Schluchter (1998:3). The specific characteristics of these civilisations should be analysed “not only in terms of their approximation to the West but also in their own terms” (Eisenstadt & Schluchter (1998:7). It is these cultural codes of modernity, shaped by continuous interaction and exposure to new internal and external challenges, which gives rise “to new interpretations of the relation between cosmic and social order, between social and political order, and between authority, hierarchy and equality” (Eisenstadt & Schluchter (1998:5) for example.

In essence, the concept of multiple modernities embodies the assumption that the most desirable way to comprehend the contemporary world is to view it as a narrative of ongoing construction and reconstruction of a multiplicity of cultural programs. These cultural programs involve a range of social actors who engage with broader sectors of their specific societies—such as political, intellectual or social movements—resulting in different expressions of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000). For example, the role of Islamist associations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in the pursuit of nationalism, the Islamic endowments (*awqaf*) of educational institutions, or state domination of civic activity in an attempt pursue Arab socialism. Or in more recent times the “controlled liberation” (Ehteshami & Wright, 2007) which is described as a move towards democracy, but not in the sense of the Western view of democracy. What I interpreted from Eisenstadt’s (2000) abstraction of multiple modernities is that while Arab counties pursue the European ideal of political, economic and education reform as a modernisation attempt, the result is a different modernity in that the distinct cultural factors (such a tribal elites) are bound in institutional factors (such as the rentier state) and structural factors such as the existence of a public sphere.

The second aspect to consider is as follows. If multiple modernities exist and expansion beyond Europe leads to new civilisations that are based on the interaction of cultural, structural and institutional factors, then the question arises as to what extent are these societies shaped by historical experiences. Thirdly, in trying to achieve a more critical perspective, Eisenstadt & Schluchter (1998) analyse collective identities and their construction as well as the institutionalisation of public spheres. The concept of public sphere is favoured above civil society, primarily because the traditional definitions of the term do not take into account societies outside Europe. The concept of public sphere also attempts to avoid imposing European patterns on other civilisations. Like civil society, the concept of public sphere is bound in culture and is concerned with the fact that “a civil society entails a public sphere, but not every public sphere involves a civil society” Eisenstadt & Schluchter, (1998:12). The major codes influencing the construction of collective identity include primordiality, civility, and sacredness. These codes have their own “ontological and cosmological premises and conceptions of social order prevalent in a society” (Eisenstadt & Schluchter, 1998:14). It is these codes then that influence and determine the definition of the major arenas within the collective identity of a civilisation. These three cores of collective identity are affected by specific

social actors and their relative interaction between and with each other, while occurring in different historical settings, including axial and non-axial civilisations. The Axial Age (800BCE – 200BCE) coined by Karl Jaspers saw a major shift in human thinking; development of several new religions; and major developments in law, ethics, math and science (Bowman, 2015).

The development of religious collective identities, as opposed to political and primordial identities was achieved in axial civilisations, including Ancient Greece, Early Christianity, Zoroastrian Iran and slightly later in Islam. The axial age “revolutions“ are related to “the emergence, conceptualisation, and institutionalisation of a basic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders” (Eisenstaedt, 1986:1) and were driven by continuous changes in a new social element – that of the intellectual elite. These elite brought about significant changes in collective identities and their constitution, particularly in relation to the transformation of ecumenical conceptions to vernacular conceptions.

The key point Eisenstadt (2000) tries to raise is this: components of collective identities such as primordial, civil and sacred are useful in analysis of modernity as long as the way in which these aspects feature in Europe are not used as the benchmark for other societies. Collective identities can develop along different lines, depending on symbols that are grounded in religious, ideological, primordial and historical components and it is this factor that makes this approach useful. This is important in terms of attending to analysis of context aspects such as the “majlis culture” or “Islamic Umma” as examples.

Modern civilisations can be compared using concepts such as political order, collective identity and public sphere. These components “cannot be reduced to each other...they vary independently of each other... and are interrelated in a non-random manner” (Eisenstadt & Schluchter, 1998:17). Political order changes when empires transition to states, seen in the emergence of a state apparatus or however that might be construed in any particular civilisation in relation to rule of law, power, or participation of public in the political process for example. The culturally constructed collective identity of a state is centred around national and religious identity, which is expressed in sacred, civic or primordial terms or some combination. The final aspect of this three-way pattern is that of the public sphere.

The need for an understanding of cultural and civilisation aspects are grounded in the fact that educational research in the context of Arab higher education refers mainly to the modernising and reforming function of state institutions and policies (Mazawi, 1999:332), while the impact of civil society on educational outcomes is underestimated and not well understood.

4.6 Interpreting Arab Modernity, Culture and Societies

How is Arab modernity viewed historically and today? On what basis should I interpret Arab culture and societies? While Eisenstadt (2000), and Eisenstadt & Schluchter (1998) provide a mechanism of interpreting Arab culture and society; it is necessary to note that there are other notable paradigms useful for analysis. Some of these paradigms are limited in terms of the spatial and temporal situatedness of Arab culture and do not necessarily accommodate comparative educational perspectives. Competing paradigmatic and methodological approaches appropriate for Arab sociology orientated research include Orientalism, Occidentalism, Neopatriarchal Society, Historicism, Foucault's Archaeological Method, Arab Cultural Studies and Modernisation Theory.

The study of the modern Arab world, according to Hourani (2004:3-4), has been carried out at high level in the last half century as the critical mass of scholars and researchers trained in the methods of modern historiography has grown. Hourani prefers to view the history of the modern period (nineteenth and twentieth century), as not of what existed earlier being completely replaced by something new, but a complex interaction of culture and values alongside adoption of modern world principles.

Competing approaches to which Arab society can be understood are many. Orientalism (Said, 1977) as a conceptual framework focuses on the appropriation of the Orient through colonialism and imperialism encounters. Occidentalism as a framework to study Arab conceptualisation of the West, much of which has been about the idealisation of the western "Other", "the desire to become the other or at best become like the other" (El Enany, 2006:7). Sharabi (1988:viii) uses the concept of the neopatriarchal society as an analytical framework for the systematic interpretation of aspects of political and social phenomena, facts and events which exist at the macro level of society, the state and the economy to the micro level of the family or individual personality (Sharabi, 1988:3). Patriarchy refers to a "universal form of traditional society, which assumes a different character in each society", while modernity is deemed to be an historical break with traditionality and which occurred in its original form in Western Europe (Sharabi, 1988:3). Sharabi (1988:x) outlines that his approach to neopatriarchy is one of a social and discursive paradigm, with aspects of Weber and Marx brought together to complement each other and "seeks to provide a comprehensive view of the basic structures and relations of the social whole". Notably, Sharabi (1988:x) excludes the view of culture as understood by orientalists and modernisation theorists, where modernity is denoted as "a mode of being and not a model to aspire to or imitate". Sharabi distinguishes between traditional patriarchy and modernised patriarchy; with modernised patriarchy deemed to be a product of a hegemonic modern Europe, but the modernisation aspect is viewed as a product of patriarchal and dependent conditions. The dependency conditions "lead not to modernity but to 'modernised' patriarchy or neopatriarchy". Sharabi (1988:4) qualifies this in terms of the assumption that the

patriarchal structures of Arab society, over the last century, is far from being “truly modernised” as the Arab Awakening (Nahda or renaissance) led to a material modernisation as a very surface level manifestation of social change. Therefore, modernisation is the adaptation from the West of “science, technology, industry and material comforts but not the thought systems, value systems or the political or social systems” that lie behind them (El Enany, 2006:8), therefore failing to “grasp the true nature of modernity” (Sharabi, 1988:6). The internal structures of neopatriarchal family and society remain grounded in values and social relations of “kinship, clan, and religious and ethnic groups” (Sharabi, 1988:8).

As of the late nineteenth century, Sharabi (1970) identifies the Levant society—from an intellectual, social and economic point of view—as agricultural, traditional and premodern. The family and tribebased kinship system formed the basis of social organisation. The subsequent Arab Awakening, through the view of neopatriarchy, accepted the adaptation of modern aspects of scientific and material progress, but failed to question or challenge the tradition of history and society and thereby what ensued never broke with its patriarchal past and in Sharabi’s view (1988:91) obstructing the subsequent development of Arab culture.

Sharabi’s work, according to Sheedi (1997) offers a means to critique and dismantle the question of Arab subjectivity. Significant Arab intellectuals such as Adonis, Laroui, and Al-Jabiri have discussed in different ways the significance and relationship between Arab subjectivity, history, and modernity (Sheedi, 1997:42). Al-Jabri uses Foucault’s archaeological method (Sheedi, 1997:42) to fundamentally question the theory of tradition and history while dismissing “the idea of a unitary Arab reality or singular Arab Islamic tradition”, meanwhile, Laroui, uses historicism, deeming it to be the most adept measure in determining Arab identity. Pormann (2013) examines the influence of Graeco-Roman classics on contemporary Arabo-Islamic culture. Sabry (2010) suggests that Arab cultural studies as an episteme is useful in the pursuit of the present cultural tense of Arab culture and draws on the work of Al-Jabri and Abu-Lughod. On this note, Abu-Lughod (1963) began a new era in terms of modern “Middle East” as a field of study, focusing on the Arab world, its intellectual history and history of ideas as opposed to Islam and the larger Ottoman Near East (Khalidi, 2011). Along with Hourani (1983), both their works are impacted by modernisation theory and a set of theories about Westernisation and progress. As noted above, these paradigms are useful in their own terms; however, in terms of a comparative approach to educational research they are somewhat lacking. While this research is not a comparative piece of work; the conceptual framework in chapter two may lend itself to further work in the field of comparative education research in the future such as comparing the contexts and mechanisms of quality assurance networks in the construction of GCC higher education to that of ASEAN higher education area as an example. The next section moves on from the cultural element of civil society to focus on the relationship between Arab civil

society and higher education. Successful examples of the relationship between civil societies and education are identified, alongside some of the challenges faced.

4.7 Arab Civil Society and Higher Education

Globally there has been increasing interest in the relationship and role of civil society as a process of educational change, particularly in relation to the involvement of nongovernmental actors in national and subnational educational spaces (Mundy & Murphy, 2001). Traditionally civil associations in the Arab education sector have been identified with the provision of education services for marginalised members of society such as women and people with disabilities. However, the last decade has seen new groups form, working on issues of quality for example; a strengthening in the relationship between civil societies and education as well as an increase in the power of regional networks (Watkins, 2009). As an example of power, the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education participated in the Arab League Summit in 2007, significant in that this was the first occasion that a social issue was on the agenda at a summit meeting. Subsequently, the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education was raised to co-author of the Arab states first report on education as well as acting as the Vice-President of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), leading to a strengthening of regional NGO coalitions in the Arab states (Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, 2009).

While the main focus of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (2009) report is related to the Education for All discourse, the issues it raises in relation to civil society partnership and the limitations of the regions legal, social, cultural and economic characteristics are noteworthy. Challenging legal frameworks in terms of a wide series of interventions that can be undertaken by the government such as consent and approval for establishment and high levels of bureaucracy. In many cases civil society organisations cannot form and act independently of the state powers, while there is a lack of legislation at a regional level, including the GCC, limiting the establishment of civil society networks and coalitions. The Oman Quality Network for Higher Education (OQNHE) is a relevant example and is discussed in more detail in chapter seven. Culturally, the patriarchal nature of society not only limits the role of social education and the value of voluntary work, but also the participation of women and the young. In relation to cooperation with governments, a judicious approach is required, as often declarations of participation and involvement of civil society groups by government is nothing more than a declaration of intent and sometimes is not followed up with tangible results (Watkins, 2009). Decision making power of Ministries of Education is sometimes limited by central authorities, leading to a dominance of a few government actors. The development of open and balanced partnerships between civil society and governments is further complicated by a “needs-based approach” (Watkins, 2009:35) to collaboration linked to education and development issues that are recognised as requiring immediate attention.

Furthermore, access to regional education data and information is noted both in terms of insufficient data or discrepancies amongst available data, or lack of information or data available in the public domain. Internal organisational issues impact day to day operations which are compounded by weak financial management and accounting practices. Issues of transparency and credibility related to decision making as well as the resources and skills to conduct research and produce analysis facilitating networking are also identified as organisational concerns. Issues of funding and lack of resources further weakens the participation of civil society in education (Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, 2009).

These issues are all identifiable in the research I have undertaken for this dissertation. Families and categories of mechanisms and contexts were identified through the use of the framework of cultural patterns, power and wealth, as described in chapter two p.38. Theory led interviews and document analysis constructed a model of potential mechanisms and contributed to theory building. I used abstraction and retroduction as a means of discovering meanings and relations and obtaining knowledge of structures and transfactual conditions which enabled me to search for mechanisms using CMO configuration. The families (see p.91 for further detail) include M1 "Governance" which includes political patronage and organisational structure; this cluster is about enabling the organisations to function and undertake their activities. M2 "Status" is also an important mechanism, granting legitimacy to the organization to operate, without which employing staff, holding a bank account, renting office premises is challenging. Other mechanisms identified include M5 "access to resources" both human and financial, M7 "accountability" and M8 "autonomy". In terms of context, C1 "comity and cooperation" are important in terms of decision making and includes majlis culture; intergovernmentalism (C2) is identified in terms of thinly institutionalised organisations, the regulatory structure as well as national sovereignty. Arab Islamic culture (C3) and political climate (C4) also impact on outcomes. These mechanisms and contexts are expanded upon in more detail in chapter seven.

However, while issues and challenges exist in the field of civil society and education, Lamine (2010:39) concludes that across the Arab region there is concern and agreement for cooperation in the field of higher education. The areas of agreement and concern are primarily related to six areas. Not listed in any order of priority, the agreed areas for cooperation include quality assurance and accreditation at an Arab level; degree equivalence and recognition including an Arab qualifications framework; exchange of information/expertise/students and study grants; joint programs and projects such as the Arab protocol on patents and intellectual property or the Arab association for faculty members in higher education; networking; and databases. In relation to the GCC, I completed discourse analysis of the document "GCC The Process and Achievements" chapter one "Cooperation in Education". The chapter emphasizes the areas of agreement, reflecting the areas identified for the Arab region as outlined on the previous page and above; it also includes agreement

on research, virtual education, partnerships between educational institutions and the community, amongst other areas.

It is this notion of agreement for cooperation at the GCC level for a regional approach to quality assurance and the discourse of the quality assurance networks having a role in the process that sparked the initial interest in this as a research area. Based in the Kingdom of Bahrain since 2010, I was curious as to if and how quality assurance networks could achieve a GCC wide approach to quality assurance.

4.8 Conclusion

The chapter set out to present the underpinning aspects of civil society and what that means in the context of the Arab region and the GCC. By focusing on civil society, I address the literature relating to the political, the economic and the cultural of the GCC. In analysing quality assurance networks as NGOs within the GCC, I recognise they reside in a space that has different power plays, legalities, material and symbolic interests and a range of ideologies. This requires that phenomena such as rentier economy as well as political and economic liberalisation and reform are addressed. The cultural aspects of collective identities can be addressed through primordial, civil and sacred codes, hence the ability to recognise “majlis culture” (C1) as a context enabling aspect to decision making as a finding in this research (see p.92). Civil society groups operating in the field of Arab and GCC education are littered with challenges ranging from government interventions in the form of bureaucracy, lack of regional legislation, decision making limited by central authorities, dominance of a few actors as well as a range of other issues as outlined earlier. However, while challenges are many, there has been a strengthening in the power of regional networks and the relationship between civil societies and education.

In the next chapter I focus on the methodological aspects of this dissertation. The opening pages outline the strengths and shortcomings of realist methodology; the rationale behind the methods—document analysis and interviews—utilised; the sampling techniques utilised for both selection of documents and interview participants. It also identifies tentative explanations as the journey of the data collection was in progress. The chapter closes with a discussion on the measures used in addressing ethical aspects of the research.

Chapter 5 Methodology

5.0 Introduction

The rationale for engaging realism as well as the ontological and epistemological considerations have already been attended to in chapter one (p.11) and chapter two (p.27). In this section I seek to explain what was done, how it was done, why it was done and with what results in seeking to understand how quality assurance networks contribute (or not) to the regionalisation of quality assurance across the GCC.

I acknowledge that methodology is one of the three elements of a paradigm that I as a researcher work within and is the focus of this chapter. A realist ontology is one where the real world exists independently of my perceptions and theories; epistemology is the relationship between that reality and me as the researcher. The methodology is the techniques I used to discover that reality. In operationalising a realist paradigm, I summarise earlier discussions in chapter two (p.27). I began with the development of realist questions. I used CCPEE to develop a conceptual framework. The CCPEE is an abstracting device to conceptualise the cultural, political and economic and makes use of prior theories (as they appear in chapter one, two, three and four). The conceptual framework was developed from the literature where the focus was on the underlying structures and mechanisms. I made use of abstraction and retroduction to synthesise how the political, economic and cultural elements of the conceptual framework work in combination. I used interviews as they are recognised as the most common method of data collection in realist studies (Manzano, 2016). I used document analysis as it is considered important to theory building. Finally, I made use of Pawson & Tilley's CMO to identify contexts, mechanisms and outcomes in order to respond to the research aims as outlined on page ten.

The chapter begins with an outline of the strengths and shortcomings of realist methodology and then moves on to discuss the rationale behind the choice of methodological tools used to collect data. The sampling techniques utilised for both the selection of documents and interview participants are described in detail. I also identify tentative explanations as the journey of the data collection was in progress as well as outlining the processes followed to identify explanations. The chapter closes with a discussion on the measures used in addressing ethical aspects of the research.

5.1 Strengths of Realist Methodology

The strengths of realist research include the following aspects. The foundations of realist research lies in natural sciences methodology, which stresses theory and scope for generalisation. The inclination towards generalisation requires attention to the underlying mechanism(s), and contexts they sit within. Mechanisms are important because they generate outcomes; contextual elements

need to be taken into account as they influence the processes through which the quality assurance networks produces outcomes (Wong et al, 2103a). The context aspect is therefore critical; agent interaction and adaptation are ongoing; stakeholders are considered as fallible experts whose understanding requires formalisation and testing (Pawson & Tilley, 2009). In the field of education research, realism promotes the identification of power relations and because of the requirement to link theory and data, the risk of the researchers own bias creeping in is reduced (McPhail and Lourie, 2017). In the very specific research field of quality and higher education, Bendermacher *et al* (2017), identify their realist study as contributing to the unravelling and theory development on quality culture by addressing Pawson & Manzano-Santaella's (2012:178) "why" question. The "why" question is a more recent addition to the original realist slogan of "what works for whom in what circumstances" to "what works for whom in what circumstances and why". Contributions to the field of realist synthesis has resulted in the development of publication standards and the practical "Realist and Meta-narrative Evidence Synthesis: Evolving Standards" (RAMESES) guide (Wong *et al*, 2013a, Wong *et al*, 2013b).

Finally, in terms of the strengths of realist undertakings, combining qualitative and quantitative methods is considered acceptable (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Qualitative methods are useful for eliciting theory from those individuals involved in the area of research. Documents, official records, observational material and survey findings for example have a legitimate place, and enable the participants experiences to be understood in a contextual setting.

5.2 Shortcomings in realist methodology

Pawson & Manzano-Santella (2012:177) identify three shortcomings associated with researchers trying to execute realist principles into realist practice. The shortcomings identified include absence of explanatory focus; absence of multi-method approach to data and failure to investigate contexts, mechanisms and outcomes in configuration. I addressed these shortcomings by ensuring that realist explanations were theory driven; and also noted that realist research evidence can and should operate in both qualitative and quantitative worlds i.e. qualitative utterances cannot chart quantitative differences and finally that the terms contexts, mechanisms and outcomes take their "meaning from their function in explanation and their role in testing those explanations" (Pawson & ManzanoSantella, 2012:189). Other, larger limitations include the intellectual challenge. Realist research requires advanced theoretical understanding in order to work through the theories; the ability to define expected outcome patterns; determine the footprints to look for and where to find them in order to adjudicate between the theories; as well as the ability to design research and techniques for data analysis. I noted that even well conducted realist research does not grant any assurances and can elude efforts at being comprehensive; findings can be tentative and fallible (Pawson & Tilley, 2009). In an educational research setting, Lourie & Rata (2017) identified similar challenges, noting the difficulty of how to acknowledge the importance of the data provided by

participants; but in doing so avoiding on the one side of the scale the descriptive tendencies of empirical research to the other extreme of over-theorising.

5.3 Methods

The methods I used in this research are framed within an intensive research setting (Sayer, 2010), where qualitative methods such as structural and causal analysis, participant observation, informal and interactive interviews and document analysis are identified as appropriate means of empirical data gathering (Sayer, 2010:164). Realist studies published in health research identify interviews as the most common method of data collection and are often combined with other qualitative methods such as documentary analysis and ethnographic observation (Manzano 2016). In educational realist research, interviews are combined with document analysis of policy (Lourie & Rata, 2017); combined with observations in faculty development (Sorinola *et al*, 2015); while interviews alone were utilised in identifying what works for whom and why in faculty development (Sorinola *et al*, 2017). Logbooks, audio diaries and interviews were deployed in explaining how prepared newly qualified doctors are for completing 'first' tasks (Lefoy *et al*, 2017). The approach I implemented in this research used a combination of theory-led interviews and document analysis. The use of two data sources was aimed at avoiding some of the shortcomings of realist research identified by Pawson & Manzano-Santella (2012). While both methods are qualitative, the use of both was aimed at attempting a comprehensive approach to explanation and findings while endeavoring to avoid fallibility, descriptiveness and overtheorising. My approach to sampling is outlined below.

5.4 Sampling

An intensive research design is concerned with asking questions regarding the causal processes in either a specific case or limited number of cases. When considering which groups to include—unlike extensive research, which focuses on taxonomic groups—intensive research focuses mainly “on groups whose members may be either similar or different, but which actually relate to each other structurally or causally” (Sayer, 2010:164). These particular, identifiable individuals (Sayer does not restrict the meaning of 'individuals' to persons), are considered because of “their properties and their mode of connection to others” and “causality is analysed by examining actual connections” (Sayer, 2010:164). In the case of this research, the documentation identified for analysis related specifically to the quality assurance networks that were actively engaged in quality assurance activities in the region and related to each other in structural and causal ways, for example, similarity in the networks missions and objectives; or similarities in their constitution or differences in their targeted audiences. The individuals I selected for interview had wide ranging relationships and multiple executive board memberships at the local, regional and global level. The extent of the relationships between the organisations active in the region is identified in the opening chapter (p.22). Document analysis of the quality assurance networks, the GCC documents and the initial interviews saw governance (M1)

emerge as a mechanism. The exploration of context, “how it is structured and how key agents under study fit into it – interact with it and constitute it – is vital for explanation” (Sayer, 2010:167). Early stages of the interview analysis process very clearly identified political climate (C4) as significant in terms of explanation of the ability of quality assurance networks to close the gap in terms of a GCC regional approach to quality assurance. The next section outlines in more detail how I selected the documents.

5.5 Sampling: Selecting documents

A series of judgements related to the relevance and robustness of specific documents must be made, particularly in relation to the purpose of answering the research questions. The challenge here is that a wide range of documents can contain data that may be relevant. Documents ranging from policies, business plans and websites to impact studies and case studies can all contribute to theory development, but in order to make the process of selection and judgement for inclusion manageable in the context of this research, I utilised Wong *et al*'s (2013a:34) two criteria of relevance and rigour to make decisions on inclusion and exclusion.

Relevance is determined on the basis of whether or not the document can contribute to theory building and/or testing. Rigour is determined on the basis of whether or not the methods used to generate the data contained within the document are credible and trustworthy. The research focused on if and how the quality assurance networks were closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC. I needed to explain how this happens (if it does), under what conditions, to whose benefit and why. On this basis, document analysis was considered important as it can contribute to theory building, and the use of Fairclough's (2010) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) —which is based on a realist ontology—gives assurance that the data is credible and trustworthy. Document analysis includes the use of websites as a primary source. The purpose of using websites was aimed at locating information (documentation) related to the constitution/charter of the quality assurance networks including their organisation, structure, objectives, location/headquarters, partner organisations and links to any other organisations. Where available, other information, such as policies and meeting minutes, was also taken into consideration (see table 5.0 p.77). In selecting for relevance, the inclusion of the documentation related to the quality assurance networks was of primary focus, without which the research questions could not be answered. The rigour of these documents was validated by the fact that the websites were active and current. This was further validated though the interviews conducted.

Secondly, I included documentation related to GCC cooperation in education, as the focus of the research was orientated around the regionalism of quality assurance in higher education across the GCC. The most recent publication from the Information Affairs division of the GCC Secretariat General titled “GCC The Process and Achievements 2014” was analysed with particular reference

to chapter one, “Cooperation in Education”. This document outlines the range of activities and decisions related to a range of joint projects and committees aimed at integration and cooperation in the field of higher education. In tandem with the “Cooperation in Education” chapter of the “GCC The Process and Achievements” document, I also analysed the “Charter of the Council” and GCC “Economic Agreement”. These documents are important in terms of theory building and the context in which regionalism of quality assurance is occurring (or not). In analysing these three documents, tentative explanations began to appear at this stage, with comity and cooperation (C1) clearly evident in the Cooperation in Education chapter. Table 5.0 below outlines the documents selected for analysis and explains the rationale for inclusion in this research.

Table 5.0 Documents selected for analysis

Documents Selected for Analysis	Rationale for Inclusion
GCC The Process and Achievements	Chapter 1 Cooperation in Education outlines the range of activities and decisions related to joint projects and committees aimed at integration and cooperation in the field of higher education and quality assurance. The chapter outlines the level of progress and the chapter—as an object—can identify where cooperation happens, how, and by whom. It also outlines the intentions and objectives of GCC cooperation in higher education.
The Charter of the Council (GCC)	The Charter of the Council, signed in May 1981, formally established the institution known as the GCC. The objectives of the GCC according to the Charter is to effect coordination, integration and interconnection between member states in all fields in order to achieve unity between them. The third objective is to formulate similar regulations in various fields including education and culture. The Charter—as an object—can verify that the GCC has an objective of similar regulations in the field of education.
The Economic Agreement Between the Gulf Cooperation Council States	The Economic Agreement, signed in December 2001, has thirty-three articles related to economic integration and enhancement. It includes four articles related to education including Article 3, 12, 14, and 15. The Economic Agreement—as an object—can verify the GCC objectives of an integrated approach to higher education.

ANQAHE Constitution	<p>The constitution outlines the principles through which the organisation is governed; it includes the mission, goals, objectives, methods to achieve objectives, finance, membership, governing bodies, and the board. The constitution outlines the purpose of the network and how, through its objectives, it can contribute to cooperation and coordination of quality assurance across the region. The document—as an object—can identify mechanisms—such as governance—and the context within which the mechanism is activated such as comity and cooperation.</p>
Oman Quality Network in Higher Education Guidelines	<p>Outlines the principles of how the network is governed; its mission, principles and purpose; members, executive committee; financial and operational matters. The document—as an object—can identify mechanisms—such as governance—and the context within which the mechanism is activated such as comity and cooperation.</p>
Association of Arab Universities Mission and Goals Document	<p>Outlines the mission and goals of the Association. The document also includes an overview of its functions as well as its nine affiliated institutions. It briefly outlines the funding mechanism and its membership. The document as an object can identify mechanisms—such as governance—and the context within which the mechanism is activated such as comity and cooperation.</p>
Arab Organisation for Quality Assurance in Education (AROQA) Mission and Objectives Document	<p>Outlines the vision, mission and members of the organisation. It states the range of services provided including quality assurance, accreditation, annual conference, workshops as well as an online peer reviewed journal. The document—as an object—can identify mechanisms—such as governance—and the context within which the mechanism is activated such as comity and cooperation.</p>
Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW)	<p>Islamic World commonly refers to the unified Islamic community (Ummah) which consists of those countries that adhere to Islam or to societies where Islam is practiced (Choudhury, Piscatori & Khan, 2018). The AQAAIW forms part of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (IOC) umbrella of organisations. The OIC includes a range of intra-Islamic institutions, federations and universities (Khan, 2017). Considered as the second largest international body after the UN, there is a general scarcity of literature on the OIC and its allied institutions and their activities. The document—as an object—can identify mechanisms and contexts.</p>

5.6 Sampling: Interview Participants

With regard to sampling, the criteria used for intensive research does not have to be decided in advance; the individuals can be selected as the research progresses and importantly “as an understanding of the membership of the *causal* group is built” (Sayer, 2010:164, italics in original). A causal group is defined by Sayer (2000:20) as the “groups or networks of specific people, institutions, discourses and things that they interact with”. The particular individuals identified for interview belong to a series of causal groups i.e. institutions in terms of quality assurance networks or agencies; individuals involved in national or institutional level quality assurance implementation; individuals in senior positions of authority; and individuals involved in quality assurance on a regional basis. By learning about one object or going from one contact to others they are linked with, I “build up a picture of the structures and casual groups of which they are part” (Sayer, 2000:20). Table 5.1 outlines the credentials of the interview participants without identifying them by name.

Pawson and Tilley (1997) recommend that interview participants are selected on their “CMO investigation potential”, with each component—context, mechanism and outcome—prompting the need for various types of respondent. Therefore, in the context of this research, I included quality assurance practitioners involved in quality assurance networks as they have specific ideas on what is it within the network that works (mechanisms) as they have experience of the field of quality assurance in the GCC and awareness of people, places and institutions for whom and in which quality assurance works. It is further noted by Pawson & Tilley (1997) that it is crucial to work with a wide range of stakeholders. For example, in the initial theory gleaning, it may be better to interview practitioners than users of quality assurance networks i.e. those who set up quality assurance networks and those who are involved in managing the networks. My first interviewee was involved in setting up the Oman Quality Network. Frontline practitioners—such as the individuals involved in institutions implementing quality assurance—offer a different perspective and may be a good source of information regarding barriers and unintended consequences (outcomes). Interview participant 4 met this criterion. Subjects of quality assurance networks (quality assurance agencies/HEI’s) are likely to be sensitised about outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) and while they may not be mechanism experts in the broad sense, they may be experts on how some of the network mechanisms have influenced some outcomes. Interview participant 2 has a dual role: as a senior executive in a national quality assurance agency combined with an executive position on a quality assurance network.

In relation to sample size there is general agreement amongst methodologists that there is no set number of interviews that can be assumed to achieve saturation (Maxwell, 2012; Sayer 2000), with Maxwell (2012) advocating that in selecting participants the researcher should identify individuals that best demonstrate the phenomena of interest followed by selection of individuals that are most accessible and have the necessary credentials to acquiring the understandings being explored.

Manzano (2016) notes that irrespective of the total number of interviews, realist research should aspire to accumulate vast quantities of data. Large amounts of primary or secondary data are required - even with a small sample size - to allow for the movement from constructions to explanations of causal mechanisms (Manzano, 2016), keeping in mind, the unit of analysis is not the person, but the events and processes around them, which means that each interview reveals an assortment of micro events and processes. Table 5.1 below describes the interview participants.

Table 5.1 Interview Participants

Interview Participants	Credentials
Interview Participant 1 (IP1)	Executive management position in OAAA, Oman. Highly involved in the establishment and subsequent implementation of the OQNHE. In the region 20 years, but not of the region.
Interview Participant 2 (IP2)	Executive management position in a National Quality Assurance Agency; also holds executive position in ANQAHE. In and of the region.
Interview Participant 3 (IP3)	Founder and VP of ANQAHE; Executive management position in a National Quality Assurance Agency; Board member of several international quality assurance bodies. In and of the region.
Interview Participant 4 (IP4)	Executive management position responsible for Quality in a regional institute of higher education, former board member of the GCC Secretary General, Quality and Accreditation Agency. In and of the region.
Interview Participant 5 (IP5)	Senior academic role in a regional institute of higher education; reviewer and panel chair for regional QQA institutional and programme reviews. In the region 12 years, but not of the region.
Interview Participant 6 (IP6)	Executive management position in a regional institute of higher education; previous roles include institutional responsibility for academic quality assurance in the region; in the region four years, not of the region.

5.7 Methodological Use of Theory Led Interviews

5.7.1 Designing the Interview Questions

As I outline in section 5.3 the use of interviews is considered the most common methodological tool in realist research. I used theory led interviews as realist interviewing in the form of theory led interviews are not only to inform decisions related to overall research design, participant selection and the means of combining different research methods but importantly to yield insights into features such as knowledge of events, processes and examples as well as causes and underlying conditions. The analytical framework of theory led interviewing creates a mechanism—which can include questions, suggested probes and directions for further discussion—which enhances the insight, nature and complexity of the accounts being developed (Smith & Elger, 2012). The theory driven interview in realist evaluation research has been used to “inspire/validate/falsify/modify” (Pawson, 1996:295) hypothesis on how programmes and interventions work (Manzano, 2016). The interview questions provide the researcher the means with which to acquire answers to research method questions (Maxwell, 2012:104). I chart the relationship between the realist research questions as initially presented in chapter two (p.30) and the interview questions in table 5.2. Importantly, the table also outlines the purpose and means of asking the questions. This is where the relationship between the conceptual framework and the empirical work is demonstrated. The conceptual framework was developed from the theory utilising abstraction and retrodution methods.

The distinguishable difference between research method questions and research interview questions is that research method questions “seek to understand the causal mechanisms at play in a unique context which go on to reproduce particular outcomes”, while research interview questions are adapted to the “concrete specificity of a distinctive context” (Roberts, 2014:6). A degree of flexibility in interview question design allowed me the ability to extract information about “the unique interaction of causal mechanisms in a particular context” (Roberts, 2014:6). The realist interview is considered generally to be semi-structured and contain both exploratory and structured questions (Manzano, 2016). A key point noted by Pawson (1996:299) is that the subject of the interview is not the subject matter. In realist interviewing, Pawson (1996:299) indicates that the “*researcher's theory is the subject matter of the interview, and the subject is there to confirm or falsify and, above all, to refine that theory*” (italics in original). The alignment of realist research questions to interview questions is presented in table 5.2. The table also illustrates the focus of each question and what I wanted to know.

Table 5.2 Research questions aligned to interview questions

Research Question	Interview Question	Focus	Purpose & Means of asking (Theoretical Perspectives)
<p>1. What does the existence of this object/practice assume? What are its pre-conditions? e.g. what does the existence of quality assurance networks assume? (e.g. exchange of information, dissemination of knowledge, increased understanding of international quality assurance developments, improved professional expertise, and strengthening liaisons between quality assurance bodies in different countries.</p>	<p>Please comment on the position of quality assurance practices in higher education across the GCC.</p> <p>For what reason(s) was this organisation founded? (e.g. mission/vision)</p> <p>What are the current activities of this organisation?</p> <p>How many people/organisations/institutions participate in your organisation?</p> <p>How many members do you serve?</p> <p>What contingencies in the environment exist/need to exist (e.g. competing processes, facilitating factors, inhibiting conditions) to be successful?</p> <p>How does the network influence quality assurance practice across the GCC region?</p>	<p>To know the general position of QA practice in the GCC as understood by network members.</p> <p>To know the nature of the organisation, activities it is involved in, the range of members (who are they, who and what do they represent).</p> <p>To know the impact of the general environment on the workings of the networks in terms of competition, factors that inhibit and factors that facilitate progress.</p> <p>To know if network members identify the network as an important actor in the regionalisation of QA practice within the GCC and if so, how does it achieve this? What measures does it take influence QA practice in the GCC?</p>	<p>Realism/CCPEE-Realism—abstraction & retrodution —through the use of interviews and documents—of mechanisms leading to conceptualisation of how these mechanisms operate.</p> <p>CCPEE - identification of educational relationships with and within societies and identified through the layers. Identify distinctive cultural orientation (specific meaning) & institutional structures and dynamics.</p>

Research Question	Interview Question	Focus	Purpose & Means of asking (Theoretical Perspectives)
<p>2. What conditions must be fulfilled to be successful? (political, regulatory, economic, social, cultural).</p>	<p>What is the status of your organisation? E.g. Association/NGO?</p> <p>What are the needs and interests of the higher education institutions within this network?</p> <p>What are the needs and interests of the government & state institutions within this network?</p> <p>What are the needs and interests of other institutions (e.g. global organisations/agencies/other networks e.g. WB/UNESCO/) within this network. Who are these actors?</p> <p>How does the regulatory/political environment influence the ability of the network to engage in its activities across the GCC? Are there particular aspects that facilitate the processes/particular aspects challenge the process?</p> <p>How does the economic environment influence the ability of the network to engage in its activities across the GCC? Are there particular aspects that facilitate the processes/particular aspects challenge the process?</p>	<p>To identify mechanisms as they are deemed to be in existence by network members; to locate the mechanisms within cultural, political and economic perspectives as they are seen to exist. What can be seen? What is hidden?</p>	<p>Realism/CCPEE</p> <p>Realism—abstraction & retrodution —through the use of interviews and documents, of mechanisms leading to conceptualisation of how these mechanisms operate. Specifically, to identify mechanisms from a political and legal, economic and cultural perspectives.</p> <p>CCPEE - identification of educational relationships with and within societies and identified through the layers. Identify distinctive cultural orientation (specific meaning) & institutional structures and dynamics.</p>

Research Question	Interview Question	Focus	Purpose & Means of asking (Theoretical Perspectives)
Q2 continued	<p>How does the cultural environment influence the ability of the network to engage in its activities across the GCC? Are there particular aspects that facilitate the processes/particular aspects challenge the process?</p> <p>As a member of this network, are you also involved in other similar institutions (e.g. MOE, QQA etc). What is the impact of this?</p> <p>How do you communicate your concerns to important or influential people in government?</p> <p>How is your organisation different from other organisations carrying out the same function (cultural, economic, financial)?</p> <p>Do you network with any other organisation or institution? (If yes) With whom? How do you coordinate your activities?</p>		

Research Question	Interview Question	Focus	Purpose & Means of asking (Theoretical Perspectives)
<p>3. What are the basic conditions for the development of quality assurance networks?</p>	<p>External conditions: Are there any particular market forces at play (e.g. economic/political/legal/cultural) that are viewed as necessary conditions for the development of networks in meeting their vision and mission? How can conditions hamper development of networks?</p> <p>Internal organisation conditions: Do you have any kind of background that has enabled you to help solve some of the challenges facing achievement of the goals of the network (e.g. educational, professional, familial, contacts, interpersonal links)?</p> <p>Where members are volunteers, how much time and what role flexibility can they offer? Is this important?</p> <p>What skills have your committee members brought with them and what skills have they learned here? (e.g. expertise, communication).</p> <p>Other inputs such as administrative support; micro politics; culture; information needs; impetus; skills</p>	<p>A more specific focus than question 2. What external conditions do network leaders identify as currently existing (e.g. market forces) or needing to exist. Of these external conditions which hamper and help networks? Why are these important?</p> <p>The internal conditions also influence the ability to develop (e.g. Watkins, 2009). What conditions in particular do network leaders see as significant in the development? Why are these important? If conditions are absent, why is this important?</p>	<p>Realism/CCPEE</p> <p>Realism—abstraction & retrodution—through the use of interviews and documents—of mechanisms leading to conceptualisation of how these mechanisms operate.</p> <p>CCPEE - identification of educational relationships with and within societies and identified through layers. Identify distinctive cultural orientation (specific meaning) & institutional structures and dynamics.</p>

Research Question	Interview Question	Focus	Purpose & Means of asking (Theoretical Perspectives)
<p>4. What are the basic conditions for the regionalisation of quality assurance practices across the GCC?</p>	<p>What general mechanisms need to be in place to regionalise quality assurance practice across the GCC e.g. policy discussion and deliberation, coalition formation, standard setting, policy consideration?</p> <p>What mechanisms are currently in place to regionalise QA practice e.g. Regional Qualification Framework/Benchmark statements/?</p> <p>What needs to be in place? How can this happen? How can the network position itself?</p>	<p>Why has the GCC achieved the level of regionalisation it has today in terms of QA practice in higher education? What have been the forces behind this achievement. Is it actually important to stakeholders to have regional GCC QA framework in place? What needs to happen to replicate what has happened in other regions in terms of QA? What is the role of networks in this? Can they achieve this?</p>	<p>Realism/CCPEE</p> <p>Realism—abstraction & retroduction—through the use of interviews and documents—of mechanisms leading to conceptualisation of how these mechanisms operate.</p> <p>CCPEE - identification of educational relationships with and within societies and identified through layers. Institutional structures & dynamics. Regional basis of distinctions in terms of geographical context.</p>
<p>5. What are the respective roles of quality assurance networks and Arab culture in accounting for the regionalisation of quality assurance practices across the GCC? e.g. Can/could object A e.g. quality assurance networks exist without B e.g. Arab culture (as a means of sorting out the conditions of existence of social phenomena)</p>	<p>What is the role of Arab culture in terms of the existence of networks and the ability of the network to be involved in the regionalisation of QA practice across the GCC.</p> <p>Culturally, what restrictions does your organisation face in its operation (e.g. traditional norms, knowledge, expertise)</p> <p>Culturally, what benefits does your organisation gain in its operation (e.g. traditional norms, knowledge, expertise)</p>	<p>What do network members specifically identify with, in terms of Arab culture, and what does the existence of these social phenomena mean for regionalisation of QA practice and the role of networks.</p>	<p>Realism/CCPEE –</p> <p>Realism—abstraction & retroduction—through the use of interviews and documents—of mechanisms leading to conceptualisation of how these mechanisms operate.</p> <p>CCPEE - identification of educational relationships with and within societies and identified through layers. Universe of meaning, institutional structures and dynamics, world view, regional basis.</p>

<p>6. What are the respective roles of quality assurance networks and political economy in accounting for the regionalisation of quality assurance practices across the GCC? e.g. Can/could object A e.g. quality assurance networks exist without B e.g. political economy (as a means of sorting out the conditions of existence of social phenomena)</p>	<p>What is the role of the GCC political and economic characteristics in terms of the existence of networks and the ability of the network to be involved in the regionalisation of QA practice across the GCC.</p> <p>Politically and economically, what benefits does your organisation gain in its operation (e.g. financial, structural, regulations to set up, knowledge)</p> <p>Politically and economically, what restrictions does your organisation face in its operation (e.g. financial, structural, regulations to set up, knowledge)</p> <p>How is your organisation funded? How much funding do you receive from donations and what percentage of your source of funding does this constitute?</p> <p>How much funding do you receive from government and what percentage of your source of funding does this constitute?</p> <p>How much funding do you receive from individuals/associations/ members and what percentage of your source of funding does this constitute?</p> <p>Any other sources? What kinds of demands do some of these sources place on you in terms of activities to pursue?</p> <p>What are the costs of running this organisation?</p>	<p>What do network members specifically identify with, in terms of GCC political and economic aspects, and what does the existence of these phenomena mean for regionalisation of QA practice and the role of networks.</p>	<p>Realism/CCPEE –</p> <p>Realism—abstraction & retrodution—through the use of interviews and documents—of mechanisms leading to conceptualisation of how these mechanisms operate.</p> <p>CCPEE - identification of educational relationships with and within societies and identified through layers. Institutional structures & dynamics. Regional basis of distinctions in terms of geographical context</p>
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Research Question	Interview Question	Focus	Purpose & Means of asking (Theoretical Perspectives)
Q6 continued	What other obstacles exist in Arab Gulf/GCC society in meeting the goals of this organisation?		

5.7.2 Conducting the interviews: Theory Gleaning

Manzano (2016) recommends a three-phase approach—theory gleaning (or idea generation), refinement and consolidation—for conducting the realist interview. These phases can be used interchangeably—which I did—with theory being the common dominator, although Manzano (2016) indicates that these three phases are not a prescriptive set of steps. Theory gleaning interviews are often utilised in the first set of interviews and help to articulate first order theories. In the case of this research, these first order theories are those that are part of the conceptual framework identified in chapter two for example, cultural patterns and the associated components of civil society or symbolic & institutional frameworks of civilisation. These identify how the contextual circumstances of the quality assurance networks impact on quality assurance outcomes. In this instance, the questions start with a range of possible contexts, mechanisms and outcomes on which the interviewee can articulate their views. Where interviewees were directly involved in a quality assurance network, questions were orientated at the meso-level and the micro-level.

The interviews started with asking the interviewees general questions about their role, their experiences and their views of quality assurance in higher education in the GCC region. These were mostly exploratory with a view to ascertaining how quality assurance works, for whom and how—if at all—the quality assurance networks were involved. In exploring the context, questions such as ‘what is the position of quality assurance practice across the GCC?’, ‘has practice changed since the introduction of quality assurance networks?’, what contingencies in the environment—facilitating factors such funding, volunteer effort, or access to experts—need to exist for the quality assurance networks to be successful?’. Other context questions, such as those related to regulatory status (i.e. NGO), level of autonomy, or structures, allow for exploration of power contexts. Strong questions about context, according to Manzano (2016:355) encourage interviewees to compare “subgroups, locations, time, before and after”. The purpose, according to Stake (2010:95) of the qualitative interview is not only to “find out about ‘a thing’ that the researchers were unable to observe themselves” but also to “obtain unique information or interpretation by the person interviewed”. The examples, events and stories helped me to develop tentative explanations. These explanations were

built upon, based on further interviews, observations and comparisons, developing the rigour of the research (Pawson, 2013). For example, financial resourcing of the networks plays a big part in the ongoing sustainability of the organisations. ANQAHE executives have proposed a mechanism of dealing with this issue which includes recruiting another layer of volunteers from the agency members, whose responsibility lies with increasing funding. Another proposal is to charge for their workshops.

5.7.3 Conducting the interviews: Theory Refinement

In the context of Pawson (1996), the second phase of Manzano's three phase approach is theory refinement. In this stage, I incorporated second level theories into the interview questions. As I become more knowledgeable of the quality assurance networks, the questions become more orientated towards the refinement of specific outcome patterns. The meanings I attributed to previous interview answers or observations were presented to the interviewee (i.e. when they implemented the Oman Network for Quality Assurance, they had this problem with status, have you seen this with the Arab Network for Quality Assurance? Its headquarters are located in Cairo, Egypt, does its NGO status serve a function?).

Interview 1

P1: one of the biggest challenges for the OQN is its status. Because at the beginning it was under the OAAA, it was under the agency. We kind of had Her Excellency as the patron and we [OAAA] were kind of looking after it. It's like it is growing up and leaving home, but it doesn't have a status. In Oman, for it to operate, it needs to be recognised as a social organisation.

Researcher: Like an NGO or civil organisation?

P1: Exactly. They have lots of rules and regulations and it comes under the Ministry of Social Development. Any kind of society or professional organisation needs to have a status in order to be able to employ people, rent premises, have its name on a website. It does have its own bank account. So, it has got those in place, but that is the challenge at the moment. But there have been conversations, with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Higher Education in order to get the OQNHE its own status. But that has been a long journey and it is quite hard, and I think that it is kind of in limbo as an association.

Interview 2

Researcher: Do you think that there are benefits or equally challenges of the regulatory environment within which an organisation like ANQAHE has to operate within, and can you tell me what those benefits are? Or equally, what those challenges may be within the regulatory environment. That could be simply where the organisation is based, where it's registered, are there any things like that? When they implemented the Oman Network for Quality Assurance, they had this problem with status, have you seen this with the Arab Network for Quality Assurance?

P2: We are registered as a nonprofit nongovernment agency. We don't interfere with other regulatory bodies or regulations, anything. We always help them to sustain their work, help

agencies to sustain their work. Our main threat, I would say the problem we are facing, is funds to sustain this network now. Because not all people unfortunately can pay from their own pocket now. Especially with this restriction of training and salaries.

Individual cases can be used to refine general theories (i.e. status of the organization such as NGO) while also exploring unobservable events. In this example, I am trying to explore the mechanisms that grant power to quality assurance networks, facilitating their ability to influence quality assurance within and across the GCC states. In this case, the interviewees, with their knowledge of how the network operates, become more like informants.

5.7.4 Conducting the interviews: Theory Consolidation

Phase three is interlinked with the other phases. The theory consolidation process is a second level of refinement and are often linked to the later interviews, although, this is not always the case. This is when third level theories are built, and the process can require investigation of other rules and protocols. In summary, this phase gives more consideration to “a smaller number of CMOs which belong to many families of CMOs” (Manzano, 2016:356).

This is where CMO configuration begins to take shape. Table 5.3 and 5.4 give an example of families of mechanisms and contexts as a preamble to CMO configuration. This is a snapshot of mechanisms and contexts as identified in the early stages of document analysis and part way through the completion of the interviews and includes categories within each cluster of mechanism (Jolly & Jolly, 2014).

5.7.5 Interviews: the role of abstraction and retrodution

In terms of analysis, I needed to move from the empirical to the real (mechanisms) which means I needed to make use of abstraction and retrodution. The analytical process involves describing what is observed from the interviews in terms of the theory (the conceptual framework) in order to determine the relation between things. In doing this, I can observe regularities in the pattern of events or in other words what happens if and when powers are activated, what they do and what ensues when they do. This can involve combining observations, in tandem with the theory, to produce an explanation of the mechanism that caused the event. For example, following completion of interview one, I made some notes about salient aspects of the interview, for example, patronage of the network, the effort of volunteers, empowering through training, legal status of the network, amongst others. Following completion of the transcript, I began to read through the script and started to identify points raised in the interview and consider them in relation to the conceptual framework. This is demonstrated in figure 5.0, with additional examples in appendix one. In figure 5.0, 1 as it appears on the script refers to the cultural patterns of the conceptual framework and the beliefs and values dimension. This is the process of describing what is observed in terms of the theory. For

example, under the cultural patterns component of the framework, I included “Patronage” alongside the *symbolic and institutional frameworks of civilisation*. This is relevant in the Oman Network setting, as the patronage of HE Minister Of Education is prevalent throughout the script and deemed to be necessary to the ongoing sustainability of the network, particularly in the absence of the completion of the formal governmental requirements for NGO status. At this stage, I also included “Patronage” under the *status* element of the Power component of the framework. This is relevant here, as the patronage of the network somewhat protects it, particularly in light of the absence of formal NGO status being granted to the network. Examples can be seen in Table 2.0 p.40. This allowed me to begin the development of families of mechanisms and contexts, which I added to as I conducted and completed the interviews and document analysis. For example, in the case of Interview one, “Patronage” sits under the Governance (M1) family of mechanisms and is referred to as M1.1. Where I saw similar instances in other interviews, the data was identified with M1.1, as per table 5.5. Table 5.4 contains an example of the family of mechanisms associated with M1: Governance in GCC and Arab organisations. The table includes the category name for the mechanism (political patronage mechanism) and a category description (formal and informal political patronage leading to political insulation). Finally, each category includes examples from document analysis and interviews.

The first interview allowed for the distinction of possible C’s (contexts), possible M’s (mechanisms) and possible intended and unintended outcomes. As indicated in chapter two, in order to investigate causal processes, realists contend, as a first step, the need to abstract underlying causal powers (or mechanisms), of the quality assurance networks and conceptualise how these powers or mechanisms operate. In conceptualising the mechanisms, it is assumed that they will only be active under specific contexts. Contexts describe the features of the conditions in which, in this case quality assurance networks, are introduced and are relevant to the operationalisation of the mechanisms. The theory led-interviews assist the researcher in abstraction which is achieved by “constructing a model of a potential mechanism through analogies to other known objects, which can then be used to explain a set of observable patterns” (Roberts, 2014:5).

This process substituted a pilot interview due to the very nature of the fact that theory refinement occurs through the process of conducting the interviews, in that as the researcher becomes more knowledgeable, the questions become more orientated towards the refinement of specific outcome patterns.

As the number of interviews progressed and more theory was collected from the documents I began to construct outcome patterns (Manzano, 2016). This is expanded upon in the next chapter. Furthermore, Pawson’s (2013) notion of emergence, in the context of realist evaluation, suggests that researchers should also “plan for the unplanned and be ready for the exploration of unexpected contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (Manzano, 2016: 352). I expected to find cooperation as a

Table 5.3 Family of Mechanisms				
M1 Governance	M2 Status	M3 Conduit	M4 Improvement of Knowledge & Skills	M5 Access to Resources
<p>M1.1 The political patronage mechanism (E)</p> <p>M1.2 The multilayered network governance structure mechanism(E)</p> <p>M1.3 The Executive Board Mechanism (E)</p> <p>M1.4The Organisational Structure Mechanism (E)</p> <p>M1.5 The organisational reach mechanism (E)</p> <p>M1.6 The 'type of organisation' the network activities target mechanism (E)</p> <p>M1.7 The "Volunteer effort" mechanism (E)</p>	<p>M2.1 The "Status" mechanism(C)</p>	<p>M3.1 The "Conduit" mechanism (E) and (C)</p> <p>M3.2 The 'interaction between Arab nationals' mechanism (E)</p> <p>M3.3 The 'Global' Mechanism (E)</p>	<p>M4.1 The "Human Capital Agenda" mechanism (E) and (C)</p> <p>M4.2 The "Training and Development" mechanism (E)</p> <p>M4.3 The "High Staff Turnover" mechanism (C)</p> <p>M4.4 The 'Nationalisation of Workforce' mechanism (C)</p>	<p>M5.1 The "Human Resources" mechanism (C)</p> <p>M5.2 The "Financial Resources" mechanism (E)</p>

E = Enabling; C=Constraining

key mechanism, as it was this point that drew my attention to the networks as a research starting point. The standard discourse of the networks is about collaboration and cooperation. However, throughout the document analysis and the interviews I was surprised about the extent of how cooperation is utilised as a discourse. But as thinly institutionalised organisations (Doige, 2008)—or described more aptly as “paper tigers” (Beck, 2014:2)—these organisations lack characteristics that should be visible in a regional organisation—action triggers, policy structures and processes and performance structures i.e. legal, formal and informal capacity of the organisation to make a

decision and resources necessary to implement the decision undertaken. This was not only evident at the network level, but also at the level of the GCC as an institution in itself.

Table 5.4 Family of Contexts			
C1 Comity & Cooperation	C2 Intergovernmentalism	C3 Arab Islamic Culture	C4 Political Climate
C.1.1 The 'Committees affect decisions' context (C)	C 2.1 The 'National Sovereignty' context (C)	C3.1 The 'Organisational cultural agenda' context (C)	C4.1 The 'Political turbulence' context (C)
C.1.2 The 'Cooperation in developing regulations' context (E)	C 2.2 The "Paper tiger institution" context (C)	C3.2 The 'Arab regional culture' context (C)	C4.2 The 'Political Will' context (C)
C.1.3 The Majlis Culture Context (E)	C2.3 The "Regional institutional cooperation" context (C)	C3.3 The 'Nationalism' context (C)	C4.3 The 'political interest through education' context (E)
C 1.4The Competition Context (E)	C2.4 The 'Absence of a regulatory structure' context (C)		

E = Enabling; C=Constraining

As the tables 5.3 and 5.4 demonstrate at this stage, families of mechanisms include governance, status, conduit, improvement in knowledge and skills and access to resources. The tables also indicate where the mechanism is constraining or enabling. The context within which the mechanisms occur include comity and cooperation; intergovernmentalism; Arab Islamic culture and political climate. Again, these contexts were identified as enabling or constraining.

Table 5.5 contains an example of the family of mechanisms associated with M1: Governance in GCC and Arab organisations. The table includes the category name for the mechanism (political patronage mechanism) and a category description (formal and informal political patronage leading to political insulation). Finally, each category includes examples from document analysis and interviews.

Table 5.5
M1: Governance in GCC and Arab organisations

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
Formal and informal political patronage leading to political insulation	The political patronage mechanism (E)	<p>Interview 1: The patron is HE Minister for Education. If you have support at that level, it means you are going to have sustainability.</p> <p>Interview 1: The GCC like the ONQN model. The minister took it to the Ministers Meeting in 2012 because she is the patron of it and is able to say - look at what we are doing. They all got very excited by it.</p> <p>Interview 5: Because of where we are, there is strong patronage of quality, sustainability is strong patronage. It's how things work. The higher up you've got a patron, the more powerful you are. And the more protected you are until it all shifts.</p>
Multi-layered governance structure allows for planning and implementation of objectives	The multilayered network governance structure mechanism(E)	<p>Document analysis ANQAHE: The CEO of the BQA and the General Director of the BQA National Qualifications Framework Director both hold Board positions on two networks. The CEO is the current Vice President and Former Chair of ANQAHE and the Executive Board President of AQAIIW; The General Director of the BQA holds position of Secretary General of ANQAHE; and the position of Secretariat of the AQAIIW.</p> <p>Interview 1: However, there has been a close association between the OQN and OAAA and we have advised them where we have picked up stuff from the Quality Audit reports and where you might want to do something in a particular area or you might want to offer more support in an area.</p>

<p>Membership of Executive Boards acts as a conduit to multiple organisations</p>	<p>The Executive Board Mechanism (E)</p>	<p>Document analysis ANQAHE: Thirteen members of the ANQAHE Board represent five GCC quality assurance agencies BQA, CAA in UAE, NCAA in Saudi Arabia, the OAAA in Oman; NBAQ in Kuwait as well as the AAU; the Centre of Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Higher Education in Lebanon; Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya; the Higher Education Commission (HEAC) in Jordan and the NAQAEE in Egypt. Where progress in regional quality is not easily implementable through the structures of the GCC; a route of access through the network via the national state quality agencies may be the way forward for a more regional approach to regional quality.</p> <p>Interview 1: Ministry of HE are ex-eflico member. So they have a direct relationship with the network. The other ministries yes, in as much, say for example, the current Chair is Dean of one of the Ministry of ManPower colleges. So, there is a connection, but it is indirect rather than direct.</p> <p>Interview 1: the executive committee are all volunteers who are voted. There is an AGM, nominations are submitted, before the AGM. People vote for the members. There are six or eight, there is a chair, secretary, treasurer. And they are all volunteers. They meet three or four times a year, in fact they meet more often when they have events like conferences. It varies, some EC are more active than others. I think it is a challenge. They don't have a permanent secretariat and one of the biggest challenges for the OQN is its status. Because at the beginning it was under the OAC, it was under the agency.</p> <p>Interview 1: they now have a Ministry of HE representative on the Committee as an Ex Officio member; the OAAA is on the committee as an Ex Officio member. We no longer provide admin support, that has now been handed over to the sector.</p> <p>Interview 1: You are only as good as your executive committee. The EC are busy people. It can get a bit messy, a bit disorganised because, where is the accountability.</p> <p>Interview 1: he Chair is based up in Ibra, which is up near the border. To come all the way to Muscat for meetings is a big commitment. There is also a big commitment on behalf of the institutions, because they have to allow the Deans and their staff to come to these meetings.</p> <p>Interview 3: "I'm on the advisor board of CHEA International Quality Group and we are working actually to globalise the quality assurance".</p> <p>Interview 4: There is some networks currently in the GCC. The Quality Assurance Network for six countries, which I was a member, for the GCC in Riyadh. We worked to state the first principles and terms of reference. This was started in 2013, I was a part of it. Then they realised they wanted a higher level. They wanted the members to be ministry level. Maybe this was the challenge, because when you go higher, there is a lot of responsibilities this means that they cannot keep this group together.</p>
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<p>Networks and their complex interactions occur due to the nature of their structures</p>	<p>The Organisational Structure Mechanism (E)</p>	<p>Document analysis of the networks: affiliations to international and global organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank to regional organisations such as ALESCO and the GCC Supreme Council as well as a range of international quality assurance and accreditation outfits. At a local level, relationships exist through a range of Ministries including Education, Higher Education, Finance, Manpower/Labour. The range of relationships can be seen in Chapter 1. Some of these relationships are through formal association links such as that of ANQAHE and INQAAHE; or memorandum of understanding or agreements such as that between AROQA and the British Accreditation Council. Other, less obvious relationships exist through the governance structure of these organisations. AROQA for example has the Secretary General of the League of Arab States as its Honorary President on the Board of Directors; while Board of Trustee members include former University of Bahrain president and a UNDP Regional Co-ordinator as well as a Saudi Arabia MoHE representative and a World Bank education specialist. For the Oman Network, the MoHE and Oman Accreditation Council provide part time administration support as well as professional and expert advice.</p> <p>Interview 1: It was very well supported, by what was called the Oman Accreditation Council, as it was called at the time.</p> <p>Interview 1: The networks coming together, as a formal body gives you more opportunity to lobby, to seek funding, to identify common areas of challenge, capacity building, for sharing good practice, for the future, mutual recognition, but that could happen informally, it's a bit like a trade agreement. You can sit and talk about trade agreements with blocs but then what will happen, there was a big thing with the GCC and the US and then Bahrain went off and signed its own thing with the US anyway. Things happen at many different levels.</p> <p>Interview 1: unlike other associations, it's the institutions that are members, not the individuals. Professional organisations would normally have members and because they haven't got a model where an organisation or an institution is a member, they struggled with that. I think that is part of the problem.</p> <p>Interview 1: The whole thing about the OQN is that it is institutional level, it not QA level, because there is already ANQHE, the AAU group, there is all sorts of networks,</p>
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Table 5.5
M1: Governance in GCC and Arab organisations

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
<p>Type of organisation the networks' activities are directed at</p>	<p>The 'type of organisation' the network activities target mechanism (E)</p>	<p>Document analysis of the networks: ANQAHE's work is primarily focused on the Arab region quality assurance agencies; with a secondary focus on the HEI's. OQNHE is focused only on the HEI's; while AAU and AROQA aim their work at and across Arab universities. AQAIIW focuses on Islamic World quality assurance agencies.</p> <p>Interview 2: Not all the members of ANQAHE unfortunately actually are active. Only a very few are them are very active in the region</p>

	<p>The “Volunteer effort” mechanism</p>	<p>Interview 1: There is no training for them as such. There is a handover/induction at the beginning, but there isn't really any training for them. They come with the skills that they have. Basically, when they sit around and talk about who is going to be the treasurer and who is going to be the secretary, they volunteer for those roles. But there isn't a skills audit, when people are voted onto the committee it is because they are willing to do and not because they have a particular set of skills. However, when they do need a skill set, they go back to their institutions.</p> <p>Interview 1: At the moment, the admin support for the EC is a former student of one of the institutions. That is nice. They don't really have much engagement with students. That is really important point. Diane Jones raised the point in the INQAHEE conference. If you like at QA Scotland and SPARQS which was an initiative to get students into quality training so that they could be useful representatives on academic bodies. The OAAA in their standards in a couple of places, we expect that student representation. There is a whole standard on student representation. But it is really not student facing at all. It is much more institution focused, staff facing. It is always good to reflect on these things. Who are we ultimately serving?</p> <p>Interview 1: It is a voluntary group of organisations coming together, run by an EC that has no finance, I mean, they don't get any financial reward, they are doing it purely voluntary. I think they are in place for 2 years and can be renewed for another two years. I think that there is a lot stability. there is always one member who stays on and it has been interesting how it works and the commitment from the sector.</p> <p>Interview 2: Finding voluntary people, especially to put efforts on quality assurance is a little hard nowadays.</p> <p>Interview 2: Sometimes when we meet with people they got really surprised when they knew that we have a full-time job. They thought we are full-time ANQAHE.</p> <p>Interview 2: Sometime we pay from our own... from our own pocket to travel. Sometime we take actually a day leave from our work</p> <p>Interview 2: The person who give me most power to let me work is our chief executive. Without, I couldn't do anything. She's given me lots of support to do many work. So she's been really supporting me. So I think one of our success, and me actually personally is that my leader giving me the time to work and to help me to do the initiatives and the meetings and etc. Some other chief executives, they don't allow their staff to travel”.</p> <p>Interview 2: Finding voluntary people, especially to put efforts on quality assurance is a little hard nowadays... It used to be six, maybe seven. Now I can tell you for ANQAHE, maybe three or two.</p> <p>Interview 5: Because even within the networks, a lot of these roles that say people like [mentions name] they are voluntary efforts if you like. While he's employed say for example by the BQA, his work and his effort with the Arab network is voluntary or so he says. You're relying on kind of the efforts of people who are ... who identify themselves as being relatively expert in the field and contribute to the national and regional agenda</p>
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Figure 5.0 Examples of identification of potential mechanisms and contexts from interview transcript

The examples highlight the identification of potential mechanisms from an interview script.

Example 1

our website. Qatar are just forming their association now and Saudi started their programme reviews six or seven years ago and now you have got Kuwait that is now also operating. The region is certainly growing and developing and it is sort of being headed C3.1 1 4 C3.1. It is about, the word that came from the conference, it is about trust and I think that people have come to accept that quality assurance is part and parcel of the higher education experience and remember here we don't have self accrediting institutions in the region like we have in places like the UK or Australia. 2 3/4 It is a very different. It is very much seen as a regulatory aspect of higher education, but less so in Oman, I would argue because when Oman started the quality assurance, the first iteration of standards was in Muscat which was the requirement of Oman's system for quality assurance and that had

Example 2

exactly what we did. In 2007 we launched two stage accreditation process. The first stage being the quality audit which is a formative process M4.2 10 standards assessment which is a summative process. Just before I joined the Oman triple A there was an enormous national training quality programme and all the modules are still available on our website under quality enhancement. This was delivered to the HEI's, the government sector, to really enable people to develop strategic plans and to look at things like stakeholder feedback and to look at developing quality management systems, to benchmarking, to process mapping. There were 18 modules delivered. I think by June, something like that, I haven't got the figures at the top of my head, but three years after they had been published on the website (2006-2007), they had been 3 downloaded 30,000 times.

Example 3

CW: Like an NGO or civil organisation?

IP1 Exactly. They have lots of rules and regulations and it comes under the Ministry of Social Development. Any kind of society or professional organisation needs to have a status in order to be able to employ people, rent premises, have its name on a website. It does have its own bank account. So, it has got those in place, but that is the challenge at the moment. But there have been conversations; with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of HE in order to get the OQN its own status. But that has been a long journey and it is quite hard, and I think that it is kind of in limbo as an association. It is a voluntary group of organisation's coming together, run by an EC that has no finance. I mean, they don't get any financial reward, they are doing it

Example 4

purely voluntary. I think they are in place for 2 years and can be renewed for another two years. I think that there is a lot stability. There is always one member who stays on and it has been interesting how it works and the commitment from the sector. The challenges are its status, unlike other associations, it's the institutions that are members, not the individuals. Professional organisations would normally have members and because they haven't got a model where an organisation or an institution is a member, they struggled with that. I think that is part of the

Example 5

organisation or an institution is a member, they struggled with that. I think that is part of the problem. M1.4 There was a very comprehensive review carried out by the British Council in 2010 and that proposal is available on the OQNH website. 10 The BC were very supportive of the OQN because they see it as an empowerment of the sector and promotion of HE. They have a strategic plan, a mission, they have a purpose. M1.4 The interesting thing from the review carried out in 2010 was that it the OQN as it was at the time, lacked a clear purpose. They interviewed vice chancellors and Deans and they sort of said - you are members of the OQN, what are you getting

Example 6

was that it the OQN as it was at the time, lacked a clear purpose. 4 They interviewed vice chancellors and Deans and they sort of said - you are members of the OQN, what are you getting from it? M1.4 4 They were saying 'well, we're not quite sure'. The challenge is 'who are you serving? they give very broad QA type workshops but also for teaching and learning. But at the end of it, who are you getting to, who are you reaching? Especially if you have a high turnover of staff. What purpose is the network? It is very broad, it could give anything from plagiarism, setting up a quality assurance office, but also e-learning and e-technologies. So, it is a very broad remit. I

5.7.6 Challenges associated with the realist interview

While realist researchers advocate interviews as a valuable tool (Maxwell 2012, Pawson & Tilley 1997 and Sayer 2000), there are also limitations. Methodological problems raised by realist researchers are primarily articulated as difficulties in analysis, principally in distinguishing between contexts (C), mechanisms (M) and outcomes (O) (Marchal *et al*, 2012). I did experience this difficulty, but I kept referring back to my earlier description as per chapter two (p.34). Mechanisms, in this case, describe what it is about quality assurance networks that bring about any effects.

Sometimes, mechanisms are hidden; while we may be able to see the outcome, we may not be able to see the workings. The quality assurance network is a measure that may facilitate the regionalism of quality assurance. The key aspect to understand is that 'the measure' is not the unit of analysis for understanding causation. Again, using Pawson and Tilley (2009), a measure may work in different ways or using realist vernacular, they may trigger different mechanisms, for example M1, M2, M3. In essence, a measure i.e. quality assurance network, may work in different ways and trigger different mechanisms. A quality assurance network may improve the level of expertise by offering training programs (M1), it may act as a conduit between quality assurance agencies (M2), it may disseminate best practice through conference (M3). Mechanisms also explain how a measure might also fail and therefore I can add some adverse processes. The status (M4) of the network may impact its ability to carry out day to day functions such as employing staff, renting premises and operating like an organisation; membership of the network might prove a barrier (M5) because of high staff turnover in the field of higher education and the pursuit of employment of nationals. Section 2.2 in chapter two, makes further distinctions between contexts (C) and outcomes (O).

Other limitations include the fact that interview participants may be orientated towards specific interests and views, for example, how participants view the world might shape views that the western approach to quality assurance is the most suitable for the GCC region. In order to address this limitation, the table of interview participants outlines the credentials of the participants including Mazawi's (2009) reference of in and of the region. The six interview participants were all based in the region, albeit for various periods of time. Three participants were in and of the region, while the remaining three were in the region, but not of the region. Two of the three participants, not of the region, had 20 years and 12 years respectively, of higher education experience in the GCC, while the last interview participant was in the region four years. As the researcher conducting the interviews, I am not of the region, but I am in the region eight years. The significance of cultural and structural forces—which are unique and complex to comprehend—and how they impact, in often invisible and in unrecognisable ways, on various actors are another limitation. Thirdly, while interviews allow access to thoughts, understanding and ideas of participants, they are not solely adequate for "analysing the multiplicity of causal factors at play in social relations" (Smith & Elgars, 2012:18). Triangulation of data sources, however, allows for a deeper analytical approach in theory development and generation.

5.7.7 Role of the researcher in conducting the interviews

The role of the interviewer is significant. Manzano (2016) adds to Pawson's (1996) methodological advice on conducting realist interviews, by adding guidelines on how to ask realist questions. As the realist interview focuses on eliciting the varying processes and outcomes of quality assurance networks, the researcher is required to take an active role in directing the questioning. This facilitates the ability to trace processes, mechanisms and outcomes as the various interviewees "meaning and

reasoning processes” about quality assurance network implementation “can help identify key contextual differences in the construction of outcome patterns” (Manzano, 2016:351). The active role of the researcher is unlike the traditional advice on how to conduct qualitative interviews, whereby the researcher is advised to conceal their knowledge, pretend incompetence, or be neutral to the topic (Manzano, 2016) for example. To generate data, as a realist interviewer I took an active, investigative and analytically orientated approach (Smith & Elger, 2012). An interviewer is considered more effective if grounded in the contextual reality of their field, particularly prior to interviewing key participants. I was aware that having knowledge of empirical and actual events allows for more in-depth probing; a simplistic, working in isolation, or inactive approach to interviewing will not yield data. Secondly, I recognised that as a researcher my values are intrinsic throughout the research process, however, to counter this, as a researcher I comprehended interviewees’ reality and structures by working through the interviewees’ accounts of their understandings and experiences which were then subjected to theory generation (ideas) (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

5.7.8 Challenges in terms of collecting primary data in the GCC context

It is important to briefly outline some challenges faced in primary research in the GCC context. Statistics on research and development (R&D) expenditure as a percentage of GDP indicate that across the GCC states a range of government spending exists. Bahrain is the lowest ranked at 119 from 135 countries (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018) with 0.10% of GDP committed to research. Oman (0.25%) with a ranking of 93; Kuwait (0.30%) with a ranking of 88; while Qatar (0.48%) is ranked 67. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) (0.87%) and Saudi Arabia (0.82%) rank 41 and 43 respectively. While research is firmly on the national agenda of all GCC countries the reality is that it is not well resourced in the most case. Some of the challenges conducting research have been outlined by others. Gengler (2015:36) noted that in conducting survey research in the GCC, a range of challenges exist in relation to gathering data, including access to a nationally representative sample, and secondly, what data is available lacks ethnic and other group identifiers. For example, the World Values Survey, which has been collecting data since 1981 from over 150 countries has only been administered in the GCC, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, since 2010. Political questions exposing the participants’ opinion toward the state or participation in political activities were not fielded in the World Values Survey. Non-state efforts to collect individual denominational data are a rarity, with Gengler (2015:36) indicating that his survey was the first of its kind in the GCC.

Data collection challenges, in the context of this research, are minor, but noteworthy in itself. All interviews, with the exception of one, were conducted face to face. IP3 was located in Egypt and a telephone interview was conducted in this case. The interview participant agreed over email to participate in an interview, following an introduction through a Bahrain based contact. The interviewee indicated that we should use the social media application “Viper” (as opposed to “Viber”) to connect as there was significant politically orientated challenges with connecting on Skype at this

time in Egypt. I was unfamiliar with this application and needed to download it to my phone. However, once downloaded, I was unsuccessful in registering as a user. I thought this was a technical failing on my behalf and I asked several work colleagues to undertake the challenge of downloading and registering. They all failed. This is a curious incident and not one for which I have an answer. I can't explain why we could not register on the application in Bahrain. While a curious incident, we conducted the telephone interview utilising regular phone to phone contact minus the use of applications.

5.8 Methodological Use of Document Analysis

The application of document analysis using critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairlough, 2010) is orientated around the realist principle of theory building. Documents serve a variety of purposes including data on the context within which quality assurance networks are positioned; background information and historical insight. Information and insights derived from documents were valuable additions to my knowledge base while also providing a means of tracking change and development over time, such as the "Chapter (1) Cooperation in Education" within the 2014 GCC Secretariat General document "GCC The Process and Achievements" document. Documents can also be used to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources (Bowen, 2009). The documents in this case were orientated towards theory building; critical discourse analysis is a methodological tool for uncovering reality and is argued to be a useful method for analysing data in accordance with the principles of a realist ontology (Jones, 2004). It does this by helping articulate the formal theory in CMO terms and has a legitimate place (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). I made judgements in terms of selection and appraisal of the documents, including decisions on what to include and exclude by actioning the two criteria of relevance and rigor to justify (Wong *et al*, 2013a). Relevance allowed for judgements on whether the document can contribute to theory building and rigor in terms of the information or data contained within the document as credible and trustworthy.

I analysed "Chapter (1) Cooperation in Education" within the 2014 GCC Secretariat General document "GCC The Process and Achievements", "The Charter of the Council" and "The Economic Agreement", specifically in relation to higher education. The purpose of analysing these documents is to explore the role of the GCC SC as a regional organisation in the development of a regional approach to quality assurance in higher education. The CDA is based on realist ontology (Sayer 2000), which views "both concrete social events and abstract social structures as part of social reality" (Fairclough, 2010:74).

Other documents analysed include the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) Constitution, the Oman Quality Network of Higher Education (OQNHE) Guidelines, the Association of Arab Universities (AAU) Mission and Goals document, the Arab Organisation for Quality Assurance in Education (AROQA) mission and objectives and the constitution and goals of

the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW). As the primary actors in the field of quality assurance networks, analysis of these documents in a systematic way allowed for the cultural patterns, power and wealth factors to be sought out, identified and further incorporated the identification of intended and unintended outcomes of the quality assurance networks and their complex interactions. Examples can be seen in table 5.5. The process of analysis is explained in chapter six (p.107).

5.9 Triangulation

The choice and phrasing of questions is important in any research, but in the context of the realist interview one of the key points is to “recount experiences and reasoning related to their context and to the emerging theories that are under investigation” (Manzano, 2016:352). In terms of the design of interview questions, it is necessary to contextualise the accounts generated by the interviews in relation to other sources of data, which can include other interviews, documents and observations and in this context the concept of triangulation becomes important. The concept of triangulation I used here is not situated in the classic rational of validity, but more so that of expansion, whereby I sought to investigate “different phenomena that interact and need to be jointly understood” (Maxwell, 2012:107). In this case, for example, (C1) Comity and Cooperation becomes highly relevant, as it appears throughout the document analysis of the GCC documents, the quality assurance network documents and also throughout the interviews.

Within this, a number of categories appear including C1.1 The “Committees affect decisions” context which is constraining and was seen mostly at the GCC institutional level; The “Cooperation in developing regulations” context, which is enabling, is seen at the quality assurance network level. The “Majlis Culture” context (enabling) is seen across all levels from the regional GCC institution to the networks and the “Competition” context (E) which is relevant at the HEI institutional level. This contextualisation can be assessed in terms of “comparative adequacy or completeness, the basis of which explanatory theories can be tested and developed (Smith & Elger, 2012:15). It should be recognised that the triangulation can involve different types of data comparison and that in developing theories, I recognised and integrated the conflicting and differing implications of such comparisons. The development of theories during data collection is recognised as a work in process, therefore allowing for “co evolution, development of theory-data and is less likely to create divisions and disconnections between data and analysis” (Smith & Elgar, 2012:27). Qualitative data collected in realist research are not simply seen as constructions but instead considered as “evidence for real phenomena and processes” (Maxwell 2012:103) with the data being used to make inferences about the phenomena and processes.

5.10 Ethical Considerations

In a wide range of disciplines, research is an issue of ethics (Flick, 2009), where ethics is considered to be the principles of right and wrong that a particular group accepts at a particular time (Bogdan *et al*, 2007). Ethical dilemmas (Flick 2009) are in abundance and as a researcher I needed to consider ethical dilemmas right from the initial planning stage though to the completed and finalised document. In essence, ethical decision-making is an active, deliberative, ongoing and repetitive process of assessing and reassessing the issues as they arise (British Educational Research Association, 2018). In handling ethical dilemmas, there is no fixed solution to problems that researchers may encounter (Burgess, 1989). As a result of this situation, I needed to reflect regularly on the work in order to maintain integrity.

Codes of ethics are many. For the purposes of this dissertation I made use of the University of Bristol Graduate School of Education Ethics Code as well as the British Education Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. The issues that dominate these codes are multitudinous, but there is a particular focus on informed consent and the protection of participants from harm (Bogdan *et al*, 2007). Informed consent ensures the participant is aware of the nature of study, voluntary nature of engagement and participation, and to be made aware of any dangers or obligations that may exist and includes the participants right to withdraw from the study (Flick, 2009). Researchers have a duty of care to protect participants from harm which requires the research design and execution is aimed at putting participants at ease and ensuring that they do not have unreasonable demands made of them (British Educational Research Association, 2018).

The principles underpinning the BERA Ethical guidelines for educational research include respect of privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of all stakeholders. Research should be conducted with integrity; with the researcher having regard for social responsibilities for reporting and dissemination.

Over the course of this research, from initial conception of idea to the finalised report, I reflected on the integrity of the research process on an ongoing basis. No major issues arose in the course of the research. The research involved interviews and document analysis. The BERA guidelines in relation to publicly available documents such as annual reports, meeting minutes and policy documents for example, do not require informed consent, as they are written with the expectation that they will be available for public use. I completed the University of Bristol online ethics form in December 2016 and received approval from the Ethics Committee in the same period. The submission requires the researcher to respond to a series of lead questions in order to determine the correct ethics pathway for the research. The online tool has a checklist of ten questions regarding research involving human participants. As the research involved human participation for interview

purposes, I was required to make a full ethics application and supporting documentation for review by the institutional research ethics committee. The supporting documentation included the research proposal, consent form and a participant information sheet (PIS).

Before conducting each interview, the participant was emailed an outline of the research, the PIS and the consent form, in advance. The PIS included statements related to anonymity and non-disclosure of names, how the data will be analysed as well as the outputs of the research. The consent form confirmed the nature of the research, the right of the participant to withdraw at any stage and that the participant has been given and understands the research and agrees to take part. Participants are identified by and referred to by number in the dissertation. In conducting the interviews, I was mindful not to ask direct political questions, as this may have the potential to make participants feel uncomfortable or indeed vulnerable, particularly those participants in and of the region. Where participants made comments that they wished not to appear in the reporting of the dissertation, the comment was not included in the transcript.

In analysing the participants responses, my focus was on interpreting the data as related to the research question and was free of judgement of ethnicity or gender. The distinction of participants as being in and of the region was utilised as a cultural pointer; where symbolic and institutional frameworks for example could be more closely investigated. All participants are located in the region.

Finally, it is noted that researchers must also pay attention to potential errors including use of inappropriate methods, absence of triangulation resulting in questionable validity and reliability of findings, and finally the possibility that respondents may not give accurate or truthful answers. Importantly, these errors are, at least in theory, possible to avoid (Scott, 2010) however, fallibilism ensures responsible rationality is practiced (Roberts, 2014). Social actors, for example are positioned in terms of how they view the world—geographically, culturally or epistemologically speaking (Scott, 2010) or the fact that the individual researcher can never have complete knowledge of how the world works and should keep searching for “knowledge about causal mechanisms in different research contexts” (Roberts, 2014:2). These two forms of fallibilism are frequently merged into one (Scott, 2010).

5.11 Conclusion

The chapter outlines the strengths and shortcomings of realist methodology and the rationale behind the methodological choice of utilising document analysis and interviews as tools to collect data. The sampling techniques utilised for both the selection of documents and interview participants is presented. The chapter also includes tentative explanations of the journey of the data collection in progress and gives examples of how I used abstraction and retrodution. The chapter closes with a discussion on the measures used in addressing ethical aspects of the research. The next chapter builds on the tentative explanations offered here and includes an overview of how the interview and

document data were analysed in order to orientate the context, mechanism, outcome (CMO) configuration and respond to the research questions.

Chapter 6 Analysing the Data

6.0 Introduction

This research focuses on the identification of mechanisms and contexts framing the development of Arab higher education, with a particular focus on the role of quality assurance networks in the construction of a GCC higher education area. I attempt to explain the complex interactions of quality assurance networks and to understand how and under what conditions they contribute to the construction of a GCC higher education area. In doing so, I seek to respond to the following four aims. To focus on the GCC region—which lacks a regional approach to higher education in general and quality assurance in particular—and the role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap. Secondly, to understand under what conditions this regionalisation approach to quality assurance in GCC higher education space happens, to whose benefit and why? Thirdly to establish if and how quality assurance networks are closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why? Finally, add to the body of knowledge related to critical cultural political economy of education.

6.1 Realist Data Analysis using the Conceptual Framework

The aim of this chapter is to outline the principles used for analysing and reporting the data and how I actioned these principles. However, before doing so, it is useful to recap the importance and use of theory building. In keeping with a realist approach, I developed a conceptual framework using CCPEE. This first stage of analysis is outlined in chapter two (p.27). Analysis is an ongoing and iterative process in realist research. This is where I discuss how I used the conceptual framework for theory building and subsequent identification of mechanisms and contexts. CCPEE is an abstracting device to conceptualise the cultural, political and economic and makes use of theories i.e. symbolic and institutional frameworks of civilisation, which I explain as Islamic Umma and majlis and their dynamics in the context of the GCC (see table 2.0 p.40). The analytical contribution of the conceptual framework is as follows. I describe that which is observed from my interviews and documents in terms of the theory in order to understand the relations between things. This involves combining observations from the interviews and documents. The first step in this process is as follows. Each dimension from the conceptual framework was given a number e.g. beliefs and values = 1; temporal & spatial = 2; mechanisms = 3; meaning = 4; symbolic & institutional frameworks of civilization = 6; status = 9; structures = 10; funding = 12; educational institutions = 14 which is the final dimension in the framework. In reading through the interview transcripts, from the first to the last, I began to identify examples of each dimension as it related to the interview question response. An example from interview 1 is included in figure 6.0. This is where I noted possible dimensions beside different parts of the text – for example the “beliefs & values” dimension was identified as 1 and the text refers to “it is about trust”; the “funding” dimension was identified as 12 and the text

refers to “the EC [executive committee] has no finance”. In the Cooperation in Education chapter of the “GCC The Process and Achievements” document I noted that the resolution concerning equal treatment to GCC students in terms of admissions and treatment in public universities and higher education institutions of the GCC states took 27 years to progress from a resolution at Supreme Council at the 8th session (December 1987) to an agreed proposal at the meeting of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in February 2014. Based on the conceptual framework, this was added to the power dimension of “structure”. This is an example of document analysis contributing to theory building. The decision-making power of the GCC committees in terms of responding to resolutions may have a significant context influence on the mechanisms of the quality assurance networks. See appendix 2: Document Analysis GCC Documents for analysis examples of the GCC documents. The next step in the process was to update the conceptual framework with data from interviews and documents. Table 2.0 on p.40 provides an example of this. Using retroduction I was able to implement the first analytical movement in terms of analysis. This is how I used the conceptual framework in analysis. I used the theoretically orientated conceptual dimensions to begin to explain the relations between things.

Figure 6.0 Example of Identification of conceptual framework dimensions from interview transcript

six or seven years ago and now you have got Kuwait that is now also operating. The region is certainly growing and developing and it is sort of being bedded in now. It is about, the word that came from the conference, 1 it is about trust and I think that 4 people have come to accept that quality assurance is part and parcel of the higher education experience and remember here we don't have self accrediting institutions in the region like we have in places like the UK or Australia. 2 It is a very 3/4 different. It is very much seen as a regulatory aspect of higher education, but less so in Oman, I would argue because when Oman started the quality assurance, the first iteration of standards was in Muscat which was the requirement of Oman's system for quality assurance and that had

The development of the conceptual framework and its associated theory are incorporated into the second stage of analysis as outlined below. Importantly, I noted that data analysis in a realist setting should concentrate on “reasons why” (Sobh & Perry, 2006). For example, why did it take 27 years for the above resolution on equal treatment of students to go from being ratified by the Supreme Council to a proposal being agreed at a meeting of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Equal treatment of student admission and treatment at public universities is a characteristic of a higher education area.

6.2 Realist Data Analysis – Configuring CMO

It is important to recognise that realist data analysis is not defined in the sense that it is considered a separate stage of the research process (Manzano, 2016). In this sense, I considered it an ongoing iterative process of placing nuggets of information (Pawson, 2006) within the wider configurational explanation of context, mechanisms and outcomes (Manzano, 2016). In the context of this research, the following perspectives were taken into account.

6.2.1 Temporal perspective

From a temporal perspective, analysis starts ahead of data collection, where insights are identified and pursued and continued alongside and post fieldwork. I explain this step in section 6.1. The outcome of which is that analysis of realist data sets is constructed in different temporal dimensions (Pawson & Manzano-Santaella, 2012). The process of analysis begins with the conceptual framework and the initial identification of dimensions as they appear in the interview transcripts and the documents.

6.2.2 Data Reduction

Secondly, realist data analysis is not about the technical process of coding interview text with software, identifying themes and labelling them as contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (Manzano, 2016). The use of data analysis software, such as NUD*IST is not essential in a realist research as I was seeking to identify possible mechanisms and possible contexts. Software cannot make interpretations or make deductions. The codes used to reduce data in a realist setting were generated initially from the conceptual framework and then proceeded to a more selective process of the distinction of possible context's, possible mechanisms and possible intended and unintended outcomes. In order to begin the process of identifying possible mechanisms, I made use of Sayer's (2000:14) approach. Sayer identifies mechanisms as *ordinary* (italics in original), being identified in ordinary language by transitive verbs such as "they *built up* a network of political connections". Using this advice, I began the process of seeking tentative mechanisms and contexts. In keeping with the explanatory and theory driven focus of realist analysis, detailed data needs to be reported in order to provide enough support for inferences and/or judgements to be made (Wong, *et al*, 2013).

6.2.3 Data Display

The conceptual framework, initial interviews and document analysis allowed for the distinction of possible contexts, possible mechanisms and possible intended and unintended outcomes. In following realist guidelines, the use of numbered mechanisms (e.g. M1.1) or contexts (C1.1) are identifiable and displayed in the text of the interview transcripts; this was to allow me to demonstrate my initial inferences, using retroduction. See figure 6.0 where M2 "status" mechanism is identifiable. As I began to identify tentative mechanisms and contexts, I began to develop families or clusters.

These can be seen on p.91-92. The interview data is the means in which contexts and mechanisms are defined and actioned. This began with the development of a quality assurance network landscape map followed by sets of clusters and categories of contexts and mechanisms.

The next section focuses on how I used critical discourse analysis to analyze the documents. The section specifically outlines the rationale for utilising Fairclough's (2010) critical discourse analysis (CDA) and gives an overview, through a number of tables, the organisation structures, genres and styles. The purpose of using document analysis was to contribute to theory building. It does this by helping articulate the formal theory in CMO terms and has a legitimate place (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). Eight genres were identified through the document analysis and include a desire to improve quality; cooperation, coordination and collaboration; organisational reach; types of organisational activity; Arab Islamic culture; improvement of knowledge and skills; addressing research; and finally, the approach to tackling GCC Supreme Council quality issues. Four styles were identified and include governance (regional, national and organisational level); day to day operations, volunteer effort and support of stakeholders.

6.3 Analysing the Documents

In order to establish the purpose for which decisions were undertaken to focus on a regional approach to higher education quality assurance from a GCC perspective and thereby identifying the intentions of the GCC Supreme Council, I decided to use Fairclough's (2010) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse "Chapter (1) Cooperation in Education" within the 2014 GCC Secretariat General document "GCC The Process and Achievements". Discourse analysis was also conducted on "The Charter of the Council" and "The Economic Agreement", specifically in relation to higher education. The purpose of analysing these documents was to explore the role of the GCC as a regional organisation in the development of a regional approach to quality assurance in higher education. CDA is based on realist ontology (Sayer 2000), which views "both concrete social events and abstract social structures as part of social reality" (Fairclough, 2010:74).

Other documents analysed included the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) Constitution, the Oman Quality Network of Higher Education (OQNHE) Guidelines, the Association of Arab Universities (AAU) Mission and Goals document, the Arab Organisation for Quality Assurance in Education (AROQA) mission and objectives and the constitution and goals of the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW). As the primary actors in the field of quality assurance networks, analysis of these documents in a systematic way allows for the cultural patterns, power and wealth factors to be sought out, identified and further incorporate the identification of intended and unintended outcomes of the quality assurance networks and their complex interactions.

Following Fairclough's (2010) CDA, the documents were considered in the context of the use of language as a social practice. The meaning implied is that language is a mode of action and secondly that language is a socially and historically situated mode of action, that it has a social context in terms that it is socially shaped, but it is also socially shaping (Fairclough, 2010:92). Fairclough's (2010) analysis framework can be broken into three dimensions: description of the text, the process of production and interpretation and the social conditions of production and interpretation. Analysis of the above-mentioned documents follows Fairclough's methodology where abstruse relationships of causality and determination between;

(a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (Fairclough, 2010:93)

are explored. Each discursive event has three dimensions: spoken or written language text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 2010:93). These are three ways of reading a complex social event. Discourse as text refers to features such as vocabulary, grammar and structure. Discourse as practice refers to analysis of vocabulary, grammar and structure and makes the link to context. Social practice dimension, as a mode of analysis, is intended by Fairclough to be political, where the discursive event is considered within relations of power and domination. In analysing the discursive events (the GCC documents; the Network documents) as a social practice, different levels of the social organisation can be referred to: the context of the situation, the institutional context and the wider societal context (context of culture). Through these three levels, questions of power can arise (Fairclough, 2010:95) with discourse and power considered in terms of hegemony. The combination of hegemony and interdiscursivity (the constitution of a text from diverse discourses and genres) is strongly associated with historical change.

In operationalising social practice for the purposes of the GCC documents and the Network documents Fairclough (2010:504) suggests that discourse can be considered in three ways. Namely, discourses as ways of representing e.g. political discourse; genres as ways of interacting e.g. quality assurance, student mobility; and styles, as ways of being or identities e.g. leadership styles/governance styles. Categorisation of the types of discursive practices is not without challenge (Fairclough 2010:93). Simply put, Fairclough (2010:93) suggests the following in relation to distinguishing between discourses, genres and styles. Discourses therefore can be categorised as a means of "signifying areas of experience from a particular perspective" e.g. rentier state versus

democracy discourses of political sociology. Genres are characterised as a communicative activity which can be distinguished “broadly as a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity” (Fairclough, 1995:14) such as conveying Arab Islamic culture or achieving cooperation. Finally, styles can be characterised as the styles of business leaders or political leaders or style of governance. Style of governance includes ways of behaving and ways of identifying (with governance). Therefore “analysis in terms of these categories helps to link ‘microanalysis’ of texts to various forms of social (sociological, political) analysis of practices, organisations and institutions” (Fairclough, 2010:7) or in the case of this research, social practices can be concatenated into quality assurance networks that comprise social fields, institutions and organisations.

In the context of these documents, it should be noted that this research used the English language version of three GCC documents: “Chapter (1) Cooperation in Education” within the 2014 GCC Secretariat General document “GCC The Process and Achievements”. Document analysis was also conducted on “The Charter of the Council” and “The Economic Agreement”. These documents are considered appropriate for use in this research as they are official GCC documents, available online at the Information Centre of the Secretariat (ICS) digital library as open access and officially translated from Arabic to English. The network documents analysed included the ANQAHE Constitution, the OQNHE Guidelines, the AAU Mission and Goals document, the AROQA mission and objectives and the constitution and goals of the AQAIIW. These documents are all located on the official websites of each organisation and are considered appropriate for use as referred to in the ethics section of chapter five.

In this section I outline how I operationalised critical discourse analysis. In operationalising social practice, I considered the GCC documents and network documents in terms of discourse, genres and styles. In terms of discourse, I wanted to understand the structure of the organisations, in terms of their status as an NGO or for-profit status; links to international organisations; and how they are funded as an example. Or in the case of the GCC documents, I wanted to understand how the Supreme Council operates in terms of quality assurance issues; how decisions are made and where power may exist. Genres follow a similar approach. For example, considering relationships with other educational regions also allowed me to consider the collaboration of ANQAHE with AAU and INQAHE in its role of disseminating information, applying good practice, organising seminars, workshops and conferences, exchanging expertise and mutual recognition. Genres in the case of the GCC documents include aspects such as building a regional approach to higher education in general, including aspects such as mobility of students as well as the intentions of the GCC to focus on a regional approach to quality assurance.

Finally, styles as it relates to the GCC documents has a focus on the forming and use of committees to action resolutions. As one example, this particular aspect of governance (use of committees)

contributed to the development of the context cluster C1 Comity and Cooperation with particular contribution to C1.1 The “Committee affect decisions” context and C1.2 the “Cooperation in developing regulations” as well C2 Inter-Governmentalism context. See table 6.5 p.121. This is how knowledge of these aspects allows for theory building in relation to the conceptual framework and in configuring potential contexts and mechanisms. The details of this analysis are captured more fully in appendix 2 in the case of the GCC documents and appendix 3 in the case of the network documents. Tables 6.1 – 6.2 outline the key aspects of the CDA analysis of the network documents. These tables result from the initial analysis as it appears in appendix 3.

Table 6.0 CDA Analysis of Organisations involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance - Organisation Structure					
Organisation	Operating Location	Year & Place Established	Patronage	Type of organisation	Formal links to International Organisations
ANQAHE membership aimed at QAAs & HEIs	Bahrain BQA Office	2007, Egypt	In association with INQAAHE	Independent, non-profit	MOU with INQAAHE, which includes 14 other networks as well as AQAIIW
OQNHE membership aimed at HEIs	Muscat, Oman	2006, Muscat	HE Minister of Higher Education, Oman	Independent, non-profit	Omani based institutions
AQAIIW membership aimed at government QQAs	Bahrain BQA Office	2009, Kuala Lumpur	Quality Assurance Agencies of the OIC	Independent, NGO, non-profit	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
AAU members include 240 Arab universities	Amman, Jordan	1969, Amman Jordan	Endorsed by SG League of Arab States	NGO	By-Laws approved by Arab League; affiliated to nine institutions
AROQA membership extended to organisations with an interest in evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in education	Amman, Jordan	2007, Belgium	Endorsed by SG League of Arab States	Non-profit	TAG Organisation, cooperation agreements with GS of the League of Arab States; AAU, Higher Education Accreditation Commission in Jordan, British Accreditation Council; Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (AQUIN)

Table 6.1
CDA Analysis of Networks involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance - Genres

Genre	ANQAHE	OQNHE	AQAIIW	AAU	AROQA
Improve Quality	Strengthen quality assurance in Arab region HEIs; enhance QA agencies in the Arab region	Improve quality of higher education leading to the development of a stronger HE sector in Sultanate of Oman	Enhance capacity of QA Agencies in the Islamic World	Cooperating to promote quality assurance and accreditation in Arab universities	Raise quality of education
Cooperation, Coordination & Collaboration	Enhance cooperation between QA bodies in the region, other regional and international QA organisations; establish a mechanism of cooperation; sustain regional and international cooperation	Collaboration by members (HEI's) to benefit HE sector in Oman	Facilitate collaboration among QA agencies of the Islamic World	Coordinate efforts of Arab universities; enhance cooperation amongst Arab universities to realise Arab national goals; cooperation with global universities; cooperation of Arab universities in terms of teaching methods, facilities	Collaboration with Arab, regional and international organisations
Level of Organisation Reach	National, regional, international	National	Regional, international QA organisations; primarily acts as an association of QA agencies of the Islamic World	National, regional and international organisations	Pan-Arab, Arab, regional and international organisations
Types of organisation activity is directed at	Regional QA Agencies primarily; HEI's	Oman HEI's	Islamic World QA Agencies	Arab Universities	Pan-Arab universities
Arab Islamic culture	Arabic is official language of the organisation	Appointment of at least three Omani citizens to the Executive Board	Represents QA Agencies of the Islamic World	Preserve unified culture & civilisation; attention to Arab & Islamic heritage; commitment to values of Islam; Arabic as medium of instruction;	Non identified in the documentation

Table 6.1 continued
CDA Analysis of Networks involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance - Genres

Genre	ANQAHE	OQNHE	AQAIIW	AAU	AROQA
Improve knowledge & skills	Develop human resources; exchange information;	Building quality conscious & knowledge rich HE sector by sharing ideas; strategies, research and practices; improve professional skills and capability; identify and prioritise professional development training needs; commission development and provision of training	Exchange of best practice, experiences and expertise	Non identified in the documentation	Improve teaching; provision of quality assurance services (consulting & training).
Research	Facilitate research	Commission research	Non identified in the documentation	Non identified in the documentation	Collaboration in research
Tackling GCC SC issues	Seeks to develop & implement credit transfer schemes to enhance student mobility between institutions within and across national borders; facilitate research	Improve quality of higher education	Non identified in the documentation	Preserve culture; realise national Arab goals; promote joint projects;	Raise quality of education; improve teaching; rank Arab universities as best in the world

Table 6.2
CDA Analysis of Networks involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance - Styles

Styles	ANQAHE	OQNHE	AQAIIW	AAU	AROQA
Governance	<p>General Assembly; The Board & General Secretary Committee. The Board was previously chaired by the BQA CEO (now VP) while the Secretary General is Bahrain's General Director of QQA National Qualifications Framework Directorate. 5 of thirteen Board members represent GCC state quality associations</p>	<p>Executive Committee responsible for day to day activities; elected using confidential ballot; Government officials not eligible for nomination; EC to include three Omani citizens; HEI can only have one representative. MoHE & OAC do not pay annual fee.</p>	<p>Roundtable and Executive Board. The EB president is current CEO of Bahrain QQA; Executive Secretary is Bahrain's General Director of QQA National Qualifications Framework Directorate, with BQA acting as the Secretariat of the organisation; Standing Committees and Finance Committee also in place.</p>	<p>Functions through the General Conference (highest authority made up of presidents of member universities); Executive Council is formed by General Conference; General Secretariat is composed of Secretary General & two Assistant Secretaries General & recruited administrative staff</p>	<p>Endorsed by Secretary General of the League of Arab States (who also happens to be Honorary President of AROQA Board of Directors). Other BoD members include Secretary General of Association of Arab Universities; Director of Education and & Scientific Research League of Arab States; MOE Saudi Arabia; BoT members include former University of Bahrain president; Regional Coordinator for UNDP Higher Education Project; MoHE Saudi Arabia; President of Jerash; University; President of Sudan University; World Bank Senior Education Specialist</p>
Day to day operations	<p>General Secretary Committee manages website & publications; prepares annual report; prepare & record GA and Board meetings</p> <p>General Secretary costs of operation are covered by funds; allows for hiring administrative support</p>	<p>Establish working parties as required; OAC provide part time administrative services, with responsibility for managing website; MoHE & OAC make professional and expert advice available from time to time</p>	<p>Secretariat is responsible of production of documents including working papers; matters relating to membership of AQAIIW; new membership applications & associated recommendations ; production of the strategic plan, annual report; maintain registrar of members; arrange & record Roundtable & EB meetings</p>	<p>The work of the AAU is achieved through nine affiliated institutions including the Council of Quality Assurance and Accreditation</p>	<p>not stated</p>

Table 6.2 continued CDA Analysis of Organisations involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance - Styles					
Styles	ANQAHE	OQNHE	AQAIIW	AAU	AROQA
Volunteer effort	All work of Board Members is voluntary and without pay	Not stated	Not stated	not stated	not stated
Support of stakeholders	Secretariat is used as the ANQAHE HQ	MoHE & OAC	BQA as Secretariat	Maintains close relations with many organisations	Endorsed by Secretary General of the League of Arab States

6.4 Moving from constructions to explanations: CMO

As mentioned earlier, significant amounts of primary or secondary data are required - even with a small sample size. This allows for the movement from constructions to explanations of causal mechanisms (Manzano, 2016), keeping in mind, the unit of analysis is not the person, but the events and processes around them, which means that each interview, as well as document analysis, reveals an assortment of micro events and processes. In terms of identifying what needed to be explained, initial categories of events were identified as the interviews progressed from one to the next. The conceptual framework, described in chapter two, was used as a theoretical reference point to consider the events in terms of cultural patterns, wealth and power. Categories of contexts and mechanisms were developed as the interviews and document analysis progressed, as well as identifying if the contexts and mechanisms were enabling or constraining. Furthermore, as the interviews reached a conclusion, the contexts and mechanisms were grouped into higher level clusters which relate to the theory and begin to combine with the findings of the document analysis. For instance, a set of mechanisms relating to the activities and actions of governance of the networks and the GCC, were grouped together under the mechanism (M1) Governance. Categories within this cluster, therefore include political patronage as an enabling mechanism. Each cluster and category of contexts and mechanisms was updated as each interview was concluded, in terms of analysis. The interview transcripts were reviewed until full saturation of the text was achieved. This involved listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts for as many occasions as it took for me to be confident and fully satisfied that I had captured the full extent of the events and processes as divulged in the interviews. I developed the Quality Assurance Network Landscape Map (p.119) (Jolly & Jolly, 2014) as an initial analytical device utilising the conceptual framework. This was followed by a set of families and categories of contexts and mechanisms (both enabling and constraining) which allowed for the development of outcomes as related to the research questions.

6.5 Defining and actioning contexts and mechanisms

A quality assurance network landscape map (Jolly & Jolly, 2014) (see table 6.3) was developed to show the focus of explanation at given points. The headings were derived from the conceptual framework referred to in chapter two. The quality assurance network landscape map acts as an analytical instrument, whereby the data can be unpacked into a proposition about how the quality assurance networks work (or not work) on closing the gap in regionalisation of quality assurance across the GCC.

Table 6.3 Quality Assurance Network Landscape Map

<----->

Potentially context (C)

(addresses issues of 'for whom' and 'in what circumstances'.
Can enable and constrain

<----->

Potentially mechanism (M)

(brings about change, but only active under specific circumstances (contexts); Can be identified in ordinary language such as transitive verbs e.g. they *built up* a network of political connections (Sayer, 2000). Can enable and constrain

<p>Beliefs and values shape outcomes e.g. trust</p> <p>Cultural Patterns: (Cultural sphere)</p>	<p>Symbolic & institutional frameworks of civilisation e.g. network supported by Patron; Islamic Ummah (Arab Nation)</p> <p>Cultural Patterns: (Cultural sphere)</p>	<p>Status of organisation, which is related to legislation; such as NGO/civil society</p> <p>Power: (political sphere)</p>		<p>Outcomes</p> <p>Can be intended or unintended</p>
<p>Social order referring to a system of linked social structures, institutions, relationships, values, practices and customs which influence patterns of behaviour e.g. voted volunteers as members of the Board; relationship with Ministries and National QAA</p> <p>Cultural Patterns: (cultural sphere)</p>	<p>Social relationships & interpersonal systems</p> <p>Cultural Patterns: (Cultural sphere)</p>	<p>Autonomy to make decisions; individual or collective</p> <p>Power (political sphere))</p>	<p>Structures: Mutually related such as relationship with state apparatus; relationship with global networks; access to resources; support at Ministerial level equals sustainability</p> <p>Power (political sphere)</p>	
		<p>Rules: of the state, religious, education system</p> <p>Power (political sphere)</p>	<p>Funding model</p> <p>Wealth (economic sphere)</p>	

The following tables outline the families and categories of contexts and mechanisms which combine data from both the document analysis and analysis of the interviews. These are presented as a follow on from table 5.3 and 5.4 in chapter five, where the CMO configuration was at the initial stages. The mechanisms and contexts are identified as enabling (E) or constraining (C).

Table 6.4 Mechanisms				
M1 Governance	M2 Status	M3 Conduit	M4 Improvement of Knowledge & Skills	M5 Access to Resources
M1.1 The “ political patronage ” mechanism (E)	M2.1 The “ Status ” mechanism(C)	M3.1 The “ Conduit ” mechanism (E) and (C)	M4.1 The “ Human Capital Agenda ” mechanism (E) and (C)	M5.1 The “ Human Resources ” mechanism (C)
M1.2 The “ multilayered network governance structure ” mechanism(E)		M3.2 The “ interaction between Arab nationals ” mechanism (E)	M4.2 The “ Training and Development ” mechanism (E)	M5.2 The “ Financial Resources ” mechanism (E)
M1.3 The “ Executive Board ” Mechanism (E)		M3.3 The “ Global ” Mechanism (E)	M4.3 The “ High Staff Turnover ” mechanism (C)	
M1.4 The “ Organisational Structure ” Mechanism (E)			M4.4 The “ Nationalisation of Workforce ” mechanism (C)	
M1.5 The “ organisational reach ” mechanism (E)				
M1.6 The “ type of organisation ” the network activities target mechanism (E)				
M1.7 The “ Volunteer effort ” mechanism (E)				

Table 6.4 continued Mechanisms		
M6 Building Capacity	M7 Accountability	M8 Autonomy
M6.1 The “Building Capacity” mechanism (E)	M7.1 The ‘Who do they answer to’ mechanism (C)	M8.1 The ‘autonomy’ mechanism (C)

Table 6.5 below outlines the contexts identified through document analysis and analysis of the interviews.

Table 6.5 Contexts				
C1 Comity & Cooperation	C2 Intergovernmentalism	C3 Arab Islamic Culture	C4 Political Climate	C5 State Regulation
C1.1 The “Committees affect decisions” context (C)	C2.1 The “National Sovereignty” context (C)	C3.1 The “Arab regional culture” context (C)	C4.1 The “Political turbulence” context (C)	C5.1 The “conflicting responsibilities between state agencies” context (C)
C1.2 The “Cooperation in developing regulations” context (E)	C2.2 The “Paper tiger institution” context (C)		C4.2 The “Political Will” context (C)	C5.2 The “government as regulator” context (C)
C1.3 The “Majlis Culture” Context (E)	C2.3 The “Regional institutional cooperation” context (C)		C4.3 The “Political interest through education” context (E)	
C1.4 The “Competition” Context (E)	C2.4 The “Absence of a regulatory structure” context (C)			

6.6 Conclusion

These families (clusters) and categories of contexts and mechanisms represent in diagrammatic form outcomes of analysis. The category level factors demonstrate what the principle features look like e.g. political turbulence and political will form part of the political climate cluster. The labelling of clusters e.g. C1 Comity & Cooperation; C2 Intergovernmentalism allows comparison with the theories on intergovernmentalism (Jolly & Jolly, 2014:37). In relation to the intergovernmentalism

context—as a category level factor—illustrates principles which can then be compared with the literature on GCC intergovernmentalism. These categories are important; while some such as “political will” appear in the theoretical development of the conceptual framework, new theories as they apply to this research, such as intergovernmentalism, appear as a result of configuration.

The next chapter discusses the main findings as identified through CMO configurations. The chapter also describes the categories in more detail and identify intended and unintended outcomes of the quality assurance networks in the regionalisation of quality assurance in the GCC. The chapter also outlines the responses to the four research aims set out at the start of this research.

Chapter 7 Findings

7.0 Introduction

This research is orientated around four key outputs. Four research aims are stated at the beginning of chapter one (p.10). The first research aim was to focus on the GCC region—which is lacking a regional approach to higher education in general and quality assurance in particular—and the role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap. The second aim was to understand under what conditions the regionalisation approach to quality assurance in the GCC higher education space happens (if it does), to whose benefit and why? The third aim was to respond to the question - if and how quality assurance networks are closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why? The final aim was to identify how this research contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge related to critical cultural political economy of education. These four aims are addressed individually in chapter eight.

Realist research requires advanced theoretical understanding in order to work through the theories, it also requires the ability to define outcome patterns, determine the footprints to look for and where to find them in order to adjudicate between the theories as well as the ability to design research and techniques for data analysis. I begin this chapter with the findings to the question—are the quality assurance networks closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why? As discussed in earlier chapters, the research was oriented in realism; made use of a conceptual framework that is located within the critical cultural political economy of education; document analysis and theory-led interviews were utilised for data collection; while CMO configuration was used to identify and explain various combinations of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. Mechanisms are important because they generate outcomes; contexts need to be taken into account as they influence the processes through which outcomes are produced. The findings are displayed using CMO configuration (Jolly & Jolly, 2014).

As a reminder, the quality assurance network is a measure involved in the coordination and cooperation of quality assurance across the GCC. As a “measure”, the quality assurance networks are not the unit of analysis for understanding causation. A measure may work in different ways or using realist vernacular, they may trigger different mechanisms, for example M1, M2, M3. In essence a measure i.e. quality assurance network, may work in different ways and trigger different mechanisms. For example, a quality assurance network may improve the level of expertise by offering training programmes (M1). Identifying mechanisms is the first step; however, it is assumed they will only be active under certain circumstances, or in realist terms, different contexts. Contexts describe the features of the conditions—in this case—in which quality assurance networks are

exposed to. These conditions are relevant to the operationalisation of mechanisms. Therefore, it is understood that certain contexts will be supportive to quality assurance networks and some will not. As an example, the organisational capacity of the quality assurance network is relevant and so characteristics such as the individual capacities of those conducting training is important in the context of how they are accepted as legitimate experts (C1); or the individual capacity of those receiving the training are relevant in terms of having some aspiration or means to implement quality assurance. These context and mechanism configurations led to the identification of intended and unintended outcomes which help to explain the conditions, identify who benefits and why.

In chapter three (p.51) I raised the question about the desire to have mobile citizens within the GCC. It would appear that mobility of students, although on the regional agenda for 75 years, is not necessarily a desirable outcome. The comment “it is not a priority for the government to exchange students” (IP4) and “the idea that a single agency approach could develop over the next 10 years is very unlikely because each country’s system is embedded in its own politics, its own structures.” (IP6), highlight some of the contexts within which the networks operate. So, while student mobility has been on the regional agenda since 1945, it would appear it may possibly remain on the agenda, un-actioned for the foreseeable future. The following sections highlight some of the intended and unintended outcomes of the networks in contributing to the regionalism of quality assurance in the GCC. Powerful contexts such as political climate and intergovernmentalism both enable and constrain a range of mechanisms including governance, access to resources, autonomy and accountability.

7.1 Key Findings

7.1.1 Intergovernmentalism lends itself to a competitive nationalist view of quality assurance

In discussing the nature and role of the GCC, the driving forces of national sovereignty, territorial survival, political and economic interests, as well as the geo-strategic environment in which the GCC is embedded and operates (Garipu, 2008:70) lend themselves to a competitive and nationalist view of quality assurance.

Arab culture (C3) represents an obstacle as “alliances and allegiances change on the basis of the definition of the “other” (Garipu, 2008:70). Furthermore, in the case of the GCC as an intergovernmental organisation, any deepening and widening of cooperation are dependent on each of the six member states’ perception of their specific interests—in this case higher education and quality assurance—and how they evaluate their strategic position within the region rather than any considerations of a regional society or community (Garipu, 2008:76). Organisations within the region

are viewed as under-institutionalised (Beck 2014) or thinly institutionalised (Doige, 2008), with Beck (2014) indicating that while there is no shortage of regional institutions, they are mostly reminiscent of paper tigers (C2.2) than powerful organisations, with the GCC identified as not always being effective in dealing with minor sub regional issues. Doige (2008:39) identifies three key characteristics that should be visible in a regional organisation: action triggers, policy structures and processes and performance structures. Taken in turn, action triggers—such as goals or principles—

Table 7.0 Intergovernmentalism lends itself to a competitive nationalist view of quality assurance		
Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome
Nationalism and national pride (the National Sovereignty context) create competition in terms of which nation is ranked the best for education (the Competition context). The political will of governments to support the national pride (the “political will” context) is significant which is combined with powerless institutions (the “paper tiger” context). These forces are bound in Arab and Islamic culture (the Arab Regional Culture’ context).	The governance structure of networks (the “organisational structure” mechanism) and the various layers of governance (the “multi-layered network governance structure” mechanism) combined with lack of autonomy (the “autonomy” mechanism) are not a force strong enough to deal with nationalism and competition.	Nationalism and rivalry impede the ability of networks to operate on a regional GCC basis. Networks indicate a preference for a bilateral approach to GCC state quality assurance relations. Intergovernmentalism in the GCC creates a competitive, nationalist view of quality assurance which is more powerful than the current governance structures of the networks.

trigger the organisation into action; policy structures and processes such as the legal, formal and informal capacity of the organisation to make a decision and finally, performance structures include resources necessary to implement the decision undertaken. Doige (2008) argues that as a thinly institutionalised organisation, the GCC does not have institutions or the authority required for decision making, which in turn jeopardises regional unity and inefficient decision making (Doige, 2008:39). Therefore, decision making in the GCC occurs as a result of informal negotiations between officials (Legrenzi, 2008) within the absence of a regulatory structure.

The GCC lacks the means to implement its resolutions, which often remain as neglected acknowledgements. The dynamic of the GCC member states—protecting their sovereignty and advancing their national interests—is representative of an intergovernmental organisation. The intergovernmental structure of the GCC is also distinguished by the lack of a central executive body that has a legal authority and powers of enforcement. The effectiveness of the GCC is further constrained by the fact that the member states have a variety of political orientations (C4). The

overall effect of these differences is powerless resolutions that are honoured only by absence of implementation. The distinct cultural and political structures of the GCC is summed up eloquently by GCC Secretary General Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani who stated that

Every society has its own characteristics, history, heritage, demographic, religious and sectarian structure. We are still countries that have social realities, which are linked to tribes and clans. Hence, social change is slow and undermining the stages of development can result in confusion of the political system (Maestri, 2012: 52).

The intergovernmental context of the GCC is evident throughout the analysis, with the family of contexts appearing throughout. These include national sovereignty (C2.1), paper tiger institution (C2.2), regional institutional cooperation (C2.3) and absence of a regulatory structure (C2.4). See table 7.0.

7.1.2 Comity and Cooperation through Committee - Getting Things Done (Or Not)

Comity and cooperation is evident from the analysis of the GCC documents, network documents and interviews. States and national governments can be considered as primary actors in the regional approach to quality assurance within the GCC higher education sector. Comity and cooperation is embedded through the governance structure of committees; be it committees operating at the GCC regional level through the Supreme Council and its many apparatus; national and ministerial level or at the individual organisational level of the networks. Table 7.1 outlines the lack of accountability (M7) combined with network executive board membership (M1.3) which is an unpaid and voluntary commitment (M1.7) are constrained by the decision making context of individuals that make up committees in terms (C1.1) of their position (e.g. minister) and/or their level within an organisation which is bound in cultural and political packaging.

**Table 7.1
Comity and Cooperation through Committee - Getting Things Done (Or Not)**

Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome
<p>The involvement of individuals on network, agency, ministry and regional body committees influence decision making and the ability to 'get things done' at the local, national and regional level as part of the "committees affect decisions" context. The committees often include individuals because of the level of their position (Minister) and level within an organisation (Director/CEO) and not necessarily for their expertise or knowledge. This is further compounded by culture (the "Arab regional culture" context) and politics (the "political will" context).</p>	<p>The lack of accountability reduces the concerns of getting things done (the "who do they answer to" mechanism)</p> <p>The membership of the executive boards (the "executive board" mechanism) is voluntary (the "volunteer effort" mechanism). This often means that individuals have many responsibilities reducing their ability to commit time and effort to the network activities.</p>	<p>Not all committee members are active in responding to objectives, goals and activities which lessens the ability to "get things done".</p> <p>Understanding of the nature and requirements of quality assurance is absent due to lack of ownership and knowledge as a result of who is involved and at what level they are involved.</p>

The unintended outcomes result in an inability of the networks to achieve goals and objectives in a timely and efficient manner. In relation to accountability, IP1 suggests that

"even though they have a patron, the challenge is accountability, who do they answer to? They don't answer to anybody. They don't have a board driving them...the bottom line is accountability."

The lack of accountability combined with the voluntary nature of their commitment, detracts from getting things done. There are few paid positions within the networks and where there are paid positions, these are for administrative support.

"Because even within the networks, a lot of these roles that say people like [mentions name] they are voluntary efforts if you like. While he's employed say for example by the BQA, his work and his effort with the Arab network is voluntary. You're relying on kind of the efforts of people who are ... who identify themselves as being relatively expert in the field and contribute to the national and regional agenda" (IP4).

Equally

"Finding voluntary people, especially to put efforts on quality assurance is a little hard nowadays, sometimes when we meet with people they got really surprised

when they knew that we have a full-time job. They thought we are full-time ANQAHE.” (IP2).

and that

“You are only as good as your executive committee. The EC are busy people” (IP1).

This was followed with the range and level of actors involved.

“I think one of the challenges is all the players involved. For example, the formation of the GCC Qualifications Framework, people that have been involved are people in occupation standards in the Ministry of Man Power and not necessarily the owners of the frameworks. So, it is about what level and who is involved” (IP1). IP4 “They wanted the members to be ministry level. Maybe this was the challenge, because when you go higher, there is a lot of responsibilities this means that they cannot keep this group together”. (IP1) “Ministry of HE are an ex-officio member. So, they have a direct relationship with the network. The other ministries yes, in as much, say for example, the current Chair is Dean of one of the Ministry of ManPower colleges. So, there is a connection, but it is indirect rather than direct”

Culture, politics and economics intertwine and have their part to play.

“It’s a political drive, I think. People change in the ministries quite often. I think as much as anything that’s done out here is about who you know and contacts and so on.” (IP5). I would say in the short term no [in relation to a regional framework] because of these things [Syria & Qatar] because of also the nationalism that goes on as well. So, there’s a kind of geopolitical disarray isn’t there in this region? It’s never going to happen right now. There’s also a kind of nationalist agenda where they’re all kind of moving at different speeds and at different stop starts. I especially would say there would have to be an economic imperative, but that would mean a cultural shift because so many students are not going to leave their own country, are they? (IP5).

Committees as a particular form of decision making for governance within Europe is only beginning to be understood (Gehring, 1999), and it is largely unclear if and why committees are important for European governance. In the GCC context, there is an absence of literature in terms of the significance, or otherwise, of committees in the decision-making process. It has been argued that committees may be meaningful if they can influence the decision-making processes (Van Schendelen, 1996). The question then, is how can committees affect decisions, through what mechanisms and under what conditions? Secondly, once decisions are made, how can committees affect implementation, through what mechanisms and under what conditions. These are addressed below. In the analysis of the GCC documents, a range of committees exist: from the Ministerial Committee for Higher Education (established in 1996) as one example, which includes representatives of GCC member States and could be described as a comitology committee. Its role is to supervise the co-ordination and integration between the institutes of higher education. Other

committees have advisory, specialisation and expertise functions. While these committees are different in terms of membership and responsibility, they have one feature in common: they are all embedded in and dependent on the GCC Supreme Council decision making and resolution processes.

Prior to the establishment of the GCC, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS)—established in 1975 and under the tenure of the Ministers of Education—initiated joint educational processes. Under the GCC Secretariat General, the first higher education committee meeting in March 1986 included the leaders of the universities and institutes of higher education and is identified as the formal launchpad of joint educational work under the GCC umbrella. The organisation of the work of integration and cooperation came under the *Committee of the Directors and Presidents of Universities and the Higher Education Institutions*. At this stage, quality assurance wasn't identified as a specific topic; the focus was mostly related to the production of Supreme Council resolutions on equal treatment of students in relation to admission, coordination of research, Arabisation of higher education as well as student activities. In relation to these areas the Supreme Council issued a resolution directing the *Committee of Directors and Presidents and Universities and Higher Education Institutions* of the GCC states and the *Committee of the Deans of Admission and Registration in the Universities and Higher Education Institutions* of the GCC States to devise regulatory mechanisms to give equal treatment to GCC students in admission and treatment in December 1987. The Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in February 2014 agreed on the proposal submitted by the Presidents and Directors of Universities and referred it to the Supreme Council. It has taken 27 years to move from a Supreme Council resolution to devise regulatory mechanisms in 1987 to the proposed regulatory mechanisms being referred back to the Supreme Council for consideration in 2014.

Resolutions approved by the Supreme Council include the establishment of the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the GCC States. The Consultative Commission Recommendations on Education proposed joint projects in the field of education and scientific research which also included an academic accreditation board. In 2002 the Committee of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research instructed a team from the Ministries of Higher Education to prepare a study on what was required to establish an academic accreditation board. This resulted in the establishment of a Coordination Committee for Academic Accreditation in the field of Higher Education, with its headquarters in Oman, which was also identified as the centre for the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. This network was touted as an extension of the work of the GCC Academic Accreditation Coordinating Committee. The network is reported (Qatar News Agency, 2014) as a step towards achieving the goal of the GCC SC to establish a Gulf Authority for Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation. It was noted by IP4—

who was involved in the initial stages of the development of principles and the terms of reference of the Gulf Network in 2013— that

“they realised that they wanted a higher level. They wanted the committee members to be ministry level. Maybe this was the challenge, because when you go higher, there is lots of responsibilities, this means that they cannot keep this group together”.

Operationalising the Gulf Network is taking place.

“The idea of the GCC quality network is that it is the quality agencies getting together. If you do any google search, you are not really going to get anything on the GCC network. It was held up, I think in 2012, on the Ministers Meeting, basically half a million Bahraini dinars was put forward to fund it. Was it as much as that? For the next five years. It is based in Oman, it now has a director, and it has an office, but it is not operational yet. It’s got an office and it has got a head now, he was only appointed after the summer. The whole thing about the OQN is that it is institutional level, it is not QA level, because there is already ANQAHE, the AUU group, there is all sorts of networks, but the GCC network hasn’t really taken off yet” (IP1).

In exploring the relevance of committees in GCC, national and organisational governance—as it relates to higher education—two principles can be considered. Firstly, that committees are part of the decision-making process and cannot be understood in isolation. Secondly, that committees as actors, may influence the outcomes of the decision-making process in two conceptually different ways—member states will not ignore their national interests and will therefore identify their own particular subspace of issues and present them as relevant to the ultimate decision making body and in doing so, reshaping the decision circumstances. And under certain conditions, such as the Committee responses to the three State documents (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia & Qatar) as referred to in the Education chapter of the GCC Processes and Achievement, there may be committee influence that forms the basis for a transformation in the manner of interaction such as that suggested by Gehring (1999) from bargaining to arguing, or in this case, political and economic alliances, influencing the outcome.

Within the network documents, cooperation is a key genre, with all five organisations striving to achieve some level of cooperation with various levels of stakeholders. ANQAHE, AAU, AROQA and AQAIIW all state that they want to ‘enhance cooperation’ or ‘encourage cooperation’ either between the quality assurance agencies (ANQAHE); between the Arab universities, and with global universities (AAU); with Arab, regional and international organisations (AROQA). AQAIIW encourages co-operation with regional and international quality assurance organisations. In its constitution, ANQAHE states that it will establish a mechanism of cooperation; while AAU seeks to enhance cooperation amongst the Arab universities to realise Arab national goals; while AQAIIW acts as a facilitator of collaboration. The Oman Quality Network is different in its approach in that collaboration by members, who are HEI’s based in Oman, is to benefit the HE sector in Oman. Within the networks, the role of committees somewhat reflects what is seen at the GCC regional level, with the exception of the OQNHE. The network committees, as part of the governance structure, are

significant in terms of their membership and in turn the influence on decision making. For example, the Vice President and former Chair and Secretary General of ANQAHE and the Executive Board president and Secretariat of the AQAIIW are the CEO of the BQA and the General Director of the BQA National Qualifications Framework Director, which leads to blurring of organisation boundaries and identity which is discussed later. The OQNHE clearly states in its guidelines that government officials are not eligible for nomination to their Executive Committee. The AROQA Board of Directors includes individuals representing a range of national and regional institutions including League of Arab States and Ministry of Education Saudi Arabia; while the Board of Trustees includes former University of Bahrain president; regional co-ordinator for UNDP Higher Education Project; MoHE Saudi Arabia and a World Bank Senior Education Specialist, amongst others. As concluded by Garipu (2008:82) the GCC is a “mere exercise in institutionalised cooperation” rather than the beginning of an authentic regional society.

7.1.3 Governance of Networks: Blurring of Boundaries, Political Patronage & Legitimacy

The analytical dimension of governance (Nefissa, 2005), is based on the supposition that governance involves complex groups of actors, institutions—which are not necessarily governmental—and networks, often with less defined responsibilities. Action of government agencies and institutions is interdependent and includes the possibility of acting without relying on the state. Other distinctive features include close involvement in political and administrative apparatus as well as the concept of political patronage.

Complicated and complex governance perhaps hinders achievements in some cases but maybe there is also some merit in the administrative governance I see. The multi layered governance structure of ANQAHE includes the General Assembly, the Board and the General Secretary Committee. The thirteen members of the Board of ANQAHE represent five GCC quality assurance agencies—BQA in Bahrain, CAA in UAE, NCAA in Saudi Arabia, the OAAA in Oman; NBAQ in Kuwait as well as the AAU. It also includes the Centre of Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Higher Education in Lebanon; Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya; the Higher Education Commission (HEAC) in Jordan and the NAQAAE in Egypt. As already mentioned in chapter one (p.24) progress in regional quality is not easily implementable through the governance structures of the GCC. A route of access through the networks via the national state quality agencies may be the way forward for a more regional approach to regional quality, albeit through bilateral agreements, which appears to be the preferred approach by individuals involved in both ANQAHE and BQA.

“I think it’s better for the agencies to do MOU with each other. Like Bahrain, Emirates, so they can organise with each other, or Bahrain and the NQF of Kuwait. I think if we do inter-countries it will work much better than one regional hub” (IP2).

7.1.4 Blurring of Boundaries between NGO and State Agencies - Who am I?

The absence of conventional governance mechanisms—such as those principles laid out by the OECD—sees political insulation and a clear mandate for operations as important. These two mechanisms are achieved on the basis of informal political patronage by senior players (such as Board members) and clearly laid out constitutions as well as the ability of state operations such as BQA being able to undertake an administrative role within the ANQAHE operation or the AQAAIW (Hertog, 2012). However, the unintended outcome of this administrative relationship is the blurring of boundaries between NGO and state agencies. These outcomes are addressed in more detail below and are summarised in table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Blurring of Boundaries between NGO and State Agencies		
Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome
<p>The networks are closely involved through their relationship with the state agencies for quality assurance (the “Comity and Cooperation” context). The ability of committees to influence decision making at local, national and regional level (the “Committees affect decisions” context) as well as the cooperation and close relationships between the people involved in the networks and the agencies which is achieved through the Majlis culture (the “Majlis culture” context).</p>	<p>Multi-layered governance structure allows for senior executives of state agencies and ministries to hold positions on the executive boards and secretariats of the NGOs (the “multi-layered network governance structure” mechanism)</p> <p>The networks act as a conduit between the state quality assurance agencies and other stakeholders such as other networks, ministries and global agencies (the “conduit” mechanism)</p> <p>Civil society and NGO organisations have difficulties in acting independently from the state (the “status” mechanism).</p> <p>Formal and informal political patronage leads to political insulation (the “political patronage” mechanism)</p>	<p>Blurring of boundaries between NGO and state agencies.</p>

The table above describes the mechanisms and the context within which the blurring of boundaries is created in terms of the visibility and identity of the NGO. It was noted in chapter four that power plays, legalities, material and symbolic interests and ideologies have roles to play in the space occupied by the networks. For instance, IP1 stated that

“One of the challenges is that although we see the ONQHE as an independent body, most people associate it with the OAAA. One of the biggest challenges for the ONQHE is its status. Because at the beginning it was under the OAAA, it was under the agency. However, political patronage insulates the network. We are fine, because we have the Ministry of Higher Education as a patron” (IP1).

Meanwhile, IP4 suggests that

“lots of people think ANQAHE is part of BQA. Because they are the same people. They represent themselves by their position. There is a strong believe that ANQAHE is part of QQA Bahrain. They represent themselves with their positions instead of their expertise. The last meeting of ANQAHE organised by QQA. At the beginning of the opening of the brochure, the opening is written by the QQA CEO. How can the people understand that the ANQAHE is not a government related organisation? I believe that if you just move the non-profit organisation away from the government, it would be better. If they want this non-profit to work and to be trustful. There should be a safe distance between this ANQAHE and the government organisation. They can work away from the tension of the government and other stakeholder and to attract others without this tension”.

The close association between the networks and the agencies is clearly articulated throughout the interviews. For example,

“there has been a close association between the OQN and the OAAA and we have advised them where we have picked up stuff from the quality audit reports and where you might want to do something in a particular area or you might want to offer support in an area” (IP1).

That relationship between the network and agency extends across agencies as IP1 indicated that the OAAA has strong relationship with Bahrain and UAE agencies:

“I think we have already had quite a close relationship with the CAA because we all work with each other’s panels. We have an MOU with BQA in Bahrain, we work as reviewers on their panels and they work as reviewers on our panels. We have had both the BQA and the CAA come over and give workshops on their accreditation processes. Because we know them. You have the formal structure through ANQAHE, but you also have personal connections”.

While there is a lot of shared knowledge and expertise, it was noted by IP1 that

“when we were setting up the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF) Bahrain came over and talked to the OQF body. We came to the Bahrain launch. There is a lot of shared expertise. Less so with Kuwait”. This idea of sharing and collaboration is firmly embedded in the culture with IP1 suggesting that we “think about the Majlis culture and look at the way people work together and how collegiate they are. There is a lot of consultation”.

7.1.5 Sustainability through political patronage

While there is a blurring of the boundaries between network and agency, which evolves in part through patronage and administrative relationship, it is this very patronage that gives organisational sustainability to the networks.

As mentioned above, political insulation achieved through political patronage is important, particularly in the absence of conventional governance mechanisms. Political insulation is achieved on the basis of formal and informal political patronage by senior players, such as Board members, and Ministers representing Education, Higher Education, Finance, Manpower/Labour as well as regional organisations such as ALESCO and League of Arab States, as well as Quality Assurance Agencies. This is evident through the blurring of boundaries whereby BQA senior executives play important roles in the administration of both ANQAHE and AQAAIW and well as offering a physical operational base.

Table 7.3 Sustainability through political patronage		
Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome
<p>The networks are influenced by the culture patterns such as values and symbolic and institutional frameworks of civilisation (the “Arab and Islamic Culture” context)</p> <p>The “Majlis culture” context is relevant in terms of working together and through consultation.</p>	<p>Formal and informal political patronage leading to political insulation (the “political patronage” mechanism).</p> <p>Political insulation can occur as a result of the “Executive Board” mechanism, the “Organisational Structure” mechanism as well as the “multi-layered network governance structure” mechanism</p>	<p>Sustainability of the networks is achieved through political patronage.</p>

These mechanisms are embedded within a culture that

“responds to authority, and without authority, you need a strong chair to drive the network” (IP1) as well as other drivers such as “tribe and status”. But overall, even though each country “has his own culture, his own idea, his owner there is still something common between us all” (IP3). However, while it was noted that the “cultural part does not prevent or does not push out any of our activities”...the political part does influence our decision” (IP3).

In relation to patronage, the formal patronage of the OQNHE is HE Minister for Education, which according to IP1

“If you have support at that level, it means you are going to have sustainability”, which is further supported by IP5 “Because of where we are, there is strong patronage of quality, sustainability is strong patronage. It's how things work. The higher up you've

got a patron, the more powerful you are. And the more protected you are until it all shifts”.

Not only does patronage offer protection, but it also offers privileged access, as a result of the hierarchal structures, a feature of the regions state-society relations (Hertog, 2010). In this case, for example, IP1 indicated that

“the GCC like the OQNHE model. The Minster took it to the Ministers Meeting in 2012 because she is the patron of it and is able to say - look at what we are doing. They all got very excited by it”.

The comment by IP4 regarding the early work of the GCC Quality Assurance Network

“this was started in 2013, I was part of it. Then they realised that they wanted a higher level. They wanted the members to be Ministry level”.

This perspective of state-society relations and the political sociology of the rentier environment can be summarised as “it is all about what level and who is involved” (IP1).

Political insulation also occurs on an informal basis, which can be see through the executive board mechanism. The BQA’s CEO and General Director of the NQF are also the VP (former Chair) and Secretary General respectively of ANQAHE; the organisation operates from the BQA office in Bahrain. The AQAAIW’s Executive Board is chaired by the BQA CEO, the Executive Secretary is the BQA’s General Director of NQF. The BQA acts as Secretariat of the organisation. The AROQA organisation is endorsed by Secretary General of the League of Arab States (who is also the Honorary President of the AROQA Board of Directors). Other Board of Directors include the AAU Secretary General, MOE Saudi Arabia; while the Board of Trustees includes a former president of Bahrain University, UNDP MoHE Saudi Arabia, World Bank as well as other university presidents. These relationships allow for the organisations to connect with each other and to connect with those in power. In cases the power extends beyond the state and the region to a more global orientation.

7.1.6 Status of the network grants legitimacy to operate

It was noted in chapter three (p.56) that the power of networks on a global scale has the ability to assist quality assurance agencies and institutions stand up to governments or provide defence against national opposition (Woodhouse, 2010). However, the power of networks has an entirely different modus operandi within the GCC. The status of non-government, non for profit organisations are challenged by the systems of state apparatus; by resourcing, by the governance structures at institutional, national and regional levels. These aspects are bound in cultural patterns such as symbolic and institutional frameworks of civilisation such as the Islamic Umma and majlis and their associated dynamics. Within the space occupied by NGOs, different power plays, legalities, material and symbolic interests and ideologies have roles to play (Nefissa, 2005). The political and economic system is such that the ruling elites hold the power and therefore control the civil society whereby activities of civil society are bound in legislation, and actions are managed through regulations. The

legitimacy of networks to operate is granted through state approval of nonprofit, non-governmental status. The following aspects were identified in the interviews.

“Status is a problem. In the beginning it came under the OAAA agency; to operate it needs to be recognised as a social organisation. There are many rules and regulations which are related to the Ministry of Social Development. Status is required to employ people, rent premises, have a website; we are in limbo as an organisation. There are a number of supervising ministries, like the Ministry of Higher Education. To become an association, there is the Ministry of Social Development and it will have other government obligations” (IP1)

The concerns of non-status include the ability to hold public meetings, for example:

“the thing is, that in the regulatory environment, you are not meant to have any public meetings, you are not meant to have groups of people meeting unless you have got status....What I can say, there is a sensitivity about groups of people meeting without formal remit or association status. Association status is about legitimacy” (IP1).

These concerns were furthered highlighted by IP2 in response to the status of ANQAHE.

“We are registered as a nonprofit agency. We don't interfere with other regulatory bodies or regulations, anything. The Arab League invited us, I remember 2009 in Cairo, to be partnered up, we said no. We don't want to be with any governmental entity. Private, nonprofit. This is who we are. And we are working. We are producing some work. Arab League, we need their permission even to publish a single paper. To put something on the website, you need a permit”.

Table 7.4 Status of the network grants legitimacy to operate		
Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome
The state regulatory environment requires networks to be recognised as social organisations (the “ government as regulator ” context).	Status of the network impacts on the ability to implement organisational goals and objectives (the “ Status ” mechanism).	Approval of network status by government entities grants legitimacy to operate.

In summary, NGOs such as the networks gain legitimacy to operate based on meeting the requirements of the regulatory frameworks in place. These aspects include consent and approval for establishment and high levels of bureaucracy as seen in the excerpts above. In these cases, NGOs cannot form and act independently of state powers. As noted in earlier chapters, there is a lack of legislation at the regional level, which curtails the establishment of networks and coalitions. However, the close relationships between the individuals involved in and between the networks and quality assurance agencies, gives a power of its own. This leads to the next finding: quality assurance networks act as conduit between the state quality assurance agencies.

7.1.7 Quality assurance networks act as a conduit between the state quality assurance agencies

Networks have been described as having a range of purposes including strengthening liaisons between quality assurance agencies (UNESCO, 2003). Global actors including UNESCO, World Bank, INQAAHE, British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) recommended a co-ordinated approach amongst the Arab regional quality assurance bodies through the establishment and development of regional networks (Badrawi, 2007).

A range of contexts facilitate the ability of networks to act as conduits between the state agencies. These include weak regional institutional cooperation and thinly institutionalised organisations which are positioned within the vacuity of regional higher education regulation and policy and the absence of a political will for a regional approach to quality assurance in higher education. This is compounded by Arab Islamic culture, whereby personal connections and relationships are important. This point is articulated by IP1

“There is a lot of shared expertise...you don’t need a network to do what we do, to share expertise. It just happens to be a network. It is a network of people working in the same industry. It is a network of professionals. The network provides formal opportunities for people to come together. You have the formal structure through ANQAHE, but you also have the personal connections”.

The outcome of networks fulfilling this purpose is to the exclusion of the institutes of higher education as part of the quality assurance circle. With the very notable exception of Oman, where the OQNHE remit is aimed directly at the HEI’s.

“We don’t have a direct relation with institutions [HEI’s] in that we have a direct relation with the quality assurance agencies. Once we do our capacity building, we usually invite them to attend. And they also ask us to be speakers on their conferences. But we don’t have direct relationship with them as per se...because our agency is just to help other agencies” (IP2).

The relationship between ANQAHE and agencies extends across the wider Arab region, connecting the agencies together through shared ideas and experiences.

“They had our help starting from Tunisia. We went to Tunisia maybe two or four times, giving them all our ideas, our experience. Giving them our lessons learned from the pitfall that we had in our country. We did that with Morocco. We did that with Tunisia. We did that with Syria. We did that with Sudan. We did that with Yemen until everyone had its own quality assurance agency. AROQA does not work directly with agencies. They work in the community of higher education. I think this is the difference. They started actually after us maybe by one year” (IP3).

This mechanism of acting as a conduit is further supported with the idea of mutual recognition of one state agency to another.

“I don't think regional networks logically have a necessary role in improving quality. I think they are useful if they can be used as a mechanism for mutual recognition. It might be useful as a mechanism for the quality authority in one state to know a little bit more about what quality authorities in adjoining states are doing, and that's perfectly fine. But I don't see it as a fundamental part of the overall quality assurance arrangement” (IP6).

In the context of political will and absence of regional higher education regulations and policy, there appears little desire within this community of quality assurance agencies and networks to engage in a regional approach. This is in opposition to the GCC SC desire to operationalise a Gulf Network

Table 7.5 Quality assurance networks act as a conduit between the state quality assurance agencies		
Context (C)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome
Weak regional institutional cooperation (the “ regional institutional cooperation ” context) and thinly institutionalised organisations (the “ paper tiger institution ” context) creates a space in which networks can build relationships with state quality agencies in the absence of regional regulation and policy (the “ absence of a regulatory structure ” context). The absence of a political will (the “ political will ” context) for a regional approach gives further power to the networks. Competition and nationalism further compound the lack of political will. State regulation (the “ government as regulator ” context) creates further tension.	The networks act as a conduit between state quality assurance agencies (the “ conduit ” mechanism).	<p>Direct relationship with the agencies facilitates conversations and exchange of knowledge between the agency executives.</p> <p>Absence of direct relationship between the networks and HEI's (except ONQHE, whose remit is exclusively Oman focused and HEI institution focused) excludes the HEI's as major actors from the quality assurance conversations.</p> <p>Competitiveness for the position of being recognised as the best in the region detracts from bilateral approaches expanding beyond political and economic relationships.</p>

for Quality Assurance, which is aimed at setting regional standards which includes a regional qualifications framework. As noted earlier, qualification frameworks are becoming increasingly utilised as a meta structure for regulating the higher education sector and quality assurance. This regional network sitting at the GCC level is aimed at harmonising activities between the state quality assurance agencies. However, those involved in the networks, agencies and institutions have a different view. Instead of a regional view through a regional structure some identify that bilateral arrangements through the quality assurance agencies as the preferred route.

“it's better for the agencies to do MOU with each other. Like Bahrain, Emirates, so they can organise with each other, or Bahrain and the NQF of Kuwait. I think if we do inter-countries it will work much better than working for one regional hub...we

have governmental efforts by the GCC countries to do a gulf recognition, gulf qualification framework. This is still an initiative that will take years” (IP2)

and that

“the idea that a single agency approach could develop over the next 10 years is very unlikely because each country's system is embedded in its own politics, its own structures. Anything that became super-national, could at best be banal to the point of pointlessness” (IP6) and that “whats happening is all the cultures are all inventing their own credit framework and their own qualifications frameworks that appear to map onto each other. I think we are a long way from that. I think we a bit closer to a unified currency in the GCC than we are to a unified approach to quality in higher education”.

Some of the challenges of individually developed qualification frameworks have been identified, indicating the difficulties of weak regional institutional cooperation.

“What we've seen over the last, in the last few years are UAE, Bahrain, Oman are developing their own qualifications frameworks. Once you've developed one, its very difficult to change it. Its like needing a new measurement. We can't really unveil one and then a couple of years later, say, “Oh, by the way, we decided to harmonise with our neighbours where it's just going to be one” (IP6).

Bilateralism and bilateral cooperation can be understood to include all situations in which the quality agencies of two states are able to coordinate their activities. This also includes the various ways in which they enhance their quality assurance efforts through a common approach to the development and implementation of qualification frameworks and credit frameworks for example; or allowing for recognition of qualifications and enhancement of student mobility. Bilateral approaches also strive to eradicate conflicts between the agencies within their line of work. Dabbah (2011) suggests that this type of cooperation can occur with or without a formal mechanism—such as a formal agreement—between the jurisdictions concerned. Therefore, the meaning of the concept depends on the context along with the objective of seeking bilateral cooperation. While the benefits of bilateral cooperation have been well versed by the OECD, Dabbah (2011) maintains that convergence is a crucial benefit as it lends itself towards developing a policy perspective. When translated to the higher education sector, convergence could lend itself as a strategy towards regional quality assurance regulation and policy. However, the competitiveness between states may detract on the ability to have wider GCC collaboration and convergence. This competitiveness is not necessarily about attracting students or faculty in and between the member states, but more so about being recognised as the leader in the region. Competitiveness also exists between state agencies, such as the BQA and HEC example highlighted previously, another outcome of the absence of any relationship between the GCC and the quality assurance agencies. The following points from the interviews highlight this competitiveness.

“It [Quality Assurance] seems to be at some levels collaborative but at other levels quite competitive...I think there are probably an attempt by the regional governments to want to be counted amongst say the more western educational

institutions. We want to get on this top 250. How do we get on it? Put me on it. Make sure I'm on it. What you get is national pride as well. We're number one in the region. It's that. And there's a little rivalry as well, isn't there? The tribal sort of politics at every level" (IP5).

"It's the competitiveness amongst the GCC states and the Arab states. We're number one in education within our region. It may be that that's one of the reasons why more GCC-wide collaboration would run up against a set of obstacles because, well at that level, could Bahrain be in competition with UAE or Qatar or Oman for being the hub that people wanted? It may be that there is a pressure of some level of competition between the countries. But I think at the moment, there is no real competition to Dubai. I mean, that's the thing for this. Even Qatar, the relationship has broken off there. But even what's gone on in Qatar is not really affecting Dubai in that sense. I honestly can't see it happening [GCC regional approach], partly because yes, they've just established so many of their own [frameworks and approaches to quality assurance] that they're all different. Partly, I don't think the benefits would be seen by the individual states themselves. The first reason for it is that the governments and the ministries...simply don't understand what the advantages of such a system would be. They just don't." (IP6)

While IP6 suggests that government and ministries don't understand the advantages of a regional approach, IP4 suggests that government exchange of students is not a priority. The suggestion is for a university to university approach, although that is not without challenge in terms of connecting CEO to CEO.

"It is not a priority for the government to exchange students. If it is not done by the university itself, it will not be done by somebody else. The government cannot manage which university to which university or which course to which course. They can't understand the learning outcome, the alignment. The only one that can do it is the university themselves. The network can facilitate, can open the doors. It can create the channels. The communication channels with other universities is too difficult. Bringing CEO to CEO together is too difficult. In all cases, always need a facilitator" (IP4)

While competition exists between the states of the GCC in terms of higher education, it also exists at the individual state level between state agencies in education and is noted as the state regulation context (C5). The example of the tension between Bahrain BQA and its European approach to credit and the Bahrain Higher Education Council (HEC) American style credit was noted in chapter three as two fundamentally conflicting ways of conceptualising higher education.

Finally, if the states regulate higher education in an appropriate manner, graduates can become the new oil wealth lending themselves as able participants in the economic reforms and 2030 visions as published across the GCC states. Secondly, education as a sector can play a meaningful and supporting role in the economic reform of each of the states, particularly as foreign direct investment destinations.

The problem has to be resolved at the state level. Countries like Bahrain have a checkered history of higher education. Essentially a situation of very limited or no

regulation created a vacuum which has happened in lots of places in the world. Then, entrepreneurs then come in and set up pilot universities and make money from universities. Well, of course, if your motive is to make money and there's no regulation framework, two areas where that's most disastrous is education and healthcare. You'll get crack doctors paid poor salaries, but the customer has very little. You play to a naïve customer. The State should have an interest in creating a regulatory framework, that will first of all produce graduates of the caliber that its economic development requires, and secondarily as a way of bringing foreign investment indirectly into the country (IP6).

7.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter identifies and discusses a number of findings. These findings extend beyond the networks to demonstrate complex political, legal and economic dynamics. These findings range from intergovernmentalism lending itself to a competitive nationalist view of quality assurance; and comity and cooperation through committee in terms of getting things done. These contexts impact on the governance of networks through which a series of other findings were identified. The governance of networks results in blurring of boundaries between the NGO and state organisations; the significance of political patronage as a means of organisational sustainability and the power to operate as a legitimate organisation is granted through state approval of nonprofit, nongovernmental status. Finally, the ability of networks to act as conduits between state quality assurance agencies offers a pathway for agencies to push their agendas which includes orientation towards bilateral arrangements as a preferred route, although the national competitiveness may detract from convergence as a strategy towards regional quality assurance regulation and policy. The consequences of these findings ultimately place restrictive boundaries on issues such as student mobility—which is one of the key principles of a higher education area—a long standing item on the GCC and Arab region higher education agendas.

The next chapter offers concluding thoughts in response to the research aims outlined at the beginning of this research. I also outline how my conceptual framework and realist positioning offer the means in which to draw these conclusions. I finalise the chapter with a reflection on the use of a realist approach in terms of benefits and limitations as they apply to my research.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

The opening paragraph of chapter one (p.10) outlines four research aims which I have endeavored to respond to by undertaking this research. To reiterate, the research aims were as follows. I wanted to focus on the GCC region—which lacks a regional approach to higher education in general and quality assurance in particular— and the role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap. Secondly, I wanted to understand under what conditions this regionalisation approach to quality assurance in GCC higher education space happens, to whose benefit and why? Thirdly, I wanted to establish if and how quality assurance networks are closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why? Finally, I wanted to add to the theoretical body of knowledge related to critical cultural political economy of education. This chapter, in conclusion of this dissertation, seeks to respond to these research aims. Firstly, I begin with a synopsis of how a realist paradigm is an appropriate approach in terms of addressing the aims of this research.

8.1 Actioning the realist paradigm

In summary, a realist paradigm is appropriate for researching the quality assurance network phenomena. Realism as a paradigm allowed me to consider the external reality of the quality assurance space as it exists in GCC higher education while also acknowledging the complexities of that space from cultural, political and economic perspectives. These complexities needed to be identified and investigated using in-depth methodological tools; I made use of theory led interviews and document analysis.

In actioning a realist paradigm, I engaged in a two-stage analytical approach. This two-stage approach included the development of a conceptual framework to theorise what it was about the cultural, political and economic I needed to examine. The second analytical stage used a realist data analysis approach as a means to focus on the interpretation of the data to identify mechanisms, while also exploring the effect of context upon those mechanisms. Realist data analysis is not defined in the sense that it is considered a separate stage of the research process; in this sense I applied it as an ongoing iterative process taking into account temporal perspectives, data reduction and data display. From a temporal perspective analysis began with the conceptual framework and the initial identification of dimensions as they appeared in the interview transcripts and the documents. From a data reduction perspective, the codes used to reduce data in a realist setting were generated initially from the conceptual framework and then proceeded to a more selective process with the distinction of possible contexts, possible mechanisms and possible intended and

unintended outcomes using CMO configuration. In following realist guidelines, data is displayed using numbered mechanisms (e.g. M1.1) or contexts (C1.1) (see p.120–121 for context and mechanisms) as identifiable in the text of the interview transcripts or documents; this process allowed me to demonstrate my initial inferences, using abstraction and retroduction. In keeping with the explanatory and theory driven focus of realist analysis, detailed data needed to be reported in order to provide enough support for inferences to be made.

As I began to identify tentative mechanisms and contexts, I also began to develop families or clusters of mechanisms and contexts. For instance, a set of mechanisms relating to the activities and actions of governance of the networks and the GCC, were grouped together under the mechanism (M1) governance. Categories within this cluster, therefore included political patronage as an enabling mechanism. It is these families of mechanisms and contexts that allowed for the movement from constructions to explanations of mechanisms, keeping in mind, the unit of analysis is not the person, but the events and processes around them, which means that each interview and document reveals an assortment of micro events and processes. This realist approach to analysis has led me to draw the following conclusions. These conclusions are discussed in response to the research aims.

8.2 Role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap

The first research aim was to focus on the GCC region—which lacks a regional approach to higher education in general and quality assurance in particular— and the role of quality assurance networks in closing the gap. The role of the quality assurance networks in contributing to the regionalisation of quality assurance across the GCC is compounded by a range of mechanisms.

Firstly, the blurring of boundaries between the networks (as NGOs) and state quality assurance agencies—as an outcome—occurs through a range of mechanisms and contexts which are identified in table 7.2 (p.132). The “multi-layered network governance structure” (M1.2) affords the quality assurance agencies the ability to undertake administrative roles within the networks (e.g. BQA and ANQAHE and AQAAIW) meaning that the visibility, identity and role of the networks are blurred by the fact that the networks are viewed not as independent organisations, but as organisations that come under quality assurance agency as a result of the state agency executives with governance roles. The impact of this close association between agency and network is one that leads to a lack of independence and networks that are viewed as extended state apparatus.

Secondly, NGOs and civil organisations have difficulty in acting independently of the state due to the “status” mechanism (M2.1). Government entities require civil society organisations be granted “status” without which organisations have challenges in being able to operate in terms of renting premises, opening a bank account, holding public meetings and employing staff. The “status”

mechanism (M2.1) is as a result of the state regulatory environment that requires networks to be recognised as social organisations which is identified as the “government as regulator” (C5.2) context. The outcome of the acquisition of regulatory “status” grants the networks legitimacy to operate. Subsequently, NGOs cannot form and act independently of state power. See table 7.4 (p.136)

Thirdly, formal and informal political patronage (M1.1) leads to political insulation (see table 7.3 p.134). It is this very political patronage that ensures the sustainability of the quality assurance networks, whereby the close relationships between the networks and quality assurance agencies, gives them a power of their own, even if the boundaries are blurred. It is this close relationship, such as that identified between Bahrain BQA and ANQAHE that enables the network to contribute to the regional agenda, but only through the actions of the executives of the state quality assurance body. The role of quality assurance networks acting as a conduit (M3.1) between the state agencies in the competitive (C1.4) context detracts from bilateral approaches extending beyond political and economic relationships. These relationships are presented in table 7.5 (p.138).

Therefore, I argue that quality assurance networks have little formal role in closing the regional quality assurance gap. It is instead, the state quality assurance agencies driving the agenda, but through a bilateral and not regional basis as an outcome. In the context of political will (C4.2) and the absence of regional higher education regulations and policy (C2.4) there appears little desire within the community of quality assurance agencies and networks to engage in a regional approach, with bilateral arrangements through the quality assurance agencies identified as a preferred route (see pg. 137-138). As noted in the analysis of GCC documents (see appendix two), the state quality assurance agencies, as GCC actors, are notable for their absence in the GCC quality assurance arrangements. They do not play any role in delegation of tasks by the multitudinous GCC SC committees. That responsibility is left, at the national level, to Ministries of Education. In the context of Bahrain for example, the Higher Education Council—under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education—has responsibility for improving, monitoring, evaluating and regulating the higher education sector. The dual responsibility for quality assurance within the context of a state, in two very different conceptual ways, creates tensions for institutes of higher education, such as the Bahrain HEC American credit system and the BQA European credit system as described earlier.

8.3 Under what conditions does the regionalisation of quality assurance happen?

The second research aim was to understand under what conditions the regionalisation approach to quality assurance in the GCC higher education space happens (if it does), to whose benefit and why? Intergovernmentalism as an outcome lends itself to a competitive, nationalist view of quality assurance (Table 7.0 p.125). The driving force of national sovereignty (C2.1), territorial survival,

political and economic interests, and geo-strategic environment are key features of the GCC. Arab culture (C3) is identified as an obstacle as alliances and allegiances change on the basis of economic and political influences. Nationalism and national pride (C3.3) create competition (C1.4) in relation to how education (C4.3) is viewed. Positioning of regional educational institutions on global and regional rankings becomes important. Each state is vying for the number one position on the global rankings, with a view to being best in the region and ultimately being positioned within the same categories of achievement as leading international educational institutions. This is furthered by the political will (C4.2) of governments to support the national pride (C3.3), which is combined with powerless institutions (C2.2). Nationalism (C3.3) and rivalry (C1.4) disable the ability to engage in a regional approach to quality assurance. Comity and cooperation (see table 7.1 p.127) are embedded throughout GCC governance, detracting from the ability to get things done in terms of implementation of GCC Supreme Council resolutions. The absence of a regional policy (C2.4) further restricts the regional approach to quality assurance across the GCC. Therefore, as an outcome, the intergovernmental nature of the GCC, bound in comity and cooperation of committees as a form of governance, detracts from a regional approach to quality assurance in the GCC higher education space.

8.4 Are quality assurance networks closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to quality assurance?

The third research aim was to respond to the question: are the quality assurance networks closing the gap in terms of a regional approach to higher education quality assurance in the GCC, under what conditions, to whose benefit and why? It was noted in chapter seven (table 7.5 p.138) that the networks act as conduit between the state quality assurance agencies, with the very notable exception of the ONQHE. The ONQHE is focused solely on quality assurance within the state of Oman and deals exclusively with the institutions of higher education as direct stakeholders. ANQAHE as a network, connects state agencies across the wider Arab region, where the sharing of ideas and mutual recognition of one state agency to another occurs. The relationship between executives within the networks and those within the state quality assurance agencies is intertwining with BQA senior executives acting as the driving force of ANQAHE, as an example. It is this relationship that sees a focus on a preference for bilateral arrangements between the quality assurance agencies. The networks act as means to connect the state agencies, while the state agencies drive their own agendas through the network. If quality assurance bilateral coordination occurs between two states, through the development and implementation of qualification frameworks and credit frameworks as an example, this may facilitate a regulatory process supporting recognition of qualifications and enhancement of student mobility. However, competitiveness (C1.4) and nationalism (C3.3) compound the political will (C4.2) to focus on such things. At the state level, the desire to promote student mobility is called into question. The GCC documents—GCC Process and

Achievements, the Charter of the Council and the Economic Agreement—all indicate student mobility as an objective. Student mobility has been on the wider regional agenda since 1945 and the GCC agenda since its inception. Perhaps, as indicated by one interview participant, “it is not a priority for government to exchange students”. The underlying reality is one that is driven by political and economic alliances. The political in the sense that rulers maintain power through political and economic liberalisation in the form of a top down approach instead of implementing actual reforms that challenge the patriarchal power structure. The survival of ruling elites is interlinked, and therefore the power relations between states ensure that the quality assurance networks can at best achieve bilateral or multilateral participation in quality assurance matters.

8.5 Contribution to theoretical knowledge

The final research aim sought to identify contributions to the theoretical body of knowledge related to the critical cultural political economy of education. The critical cultural political economy of education as a theoretical framework has—through the conceptual framework of cultural patterns, wealth and power—given a means through which to view the processes of quality assurance networks in the context of the GCC through analytical movements. The CCPEE is an abstracting device to conceptualise the cultural, political and economic and makes use of prior theories as they are presented in the literature. This development of a conceptual framework, which is used in conjunction with CMO configuration, offers a level of certainty of how the networks take a bilateral approach as opposed to a regional approach to quality assurance. This occurs as a result of state quality assurance agencies implementing their agendas through the networks. This occurs, in part, as a result of the blurring of boundaries between the NGO and the state agency (Table 7.5) because of the dual roles of senior state agency executives and their commitment to governance roles within the networks (M1.2). The cultural patterns, such as symbolic institutional frameworks of civilisations, allow for the identification of “majlis culture” (C1.3) as means to undertake decision making, which can be combined with committees affect decisions (C1.1) context. Secondly, the absence of state quality agencies from the overall GCC quality assurance arrangements, means an absence of a regional focus on the behalf of the state quality assurance agencies.

In the context of the above discussions, quality assurance which is seen as an important harmonization tool in the European Higher Education Area and more recently in the ASEAN region, is absent in this form within GCC higher education, although there is a noted desire for a regional approach at the GCC SC level. The development and implementation of a GCC network for quality assurance, while on the regional agenda, has yet to come to fruition. The consequences of these findings ultimately place restrictive boundaries on issues such as student mobility. The mechanisms and contexts in the construction of a GCC higher education area are bound in complex cultural,

political and economic relationships. These contexts and mechanisms mediate the ability of quality assurance as a harmonisation tool to contribute to the construction of a GCC higher education area.

8.6 Reflection on the use of realism: affordances and limitations

This research offers a realist account of the mechanisms and contexts of quality assurance in the construction of a GCC higher education area. The use of a realist approach allowed for the identification of a series of contexts and mechanisms which combine, in many and various ways, resulting in intended and unintended outcomes which both enable and constrain the ability of the quality assurance networks to contribute to the construction of a GCC higher education area. The affordances of realism have been attended to in the opening section of this chapter (p.142) and chapter 5 (p.72). However, realism is not without limitations. Limitations, as they apply to my research are discussed in the next section.

Realism has some important shortcomings (Pawson & Manzano-Santella, 2012) that limit its application in terms of trying to execute realist principles into realist practice. The shortcomings include absence of explanatory focus; absence of multi-method approach to data and failure to investigate contexts, mechanisms and outcomes in configuration. I attempted to address these shortcomings by ensuring that realist explanations were theory driven; this is where I drew on theories in the development of the conceptual framework and on theories in analysis, for example bilateralism and bilateral cooperation (p.139). In keeping with other research utilising realism (see p.71), I focused on multi-methods of theory led interviews and document analysis, but did not make use of quantitative methods. Finally, in relation to contexts, mechanisms and outcomes taking their “meaning from their function in explanation and their role in testing those explanations” (Pawson & Manzano-Santella, 2012:189); I have endeavoured to follow the ‘realism steps’ I outlined in chapter two (p.28) in relation to operationalising a realist ontology as well as the steps taken in CMO configuration as presented in appendices one to three. However, I recognise there can be no simple procedural formula that provides a methodological solution to researchers that may be tackling different research questions, in different contexts, with different resources and methods. The most I can offer in terms of addressing this challenge is that I followed realism principles in a bid to offer what can be considered complex judgements. Realist research requires advanced theoretical understanding in order to work through the theories, the ability to define expected outcome patterns, determine the footprints to look for and where to find them in order to adjudicate between the theories as well as the ability to design research and techniques for data analysis. Finally, I note that even well conducted realist research does not grant any assurances and can elude efforts at being comprehensive; findings are “always provisional” (Pawson & Tilley, 2004:19).

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List of Abbreviations

AAAC	Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada
AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AAU	Association of Arab Universities
ABEGS	Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States
ACBSP	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfriQAN	Quality Assurance Network for African Higher Education
ALESCO	Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organisation
ANLAE	Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education
ANODE	Arab Network for Open and Distance Education
ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Network
AQUANET	African Quality Assurance Network
AQAIIW	Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World
AQAN	ASEAN Quality Assurance Network
ARAIEQ	Arab Regional Agenda for Improving Education Quality
AROQA	Arab Organisation for Quality Assurance in Education
ARQAANE	Arab Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASPA	The American Society for Public Administration
ASPA	The Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors
ASQAE	Arab Society for Quality Assurance in Education
AUN	ASEAN University Network
AUQA	Australia Universities Quality Agency

BERA	British Educational Research Association
BQA	Bahrain Education and Training Quality Authority
CA	Civilisation Analysis
CAA	Commission for Academic Accreditation (UAE)
CAMES	Conseil africain et malgache pour l'enseignement supérieur
CANQA	Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education
CANQATE	Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education
CCPEE	Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEEN	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CSUCA	Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano
CVU	Council of Validating Universities
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
EAQN	Eurasian Education Quality Assurance Network
EASPA	European Alliance for Subject Specific and Professional Accreditation and Quality Assurance
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation
EFMD	European Foundation for Management Development – Business School Accreditation
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assessment
EQANIE	European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESU	European Students' Union
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GIQAC	Global Initiative on Quality Assurance Capacity
HEC	Higher Education Council (Bahrain)
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HKCAA	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
IACE	Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
ICAE	International Council for Adult Education
IFNA	International Federation of Nurse Anaesthetists
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IRCEP	International Registry of Counsellor Education
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
IUA	International University Alliance
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
NBAQ	National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (Kuwait)
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (Saudi Arabia)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPM	New Public Management
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OAC	Oman Accreditation Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OAAA	Oman Academic Accreditation Agency
PUC	Private Universities Council (Kuwait)
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
QANs	Quality Assurance Networks
QF	Qualifications Framework

RIACES	Red Iberoamericana de la Calidad de la Educación Superior
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Minister of Education Organisation
SEEA	Shanghai Education Evaluation Society
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
TESQA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Australia)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UMAP	University Mobility Asia and the Pacific
UMIOR	University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDP/RBAS	United Nations Development Programme/Regional Bureau for Arab States

Appendix 1 Configuration of Contexts & Mechanisms

Appendix 1: Table 1.0 C1: Comity & Cooperation		
Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
GCC Committees influence decision making	The 'Committees affect decisions' context (C)	Interview 1: The GCC Network has not done anything yet and the meta frameworks will be interesting to see. There is a lot of conversations across the GCC. There is a lot of commonalities. I think one of the challenges is all the players involved. For example, the formation of the GCC Qualifications Framework, people that have been involved are people in occupation standards in the Ministry of Man Power and not necessarily the owners of the frameworks. So it is about about what level and who is involved and I think ANQAHEE has been successful in bringing people together and I think we have already had quite a close association with the CAA, because we all work with each others panels. For example, we have reviewers from Bahrain. We have a MOU with BQA in Bahrain, we work as reviewers on their panels and they work as reviewers on our panels. We have had both the BQA and the CAA come over and give workshops on their accreditation processes. Because we know them.
Cooperation with network in developing regulations and providing consultancy	The 'Cooperation in developing regulations' context (E)	Interview 2: I think sometimes we encourage countries, especially in the Gulf to cooperate with the networks...that can operate with us in doing regulations, and doing even consultancy for them Interview 4: There is no real cooperation between us and other universities in GCC countries, except for ANQAHE. There is some contribution, which is the translation of terms. Quality terms do not exist in our Arabic language. There is a very big variation, for example, validation and moderation. In Arabic there is no difference in these words. ANQAHE take this task and put definition for all Arabic words and they take it from INQAHE. This is a good contribution to the region.
Arabic term 'place of sitting' and used in the context of council to discuss and collaborate	The Majlis Culture Context (E)	Interview 1: Think about the Majlis culture and look at the way people work together and how collegiate they are. There is a lot of consultation.
Competition between states creates rivalry and is influenced by nationalism.	The Competition Context (E)	Interview 5: It [Quality Assurance] seems to be at some levels collaborative but at other levels quite competitive- Interview 6: It's the competitiveness amongst the GCC states and the Arab states. We're number one in education within our region. Interview 6: It may be that that's one of the reasons why more GCCwide collaboration would run up against a set of obstacles because, well at that level, could Bahrain be in competition with UAE or Qatar or Oman for being the hub that people wanted?

**Appendix 1: Table 1.1
C2: Intergovernmentalism of GCC**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
National sovereignty	The ‘ National Sovereignty ’ context (C)	<p>Interview 5: People don't do the exchange because there isn't a framework or people just don't want to go to the Qatar University when they can go to the University of Bahrain.</p> <p>Interview 6: But there's the whole issue of national pride. If you have a unified system, how can one nation be the best? Bologna is just a history of compromises, so everybody more or less continues to do their own thing</p> <p>Interview 6: I think back to this issue of national pride, "We have to do it our way. It's our national system"</p>
Thinly institutionalised organisations - includes policy structures and processes such as legal, formal and informal capacity of organisation to make decisions. Resources including human and financial.	The “ paper tiger institution ’ context (C)	<p>Interview 2: This was the GIQAC Project. It was a World Bank project managed by the UNESCO and it included about six networks all over the world and they financed this network. This is part of the success in the start of any network. If we don't have financial support, I don't believe that it could have grown to increase and to add everything, and to do the capacity building and activity without finances. It needs finances.</p> <p>Interview 2: I mean, if you're in countries like countries in the Gulf area they do have the finance although they don't pay for the networks but they finance activities. In Egypt, we do finance the activities also. Every year there is in Egypt, every year actually, at least one big activity and it's usually in combination with international organization. Say last year it was with DAAD Before it was with UNESCO. The year before it was British Council. I mean, we combined the activities with international organization to have finance, and to have human resource actually, and to have people from outside to come to the conference to do capacity building, to do activities, things like that. We are working with many international organization. We are working with many, many international organizations.</p>
Weak regional institutional cooperation	The “ regional institutional co-operation ” context (C)	<p>Interview 2: I think it's better for the agencies to do MOU with each other. Like Bahrain, Emirates, so they can organize with each other, or Bahrain and the NQF of Kuwait. I think if we do inter-countries it will work much better than working for one regional hub”.</p> <p>Interview 5: I suppose that that's the way to go, is sort of bilateral agreements with let's say the Emirates and Oman or Oman and Bahrain that they would accept qualifications.</p> <p>Interview 6: what we've seen in the last few years are UAE, Bahrain, Oman are developing their own qualifications frameworks. Once you've developed one, it's very difficult to change it. It's like needing new measurement.</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.1 C2: Intergovernmentalism of GCC		
Regulatory structure	The 'absence of a regulatory structure' context (C)	<p>Interview 2: "Once you put the bylaws through parliament you cannot go back and change it. But coming with a bylaw that is fit for purpose from the beginning, taking into account all other issues that we have experienced within those few years of having our bylaws active" [on providing advice on bylaws to Lebanon].</p> <p>Interview 2: APQN, Asia Pacific Quality Network, the European network is a network with paid staff. It's like they have their own governments. And they do reviews within Europe. So they have power. They have legal power. We are similar to APQN, similar to the Islamic Quality Assurance, similar to others"</p> <p>Interview 3: "They finished the qualification framework but it is not yet implemented. They still need a law to implement it"</p> <p>Interview 5: The national quality bodies somehow have influence over policy</p> <p>Interview 6: Of course, the problem with education is, if qualifications can't be recognized by other states easily, then you will have a major obstacle to global mobility, to economic fluidity, at all manner of levels.</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.3 C3: Arab and Islamic Culture		
Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
Arab & Islamic Culture	The 'Arab Regional Culture' context (E)	<p>Interview 1: "it is about trust"</p> <p>Interview 1: "In 2006 when it was launched, I think people weren't quite sure what it was going to be and it is very much in the culture here 'tell us what you want us to do, tell us how you want us to do it'.</p> <p>Interview 1: It is also a culture that responds to authority, and without authority, you need a strong chair to drive the network.</p> <p>Interview 1: many of the people on the executive committee for example and many of the people who work in the sector are not Omani. They are going to come from a different background of cultural norms and expectations, and that can have an impact.</p> <p>Interview 1: it is interesting, the shura majilis and how it all works. The model of a representative culture, is also within the political system. The ONQHE has a majelis shura which is voted on. It kind of reflects the political model to some extent. I'd like to get across there is a warm and fluffiness, but it not all as warm and fluffy as they all make out. There are other currents that drive people coming together. Tribal, status. They are important. Oman wasn't as affected by the Arab Spring as some of</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.4 C4: Political Climate		
Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
The political will to get things done.	The 'Political Will' context (C)	<p>Interview 2: "Now once you go back to the fiscal restriction, it is affecting everybody. Especially in education. While education is now the scapegoat within many countries, they are cutting education while they should cut on something else. And you know what they should cut on. Unfortunately they always cut on education"</p> <p>Interview 2: "This region will not rely on oil. They rely on education"</p>

		<p>Interview 2: “The regional, we have governmental efforts by the GCC countries to do a gulf recognition, gulf qualification framework. This is still an initiative that will take years”</p> <p>Interview 3: “It needs a political will actually from the country to go on in quality assurance and within this political will is the position of the education in the strategy of the country. If they're putting education first thing in their strategy so there is a political will but many of the Arab and I'm speaking of some of them that are not actually included at all. This is not their first priority in their strategic plan. It so important the political will. Apart from political turbulence, this is the second thing the political. Without political will it will never be a quality assurance in the country”</p>
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Appendix 1: Table 1.4 C4: Political Climate		
Political unrest	The 'Political turbulence' context (C)	<p>Interview 3: “The problem is in the countries that they were really active and dropped this activity with war, and the revolutions, and things like, like Syria. Syria was just about to launch the quality assurance agency and they broke. Yemen also. Tunisia, they were just about to launch it in 2010. It takes some time but they launch the quality assurance agency”.</p> <p>Interview 3: “When this turbulence will finish I think the Arab Network will have a big role in supporting these countries to come up again”</p> <p>Interview 5: There's then the ... there's a Syrian thing. There's the Qatar thing now. There's the ... these things tend to keep going on. [in relation to challenges of implementing a common framework].</p>
The relationship between politics and education	The 'Political Interest through Education' context (E)	<p>Interview 6: attempt to pursue, shall we say, explicit political interests through education. The extent of that in Bahrain really is mandatory courses that the students have to take. The majority of countries have some kind of mandatory course in citizenship that people have to take. That part of it, really, is least well developed. There's no national curriculum. That is one of the purposes of having a political dimension, Bahrain I think as well, to ensure that people teaching in universities are qualified and proper people doing it. I think that's probably true elsewhere in the Gulf.</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.5 C5: State Regulation		
Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
State agencies with similar roles however conflicting philosophies in their approach to regulation	The 'conflicting responsibilities between state agencies' context (C)	<p>Interview 5: yet they don't talk to each other HEC doesn't talk to the QQA sort of thing, so they have a different framework. QQA has that framework. They don't fit together because they brought in different consultants and too quickly implemented and so again back to the politics of it all.</p>

**Appendix 1: Table 1.5
C5: State Regulation**

Regulatory role of government involving regulation of education activities using a set of controls	The 'government as regulator' context (C)	<p>Interview 1: I think being under government is probably the safest place to be. Because lets face it, the government runs everything more or less. I think the government is best because that guarantees a kind of punch lets say for those institutions and those issues with institutions that we've kind of touched on just before there. If you don't have that governmental punch of ... if you don't do this, this will happen, then they're not likely to do it. Most are not likely to do it. And in fact, they're most likely to sort of ... a private structure would be to complain to the government because they have those easy channels to the government that we perhaps don't have in the West. I think under the government, it's the best place for it to be in terms of those things, for the sustainability or consistency of it. Of course, under the government puts it also under some conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Interview 4: MOUs - is not enough. We have to go beyond the MOU. People still believe that if you sign an MOU, you can do anything. It is just a piece of paper. When you want to do anything, you have to create another agreement with them to identify what exactly you want to do.</p>
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**Appendix 1: Table 1.6
M1: Governance within the GCC and Arab organisations**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
Formal and informal political patronage leading to political insulation	The political patronage mechanism (E)	<p>Interview 1: "The patron is HE Minister for Education. If you have support at that level, it means you are going to have sustainability" Interview 1: The GCC like the ONQN model. The minster took it to the Ministers Meeting in 2012 because she is the patron of it and is able to say - look at what we are doing. They all got very excited by it.</p> <p>Interview 5: Because of where we are, there is strong patronage of quality, sustainability is strong patronage. It's how things work. The higher up you've got a patron, the more powerful you are. And the more protected you are until it all shifts.</p>
Multi-layered governance structure allows for planning and implementation of objectives	The multilayered network governance structure mechanism(E)	<p>Document analysis ANQAHE: The CEO of the BQA and the General Director of the BQA National Qualifications Framework Director both hold Board positions on two networks. The CEO is the current Vice President and Former Chair of ANQAHE and the Executive Board President of AQAIIW; The General Director of the BQA holds position of Secretary General of ANQAHE; and the position of Secretariat of the AQAIIW.</p> <p>Interview 1: However, there has been a close association between the OQN and OAAA and we have advised them where we have picked up stuff from the Quality Audit reports and where you might want to do something in a particular area or you might want to offer more support in an area.</p>

<p>Membership of Executive Boards acts as a conduit to multiple organisations</p>	<p>The Executive Board Mechanism (E)</p>	<p>Document analysis ANQAHE: Thirteen members of the ANQAHE Board represent five GCC quality assurance agencies BQA, CAA in UAE, NCAA in Saudi Arabia, the OAAA in Oman; NBAQ in Kuwait as well as the AAU; the Centre of Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Higher Education in Lebanon; Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya; the Higher Education Commission (HEAC) in Jordan and the NAQAEE in Egypt. Where progress in regional quality is not easily implementable through the structures of the GCC; a route of access through the network via the national state quality agencies may be the way forward for a more regional approach to regional quality.</p> <p>Interview 1: Ministry of HE are an ex-eflico member. So they have a direct relationship with the network. The other ministries yes, in as much, say for example, the current Chair is Dean of one of the Ministry of ManPower colleges. So, there is a connection, but it is indirect rather than direct.</p> <p>Interview 1: the executive committee are all volunteers who are voted. There is an AGM, nominations are submitted, before the AGM. People vote for the members. There are six or 8, there is a chair, secretary, treasurer. And they are all volunteers. They meet three or four times a year, in fact they meet more often when they have events like conferences. It varies, some EC are more active than others. I think it is a challenge. They don't have a permanent secretariat and one of the biggest challenges for the OQN is its status. Because at the beginning it was under the OAC, it was under the agency.</p>
<p>Networks and their complex interactions occur due to the nature of their structures</p>	<p>The Organisational Structure Mechanism (E)</p>	<p>Document analysis of the networks: affiliations to international and global organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank to regional organisations such as ALESCO and the GCC Supreme Council as well as a range of international quality assurance and accreditation outfits. At a local level, relationships exist through a range of Ministries including Education, Higher Education, Finance, Manpower/Labour. The range of relationships can be seen in Chapter 1. Some of these relationships are through formal association links such as that of ANQAHE and INQAHE; or memorandum of understanding or agreements such as that between AROQA and the British Accreditation Council. Other, less obvious relationships exist through the governance structure of these organisations. AROQA for example has the Secretary General of the League of Arab States as its Honorary President on the Board of Directors; while Board of Trustee members include former University of Bahrain president and a UNDP Regional Co-ordinator as well as a Saudi Arabia MoHE representative and a World Bank education specialist. For the Oman Network, the MoHE and Oman Accreditation Council provide part time administration support as well as professional and expert advice.</p> <p>Interview 1: The networks coming together, as a formal body gives you more opportunity to lobby, to seek funding, to identify common areas of challenge, capacity building, for sharing good practice, for the future, mutual recognition, but that could happen informally, its a bit like a trade agreement. You can sit and talk about trade agreements with blocs but then what will happen, there was a big thing with the GCC and the US and then Bahrain went off and signed its own thing with the US anyway. Things happen at many different levels.</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.6		
M2: Status of the network impacts on ability to implement organisational goals and objectives		
Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
Civil Society and NGO organisations cannot form and act independently of the state powers	The “Status” mechanism (C)	<p>Interview 1: “Status is a problem. In the beginning it came under the OAC agency; to operate it needs to be recognised as a social organisation. There are many rules and regulations which are related to the Ministry of Social Development. Status is required to employ people, rent premises, have a website; we are in limbo as an organisation”</p> <p>Interview 2: We are registered as a non profit agency. We don't interfere with other regulatory bodies or regulations, anything.”</p> <p>Interview 4: I believe that if you just move the non profit organisation away from the government, it would be better. If they want this non profit to work and to be trustful. There should be a safe distance between this ANQAHE and the government organisation. They can work away from the tension of the government and other stakeholder and to attract others without this tension</p> <p>Interview 5: I think being under government is probably the safest place to be.</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.7		
M3: Networks act as a conduit between the GCC State Quality Assurance Agencies and stakeholders		
Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
The networks act as a conduit between the State Quality Assurance Agencies and a range of other stakeholders	The “Conduit” mechanism (E) and (C)	<p>Interview 1: Conversations with the Ministry of Social Development</p> <p>Interview 1: The idea is that the colleges or institutions take turns in hosting the OQN. We are going for the hosting model which was recommended in the report in 2010.</p> <p>Interview 2: “We don't have a direct relation with institutions [HEI's] in that we have a direct relation with the quality assurance agencies. Once we do our capacity building, we usually invite them to attend. And they also ask us to be speakers on their conferences. But we don't have direct relationship with them as per se...because our agency is just to help other agencies”.</p> <p>Interview 2: “I think it's better for the agencies to do MOU with each other. Like Bahrain, Emirates, so they can organize with each other, or Bahrain and the NQF of Kuwait. I think if we do inter-countries it will work much better than working for one regional hub”.</p> <p>Interview 3: “They had our help starting from Tunisia. We went to Tunisia maybe two or four times, giving them all our ideas, our experience. Giving them our lessons learned from the pitfall that we had in our country. We did that with Morocco. We did that with Tunisia. We did that with Syria. We did that with Sudan. We did that with Yemen until everyone had its own quality assurance agency.</p>
Interactions between Arab nationals improves Arab presence in the quality assurance field.	The ‘interaction between Arab nationals’ mechanism (E)	<p>Interview 3: “You will find Egyptians. You will find Saudi Arabians on the panels. You will find Omani, so we are interacting together. Most of the same in Dubai. The same in everywhere. I mean, you can find in the panel one of the Arab region represented. I think this is the effect of the quality assurance network, the Arab Network”</p> <p>Interview 5: I don't see them [the networks] as being particularly influential. They tend to be, in my experience again, more the mouthpiece of the network that's being used at the time. All the people from Amman, triple A will go and speak at these conferences selling the work that they have done. It's almost a channel, a communication channel.</p>

The relationship between global, regional and local	The ‘ Global ’ Mechanism (E)	<p>Interview 1: The British Council provided funding for the review that was carried out in 2010. That was the biggest. The BC was very pro the OQN. We had a champion with the previous BC director and they were very supportive. They had a drive at the time that was supporting HE. They saw the network, because it was a non-governmental body as being a way of supporting the HE sector in Oman. The sector appeals.</p> <p>Interview 1: I think the network is successful because of the external quality assurance environment. That is one of the big drivers</p> <p>Interview 3: “Actually, within the GIQAC Project of the World Bank there was such a good relation between all the networks and there is the International Network of Quality Assurance, the INQAHE”</p> <p>Interview 3: My idea of the Arab Network came from them because I was in their Board of Director for three times and I thought no, there must be, there should be a regional network. By that I mean, working with the International Network.</p>
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**Appendix 1: Table 1.8
M4: Improvement of Knowledge and Skills**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
The networks develop knowledge and skills related to quality assurance in higher education	The “ Human Capital Agenda ” mechanism (E) and (C)	<p>Network Document Analysis: ANQAHE explicitly seeks to develop human resources; while OQNHE strives to build a quality conscious and knowledge rich HE sector, stating that they can achieve this by ‘sharing ideas, strategies, research and practices’. AQAIIW seeks to exchange best practice, experiences and expertise while AROQA, through the provision of its quality assurance services, offers consulting and training.</p>
The networks improve knowledge and skills by offering appropriate professional training and development	The “ Training and Development ” mechanism (E)	<p>Network Document Analysis: OQNHE has the objective of improving professional skills; identifying and prioritising professional development training needs with the ability to commission development or and provision of training.</p> <p>Interview 1: So alongside the OQN, you are building expertise by training reviewers, so that reviewers are not only contribute to the review by providing local context when you have international people, but by also going back to their institutions, having had the experience of having had the training and being part of the review panel, they are able to support their institutions.</p> <p>Interview 4: Quality assurance is not a topic that you will graduate with a bachelor in QA. It is not a career. It’s a very long accumulated experience. It has uniqueness.</p>

Appendix 1: Table 1.8
M4: Improvement of Knowledge and Skills

<p>Diversity and turnover of staff impacts on the acquisition and retention of knowledge and skills</p>	<p>The “High Staff Turnover” mechanism (C)</p>	<p>Interview 1: one of the downsides of this part of the world and this has implications for networks and quality assurance is the high turnover of staff. Recently we did training for 11 institutions in Oman in preparation for standards assessment which is the second stage of institutional accreditation which is based on international benchmarked standards. They are actually going to have to rated themselves against these standards and the interesting thing was that we said to the people in the room - there was 110 people in the room - how many people have been through quality audit, its a cyclical thing, you do quality audit and then standards. Less than 25% of the people had been through quality audit. You have this formative stage and that in a way is a role the networks can play. It’s about the structures in place, to support quality assurance, because the people move on”</p> <p>Interview 5: People have stayed in the university of a higher education sector for all those 20, 30 years [reference to the UK]. And that experience there keeps going and doesn't get lost. What tends to happen here, of course, with the ex-pat experience and the economic type thing is people come and then they go two, three, four, maybe ten years later. They take it [the knowledge] with them. And then the people who are coming in tend not to be hired into those roles. Hence, the training. So then you've got to start from the bottom and they get so high and then they go. I think that's perhaps a big flaw in the national systems here as developing countries and the same as in most other sectors I think in the countries is building and retaining the body of knowledge and sustainable delivery to keep these things going.</p>
	<p>The “Nationalisation of Workforce” mechanism (C)</p>	<p>Interview 1: The majority of academics working in HE, apart from SQU (Sultan Qaboos University) are not Omani. They have real challenges. The Ministry of Manpower has set a target of 16% of Omani’s working in academia and most institutions are not meeting that. So there is a challenge there, apart from SQU where a healthy majority are Omani. So there are challenges in the region with sustainable practices, its about your systems, your manuals, that help to keep things in place.</p> <p>Interview 1: many of the people on the executive committee for example and many of the people who work in the sector are not Omani. They are going to come from a different background of cultural norms and expectations, and that can have an impact.</p> <p>Interview 5: I think that's perhaps a big flaw in the national systems here as developing countries and the same as in most other sectors I think in the countries is building and retaining the body of knowledge and sustainable delivery to keep these things going. And not just to keep hiring in as many of them do keep hiring hundreds of ex-pats.</p>

**Appendix 1: Table 1.9
M5: Access to resources**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
<p>The networks require human resources to work effectively</p>	<p>The “Human Resources” mechanism (C)</p>	<p>Interview 1: The website is only as good as the people managing it. The updating is done by the executive committee and the admin. They now have admin person who supports them. We have high expectations for the talent that is around to run the media, the newsletter, and those kind of things. It is quite a big ask for people to do those sorts of things. The reason it works is that people still believe in it and that it has a role in supporting institutions in doing the best job they can.</p> <p>Interview 2: “We are thinking to ask every chief executive to nominate a second member that can work with us”</p> <p>Interview 3: “The second most important is actually the resources whether it is human resources or financial resources, and I can say part of the success of Arab Network and not only Arab Network. Actually, most of the network is globally. When we started in 2007, there were World Bank finance to all the networks”.</p>
<p>The networks require financial resources to work effectively</p>	<p>The “Financial Resources” mechanism (E)</p>	<p>Interview 2: “We have received a few grants from the World Bank to help us initiate these initiatives”</p> <p>Interview 2: “But unfortunately we don't have funds to sustain our self”</p> <p>Interview 2: Our main threat, I would say the problem we are facing, is funds to sustain this network now. Because not all people unfortunately can pay from their own pocket now. Especially with this restriction of training and salaries, in Saudi Arabia they are cutting their salaries.</p> <p>Interview 3: “This was the GIQAC Project. It was a World Bank project managed by the UNESCO and it included about six network all over the world and they financed this network. This is part of the success in the start of any network. If we don't have financial support, I don't believe that it could have grown to increase and to add everything, and to do the capacity building and activity without finances. It needs finances...They were financing every single activity we were doing”.</p>

**Appendix 1: Table 1.10
M6: Building Capacity**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
Capacity building through workshops, conferences and exchanges of information	The “Capacity Building” mechanism (E)	<p>Interview 1: “Its about the structures in place, to support quality assurance, because the people move on”</p> <p>Interview 1: The learning by sharing workshops are where you get everyone together around the table and share their experiences. They did one on quality audits. Some of the institutions that had been through quality audit shared their experiences.</p> <p>Interview 1: Its success is driven by the need of HEI’s to get as much support and training as they can for its QA. In some extent it is driven by the external QA body because they all want to get through the quality audit and standards assessment.</p> <p>Interview 2: “Established 2007, and the capacity they built, it was directed not to the GCC as per se, but the MENA region. So most of our workshop that we did was in Jordan and Iraq. We did a workshop, Yemen, we did workshops in Sudan, we did workshops in Syria, and they establish quality assurance agencies, so we’ve been bringing a Bahraini model to them, bringing Saudi model, Emirati model and from Egypt.</p> <p>Interview 5: I think one of the big constraints everyone has faced even in Oman is the lack of capacity for people to take on the roles of quality managers. And that’s simply because so many people here have not done this before. And if you take UK and their role on the quality frameworks now for about 20, 30 years.</p>

**Appendix 1: Table 1.11 M7:
Accountability**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
The lack of accountability reduces the concerns of getting things done	The “Who do they answer to ” mechanism (C)	<p>Interview 1: where is the accountability. That, I think is one of the challenges. Because, even though they have a patron, the challenge is accountability, who do they answer to? They don’t answer to anybody. They don’t have a board driving them. They have a voted executive committee. The voted EC is really good if you think about it as a model. It is a democratic model. Everybody is voted on. The bottom line is accountability. (e.g. running the conference)</p>

**Appendix 1:Table 1.12
M8: Autonomy**

Category Description	Category Name	Examples from Data
<p>The lack of HEI autonomy reduces their ability to achieve their goals</p>	<p>The “lack of autonomy of HEI’s” mechanism (C)</p>	<p>Interview 6: in the region, the assumption is still the academic standards are managed at the state level, rather than being delegated to the institution. There's very little genuine autonomy of higher education institutions, and therefore no real autonomy over standards. It doesn't match the practice at the moment, for historical, political, whatever reasons. The understanding amongst the people is it's extremely good, and there are some very capable and sophisticated people. I think you would have to look at that on a country by country basis because it will depend on the degree to which quality assurance agencies can develop autonomously, and the degree to which they're going be hamstrung by their relationship with other government agencies.</p>

Appendix 2 Document Analysis of GCC Documents

The 2014 GCC Secretariat General document 'GCC The Process and Achievements' is the most recent edition of the annual GCC publication. The eighth edition is available through the Information Affairs sector of the GCC Secretariat General. In the pre-ambule, the Secretariat General outlines the nature of the document as highlighting the objectives and achievements of the GCC across a range of fields including foreign policy, defence, internal security and media; economic cooperation; human and environment; as well as juridical and legal cooperation. Education is identified as belonging to the field of human and environment. The Charter of the Co-Operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (1981) contains the rules & procedures of the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council and the Commission for Settlement of Disputes. The English translation is used for the purposes of this research as well as the GCC Economic Agreement 2001 English language version. These three official documents allow for the structure and organisation of the GCC to be identified as well as the GCC wide approach to aspects of higher education. The purpose of analysing these documents is to explore the role of the GCC as a regional organisation in the development of a regional approach to quality assurance in higher education. In operationalising social practice for the purposes of the GCC documents, discourse is considered in three ways (Fairclough, 2010:504). Discourses as ways of representing e.g. political discourse; genres as ways of interacting e.g. quality assurance, student mobility; and styles, as ways of being or identities e.g. leadership styles. Finally, social practices can be concatenated into networks that comprise social fields, institutions and organisations. See appendix 2 table 2.0

Organisation of the GCC

The GCC Supreme Council is the highest authority of the organisation and is composed of the heads of the Member States. The presidency rotates periodically in alpha order amongst the Member States. The Consultative Commission of the Supreme Council is composed of 30 members - 5 from each Member State. These members are chosen on the basis of their expertise and competence for a three year term. The Ministerial Council is composed of the Foreign Ministers of all Member States with responsibility for formulating policy, making recommendations for promoting and achieving cooperation and coordination for the implementation of ongoing projects. Decisions, in the form of recommendations are forwarded to the Supreme Council for approval. The Secretariat General has broad responsibilities including preparation of studies related to cooperation, coordination, planning and programming, implementation of its own decisions, preparation of reports or studies as requested by the Supreme Council or Ministerial Council.

Organisation of Education within the GCC

Prior to the establishment of the GCC, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), established in 1975 and under the tenure of the Ministers of Education initiated joint educational processes. Under the Secretariat General, the first higher education committee meeting in March 1986 included the leaders of the universities and institutes of higher education and is identified as the formal launchpad of joint educational work under the GCC umbrella. The organisation of the work of integration and cooperation came under the *Committee of the Directors and Presidents of Universities and the Higher Education Institutions*. At this stage, quality assurance wasn't identified as a specific topic; the focus was mostly related to the production of Supreme Council resolutions on equal treatment of students in relation to admission, coordination of research, Arabisation of higher education as well as student activities. In relation to these areas the Supreme Council issued a resolution directing the Committee of Presidents and Directors of Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the GCC States and the Committee of the Deans of Admission and Registration in the Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the GCC States to devise regulatory mechanisms to give equal treatment to GCC students in admission and treatment in December 1987. The Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in February 2014 agreed on the proposal submitted by the Presidents and Directors of Universities and referred it to the Supreme Council. In relation to equal treatment of GCC students in terms of admission and

treatment in technical and vocational training, the Secretariat General communicated the 2009 Supreme Council decision to concerned authorities in the Member States seeking the issue of legislation to be implemented in each State.

The three documents offer insights into the GCC as an organisation and the GCC as an organisation with a focus on cooperation and coordination in the field of higher education. A 1987 Supreme Council resolution instructing the development of regulatory mechanisms to give equal treatment to GCC students in terms of admission only had the proposal referred back to itself in 2014.

In relation to a regional approach to quality assurance within the GCC, the genre is distinctly absent from the documents analysed. The reference to quality assurance within the Cooperation in Education chapter in the 'GCC The Process and Achievements' was threefold. Firstly, the document mentions the Supreme Council 2009 resolution to establish the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the GCC States. This resolution has been discussed in earlier chapters. The Qatar News Agency reported in 2014 (QNA, 2014) that the United Arab Emirates were hosting the first meeting of the Board of Directors with GCC General Secretariat representatives in attendance. The agenda included the adoption of the network regulations and strategic plan as well discussion of future projects. The QNA reported that the network is an extension of the GCC Academic Accreditation Coordinating Committee. The Consultative Commission made a series of recommendations for education which were adopted by the Supreme Council in 2001. The Consultative Commission proposed a joint project to establish an academic accreditation board. In implementing this joint project, the Committee of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2002 delegated the preparation of a study on the requirements to establish the academic accreditation board to a team from the Ministries of Higher Education. This resulted in the formation of a Coordination Committee for Academic Accreditation in the Field of Higher Education. This outfit, located in Oman, is identified as the nucleus for the Gulf Quality Assurance Authority. The final mention within the documents is that of the Supreme Council adoption of the Document on Comprehensive Development of Education Quality Assurance Project for the Development of the Administrative and Organisational Performance of Educational Institutions. The Document on the Comprehensive Development of Education actually refers to this project as 'The Program of Quality Excellence for Developing Administration and Organisational Performance'. The goal of which is to achieve educational excellence by applying international standards to a range of activities including teaching, learning, educational resources such as content, educational buildings, educational equipment, the role of administration functions within educational institutions as well as relationships with external partners (Almansour, 2006). This project is tied in with the project to establish an Academic Accreditation Board.

Earlier chapters identified weak regional institutional co-operation (Legrenzi & Harders, 2008) with higher education initiatives located within national boundaries (Aljafari, 2016) and the absence of a regional policy on higher education governance (Mazawi, 2007) as key features of the GCC regional higher education space. The discourse presented through these three documents, with a particular emphasis on the Cooperation in Education chapter in the GCC The Process and Achievements 2014 indicate the following aspects.

The power of three documents, namely the *Document of Opinions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques*, the *Paper of the State of Kuwait* and the *Vision of the State of Qatar relating to Investment in Education* are events, in that they act as influencers in terms of their recommendations and the subsequent activities that occur in their aftermath. This includes numerous committees set up to investigate the proposals and make recommendations on their progression or otherwise. The case of the Qatar document is interesting in that the subsequent Technical Committee—comprised of individuals from Ministries of Finance, Education and Health in the member states—declined the proposals in relation to investment, noting that the project was not a priority on the basis of the tendency of the private sector to invest in education; and declined the proposed endowment fund for the Arabian Gulf University. This discourse of openly declining proposals or recommendations is absent throughout the remainder of the document.

The Economic Agreement, the Charter and the Cooperation in Education documents all refer to joint projects to be achieved through cooperation and coordination. But in the absence of a regional policy and work delegated to committees, the completion of GCC wide projects appears to lack traction. The Supreme Council 1987 resolution to grant equal treatment to GCC students in terms of admission to state higher education institutions saw the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research agree on the proposed regulatory mechanisms developed by Committee of Presidents and Directors of the Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the GCC States and the Committee of Deans of Admission and Registration in the Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the GCC in 2014 and referred it to the Supreme Council. This process took 27 years. With little achieved at the regional level, there appears to be lack of linkage between institutions, committees and the range of stakeholders involved. Reasons for this are multiple and include historic tensions, competition between the states, the inability of committees—through their links with ministries and other public organisations—to engage with public universities as an active stakeholder, involvement of ministry officials as influencing the political and ideological functioning of joint projects, as well as the absence of a binding role of regional education agencies such as ABEGS, finally throughout the documents, no reference is made to the various national quality assurance agencies as they exist across the six GCC states, in terms of delegating actions or tasks or utilising their expertise for committee work. The meaning of which is that ultimately higher education needs to be considered in terms of political, economic and cultural dynamics (Aljafari, 2016; Hafaiedh 2010, Mazawi 2008). The power of two documents referred to in the Cooperation in Education chapter— *Document of Opinions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques* and the *Paper of the State of Kuwait* capture different trajectories, forms and purposes of a regional approach. Representing Saudi Arabia, the Document of Opinions focused on four axis: building the educational basis, compatibility between education outputs and the development requirements, development of curricula and coordination and integration amongst educational institutions. While the Paper of the State of Kuwait focused on four key aspects: general preparation program for GCC citizens in institutes of higher education in the GCC States; promoting moderation and addressing intellectual extremism, excellence in research and knowledge management in universities and institutions of higher education. These programs, according to the Cooperation in Education chapter, have been implemented under ‘various titles and methods’ (p.179). The *Vision of the State of Qatar relating to Investment in Education* is different again in that it proposed a GCC body for investment in education, supporting projects such as the Arabian Gulf University; and assessment and evaluation of GCC States’ educational joint projects from a financial feasibility point of view. All three projects were not approved for progression. These very distinct cultural, political and economic State level arrangements can give us a way to consider the form and meaning of spaces, societies, social relations and subjectivities (Roberston, 2014) and how these causal mechanisms influence the lack of regionalism in the GCC higher education space. Appendix 3 considers the analysis of a range of documents including: ANQAHE Constitution, the Oman Quality Network in Higher Education Guidelines, the Association of Arab Universities Mission and Goals document, the Arab Organisation for Quality Assurance in Education (AROQA) mission and objectives and the constitution of the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW).

Appendix 2: Table 2.0	
CDA Analysis Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Chapter 1 Cooperation in Education; Charter of Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the GCC Economic Agreement (2001)	
Organisation of the GCC	<p>GCC Supreme Council is the highest authority of the organisation and is composed of the heads of the Member States.</p> <p>Consultative Commission of the Supreme Council is composed of 30 members-5 from each Member State.</p> <p>Ministerial Council is composed of the Foreign Ministers of all Member States</p> <p>Secretariat General is composed of a Secretary-General who is appointed by the Supreme Council.</p>

Appendix 2: Table 2.0 CDA Analysis Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Chapter 1 Cooperation in Education; Charter of Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the GCC Economic Agreement (2001)	
Organisation of Education within the GCC	<p>Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) established in 1975 (prior to the establishment of the GCC) and under the tenure of the Ministers of Education initiated joint educational processes.</p> <p>Committee of the Directors and Presidents of Universities and the Higher Education Institutions established in 1986 and is responsible for organisation of the work of integration and cooperation. They adopted a joint action plan in 1993 resulting in numerous committees including the following</p> <p>Committees of Deans of Colleges (Arts, Science & Medicine)</p> <p>Committee of Support Deanships (vice presidents, admission, registration, libraries, students)</p> <p>Ministerial Committee for Higher Education formed in 1996 as a result of the establishment of Ministers of Higher Education across the GCC States.</p> <p>Committee of the Chairpersons of the Degree-Offset Committee</p> <p>Committee of the Officials of Technical Education and Vocational Training</p> <p>Committee of Deans of Technical College</p> <p>Secretariat of the Committee of the Deans of Medicine, Education, Science and Engineering.</p> <p>Secretariat of the Committees of Support Deanship such as committee of deans of community service and continual education centres; admission and registration; libraries, student affairs.</p> <p>Many secretariats were formed for colleges: Secretariat of the Committee of the Deans of Medicine, Education, Science and Engineering. Secretariat of the Committees of support deanship such as committee of deans of community service and continual education centres; admission and registration; libraries, student affairs.</p> <p>Consultative Commission</p> <p>Higher Education and Research Commission</p> <p>Committee of Experts</p> <p>Ministers of Education Committee</p> <p>Technical Committee composed of Ministry of Finance and authorities from Health and Education (as a result of the Vision of the State of Qatar).</p>
Documents as events and influencers	<p>Document of Opinions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz submitted the Document of Opinions to the 2002 Consultative Meeting. The Document of Opinions addressed aspects of education related to the GCC. The Document was adapted as a reference for the ABEGS plan and projects.</p> <p>Paper of the State of Kuwait, the Ministry of Higher Education of Kuwait presented economic and developmental dimensions related to education. The Committee of Higher Education Ministers at their meeting in March 2008 agreed on four programmes: a concept proposal for a general preparation programme under the heading Education for GCC Citizen in the institutions of higher education in GCC States; promoting moderation and addressing intellectual extremism - the role assigned to scientific research centres in universities and establishments of higher education in the GCC States; a proposed model for scientific and research excellence in higher education institutions of the GCC states and finally a proposed model of knowledge management in universities and institutions of higher education.</p>

Appendix 2: Table 2.0
CDA Analysis Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Chapter 1 Cooperation in Education; Charter of Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the GCC Economic Agreement (2001)

<p>Genres</p>	<p>1986 Supreme Council resolutions focused on: Equal treatment of students in relation to admission - in 2014 Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research agreed on a proposal submitted by Presidents and Directors of Universities and referred to Supreme Council; other resolutions in 1986 included coordination of research; Arabization of higher education & student activities.</p> <p>Other resolutions approved by the Supreme Council include the development of objectives to ensure the role of education meets the development needs of the GCC (1985); equal treatment to GCC students (1985); recognition of certificates and degrees issued by official education institution across the GCC states and afforded the same treatment as those issued by the host member state (1985); GCC citizens allowed to engage in educational economic activity (1995); support of the Arab Gulf University (1993); establishment of the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the GCC States; and approving a common guiding criteria for equation of certificates as issued by the GCC States national institutions of higher education.</p> <p>Document of Opinions focused on building an educational basis; compatibility of education outputs; development of curricula & co-ordination of and integration across educational institutions.</p> <p>The Consultative Commission Recommendations on Education developed a set of recommendations based around four key areas: general education; preelementary education; public education and higher education as well as proposed joint projects in the field of education and scientific research. The joint projects also included an academic accreditation board; the Committee of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2002 instructed a team from the Ministries of Higher Education prepare a study on what is required to establish an academic accreditation board. This resulted in the establishment of a Coordination Committee for Academic Accreditation in the field of Higher Education, with its headquarters in Oman; which was identified as the centre for the Gulf Quality Assurance Authority.</p>
	<p>The Supreme Council adopted the Document on Comprehensive Development of Education. The resolution called for an integrated educational plan that also included other education resolutions. The focus of the projects and programmes included the following: development of education; professionalisation of education; quality assurance project for the development of the administrative and organisational performance of educational institutions; virtual education; promotion of education outputs and the educational institutions relationship with the community.</p> <p>The Vision of the State of Qatar relating to investment resulted in the formation of a Technical Committee. The outcomes reported by the Technical Committee resulted in declining the approval to set up an GCC body for investment in education as a non-priority due to the nature of private investment in education. The committee also did not approve the establishment of an endowment fund for the Arabian Gulf University.</p>

Styles

Work completed by committees.

Presidents and Directors of Universities and Higher Education adopted a regulation allowing universities and higher education institutions to participate in managing part of the joint action affairs.

Many secretariats were set up and distributed on the basis of specialisation.

Appendix 3 Document Analysis of Network Documentation

Organisation Structures

The document analysis of the five organisations indicates that they are all currently operating out of or are based in either Bahrain or Oman within the GCC, or Jordan within the Arab region. Bahrain, through the national Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (BQA) is host to both ANQAHE and AQAAIW. This is achieved as senior BQA members hold the positions of ANQAHE President and ANQAHE Secretary. The constitution of ANQAHE states that the General Secretariat is used as the ANQAHE headquarters, allowing the Board, President and Secretary undertake their work. The BQA is also the Secretariat for the AQAAIW, with both the positions of the President and executive secretary held by the same two individuals as ANQAHE. Both the AAU and AROQA are based in Jordan, while the OQNHE is based in Oman. The AQAAIW represents the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states with headquarters located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

All organisations have complex interactions in terms of their structures, be it affiliations to international and global organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank to regional organisations such as ALESCO and the GCC Supreme Council as well as a range of international quality assurance and accreditation outfits. At a local level, relationships exist through a range of Ministries including Education, Higher Education, Finance, Manpower/Labour. The range of relationships can be seen in Chapter 1. Some of these relationships are through formal association links such as that of ANQAHE and INQAHE; or memorandum of understanding or agreements such as that between AROQA and the British Accreditation Council. Other, less obvious relationships exist through the governance structure of these organisations. AROQA for example; while Board of Trustee members include former University of Bahrain president and a UNDP Regional Co-ordinator as well as a Saudi Arabia MoHE representative and a World Bank education specialist. For the Oman Network, the MoHE and Oman Accreditation Council provide part time administration support as well as professional and expert advice.

The organisations are relatively young, except for AAU, which was formed in 1969. The remaining organisations have celebrated a decade in existence. Funding of these organisations is primarily through member fees, and in some cases through provision of services, grants and donations. AROQA is part of the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh (TAG) organisation and provides commercial quality assurance and accreditation services.

Organisation Genres

Analysis of a range of documents identified eight main genres, which are outlined in table 3.0. These genres are not list in any particular order, however, it is prudent to at least begin with the genre of improving quality. The remaining genres-cooperation, coordination and collaboration; level of organisation reach, types of organisation the activities are directed at; Arab Islamic culture; improvement of knowledge and skills and research.

Improving Quality

All five organisations claim, through the analysed documentation, a desire to improve quality. For ANQAHE the improvement in quality is ultimately at the HEI level while enhancing the national quality assurance agencies in the Arab region. The OQNHE, in the same vein as ANQAHE, seeks to improve the quality of higher education, but at the country level. The AQAAIW seeks to improve quality through enhancement of the Islamic World quality assurance agencies. AROQA states in a general way that it seeks to raise quality in education; and AAU promotes quality assurance and accreditation in Arab universities.

Cooperation, Coordination & Collaboration

In seeking to improve quality—either at the HEI, quality assurance agency, national or regional level—is indicated as been achieved through cooperation, coordination or collaboration. This genre

is significant in that all three terms act as mechanisms for improvement in quality. ANQAHE seeks to enhance and sustain cooperation between quality assurance agencies in the Arab region and internationally and to achieve this, states in the constitution document, that it will establish a mechanism of cooperation. OQHNE seeks collaboration of HEI members in a bid to benefit the Oman HE sector. AQAAIW seeks to facilitate collaboration amongst the quality assurance agencies of the Islamic World; while AROQA collaborates with Arab, regional and international organisations. The AAU has a rather complex remit in terms of coordination and cooperation: it seeks to coordinate the efforts of Arab universities, enhance cooperation amongst Arab universities to achieve Arab national goals. It also seeks to cooperate with global universities and strive for cooperation between the Arab universities in terms of teaching methods and facilities, amongst others.

Level of Organisation Reach

ANQAHE, AAU and AROQA all reach out to multiple types of organisations at the national, regional and international levels; OQNHE formally works only at the national level; while AQAAIW works on a regional and international level as an association of the quality assurance agencies of the Islamic World.

Types of organisation activity is directed at

ANQAHE's work is primarily focused on the Arab region quality assurance agencies; with a secondary focus on the HEI's. OQNHE is focused only on the HEI's; while AAU and AROQA aim their work at and across Arab universities. AQAAIW focuses on Islamic World quality assurance agencies.

Arab Islamic Culture

With the exception of AROQA, the organisations all refer to Arab Islamic culture, with AAU demonstrating the largest cultural agenda which includes goals aimed at preserving a unified culture and civilisation with attention to Arab and Islamic heritage; a commitment to the values of Islam and promoting Arabic as the medium of instruction. The OQNHE seeks, through its guidelines, the appointment of at least three Omani citizens to the Executive Board which is aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of Omani citizens working in the HE quality sector. ANQAHE constitution states that Arabic is the official language of the network, while AQAAIW represents the quality assurance agencies of the Islamic World. The AQAAIW forms part of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (IOC) umbrella of organisations. The OIC includes a range of intra-Islamic institutions, federations and universities (Khan, 2018) including the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW). The OIC is recognised as the biggest intra-Islamic body and the largest intergovernmental forum based primarily on a religion. The OIC has a membership of 57 countries and spans Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America representing a population of approximately 1.6 billion people (Khan, 2017).

Improve knowledge and skills

In terms of the human capital agenda, each organisation, with the exception of the AAU, strives to develop knowledge and skills related to quality assurance in higher education. ANQAHE explicitly seeks to develop human resources; while OQNHE strives to build a quality conscious and knowledge rich HE sector, stating that they can achieve this by 'sharing ideas, strategies, research and practices'. Furthermore, OQNHE also has the objective of improving professional skills; identifying and prioritising professional development training needs with the ability to commission development or and provision of training. While ANQAHE and OQNHE are explicit in what they want to achieve in terms of improvement in knowledge and skills; AQAAIW and AROQA are less obvious. AQAAIW seeks to exchange best practice, experiences and expertise while AROQA, through the provision of its quality assurance services, offers consulting and training.

Research

While research could be included in the genre of GCC Supreme Council issues, it is worthy of mention as a separate genre. It is worth discussing, mostly because of its absence across two

organisations namely the AQAAIW and AAU. ANQAHE seeks to facilitate research, while OQNHE commissions research with AROQA collaborating in research. Importantly, these three organisations stage annual or biannual conferences, with AROQA responsible for the biannual peerreviewed 'Arab Journal of Quality in Education'.

Tackling GCC Supreme Council educational issues

The most significant genre identified within the document analysis was the link between regional educational GCC resolutions identified in the GCC document analysis, that have yet to be enacted, appearing as educational actions within the networks. ANQAHE very clearly seeks, as an objective to 'assist in the development and implementation of credit transfer schemes to enhance mobility of students between institutions both within and across national borders'. The GCC passed a resolution to implement this action over 27 years ago. In terms of the OQNHE, the objective is to improve quality of education, but as stated earlier, this is at the national level. The AAU has a strong cultural link with the GCC SC resolutions; these are linked primarily to the objectives of preserving culture, realising Arab State national goals and the promotion of joint projects. Finally, within the AROQA documentation, the objective is clearly stated regarding the ambition to raise the quality of education; to improve teaching, all with the ambition of ranking Arab universities amongst the best in the world.

Organisation Styles

The document analysis of the five organisations identified four styles. Styles are considered as ways of being or identities and when combined with genres and discourse, the three levels offer a means through which questions of power can arise and be considered in terms of hegemony.

Governance

All five organisations have clearly outlined governance structures. OQNHE and AQAAIW have detailed responsibilities outlined in the documents analysed. ANQAHE is governed by a General Assembly, The Board and a General Secretary Committee. This three fold structure is repeated in the AAU which functions through the General Conference, which is the highest authority made up of presidents of member universities. The AAU Executive Council is formed by General Conference while the General Secretariat is composed of Secretary General, two Assistant Secretaries General and recruited administrative staff. The AQAAIW has a two level governance structure—the Roundtable and Executive Board—although, its relation with OIC is not included here, which perhaps adds an additional third layer of governance. The current Executive Board president is the current CEO of Bahrain BQA while the Executive Secretary is Bahrain's General Director of BQA National Qualifications Framework Directorate. The BQA acts as the Secretariat of the organisation. There are also Standing Committees and a Finance Committee in place. The OQNHE is entirely different in its governance—a one level approach—with the Executive Committee responsible for day to day activities. The Executive Committee is elected using confidential ballot, while Government officials are not eligible for nomination. The Executive Committee states the inclusion of at least three Omani citizens while a HEI can only have one representative. MoHE & OAC do not pay annual membership fee. Finally, AROQA is governed by a Board of Directors and a Board of Trustees. The organisation is endorsed by Secretary General of the League of Arab States, who also happens to be the Honorary President of AROQA Board of Directors. Other Board of Director members include Secretary General of Association of Arab Universities; Director of Education and & Scientific Research League of Arab States; MOE Saudi Arabia. The Board of Trustee members include former University of Bahrain president; Regional Coordinator for UNDP Higher Education Project; MoHE Saudi Arabia; President of Jerash University; President of Sudan University; and a World Bank Senior Education Specialist.

Day to day operations

With the governance structure outlined above, it is prudent to consider how the various goals and objectives are achieved through the operational aspect of the networks. Within ANQAHE the General Secretary Committee (which is based in Bahrain BQA) is responsible for managing the website and publications; preparing annual reports; preparing and recording the General Assemble

and Board meetings. The General Secretary costs of operation are covered by membership funds, whilst also allows for hiring administrative support. Within OQNHE, the day to day activities are managed by the Executive Committee with working parties established as required. The OAC provide part time administrative services, with responsibility for managing website while the MoHE & OAC make professional and expert advice available from time to time. The Secretariat of the AQAAIW—based in Bahrain BQA—is responsible for the production of documents including working papers; matters relating to membership of AQAAIW; new membership applications and associated recommendations; production of the strategic plan and annual report; maintain the registrar of members; and arrange and record the Roundtable and Executive Board meetings. The work of the AAU is achieved through nine affiliated institutions including the Council of Quality Assurance and Accreditation. No information is available for AROQA.

Volunteer effort

As a way of being, the voluntary effort of individuals in terms of contribution of time and expertise alone is significant within the interviews conducted. While the analysis of the documents only clearly identifies that the work of the Board members of ANQAHE is voluntary and without pay, it is not stated as such for the other four organisations, although, it could be concluded that the effort is voluntary.

Support of stakeholders

While membership fees of each of the networks is the main contributing source of funding; support of stakeholders takes other forms and is considered significant in terms of the networks being capable of achieving their mission, goals or objectives. The support of the BQA as the ANQAHE Secretariat headquarters; the MoHE and OAC in aspects of the OQNHE; the ongoing close relations with ‘many organisations’ in the case of the AAU and the endorsement of AROQA by the Secretary General of the League of Arab states. Stakeholder support in the form of the BQA is visible for the AQAAIW.

Appendix 3: Table 3.0 Structures CDA Analysis of Organisations involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance	
Organisation	Organisation Structure
ANQAHE (Analysis of Constitution)	Independent, non-profit organisation; Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) 14 other networks including AQAAIW are also associated with INQAAHE. Described as a regional network, with Arabic as the official language. Funding is derived from fees, grants, donations and other earnings. Set up in Egypt in 2007. Three tier membership: Full members are HE quality assurance agencies/regional QA institutions; associate members are those that have an interest in HE QA but are not responsible for assuring quality of institutions, Arab region HEI's can avail of this membership; individual membership for those interested in QA from an HEI perspective.
Oman Quality Network in Higher Education (Guidelines)	Independent, collegial, not for profit network of and for private and public Omani HEI's. Members include HEI's that provide higher education in Oman and some government entities; with MoHE and OAC as ex officio members. Eligible Government entities considered are those that supervise HEI's including Ministry of Manpower; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Defence; Royal Oman Police; Ministry of Awqaf & Religious Affairs; MoE.
Association of Arab Universities (Mission and Goals Document)	NGO; based in Jordan; set up in 1969; by-laws approved by Arab League; affiliated to nine institutions incl. the Council of Quality Assurance and Accreditation whose mission is to improve quality through culture, guides, advice & training. Funded by annual membership (240 member universities) and revenues from services and publications.

AROQA (Mission and Objectives Document)	Non-profit; est. 2007 in Belgium; part of TAG Organisation which has offices in 100 countries with 140 professional companies and 250 educational partnerships.
AQAIIW (Constitution)	Independent, NGO, non-profit; funded by membership fees, grants, donations, fees and levy charges for products and services. Established in 2009 when representatives of quality assurance agencies for higher education from member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (now known as Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, HQ in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia) adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration. This occurred following a discussion of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research on the importance of quality assurance of higher education and the resolution of the 36th Session of Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC to accept the proposal of the Government of Malaysia to network OIC Member States on quality.

Appendix 3: Table 3.1 Genres CDA Analysis of Organisations involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance	
Organisation	Genres
ANQAHE (Analysis of Constitution)	<p>Strengthen quality assurance in Arab region HEI's; enhance cooperation between similar QA bodies in the Arab region and other regional and international QA organisations; enhance quality assurance agencies in the Arab region; develop human resources and establish a mechanism of cooperation; sustain regional and international cooperation; exchange information;</p> <p>These objectives are achieved by supporting, promoting and disseminating good practice; advising, consulting and establishing standards & guidelines; facilitate links and communication between agencies; develop and provide platforms for information on QA standards, good practice & professional reviewers; information on frameworks; develop and implement credit transfer schemes to enhance student mobility between institutions in and across national borders; facilitate research; represent and promote interests of the region.</p>
Oman Quality Network in Higher Education (Guidelines)	<p>Improving quality of higher education leading to the development of a strong higher education sector in the Sultanate of Oman. Achieved by building a quality conscious & knowledge rich higher education sector by sharing ideas, strategies, research and practices.</p> <p>Collaboration by members to benefit HE sector in Oman. Improve professional skills and capability; identify and prioritise professional development training needs; commission development and provision of training; provide feedback to MoHE, OAC and other stakeholders on proposed standards, policies, procedures. Hold forums & workshops and a biannual conference; database of members; document good practice through systematic enquiry and reflection; commission research; publish a newsletter; review performance against guidelines.</p>

Association of Arab Universities (Mission and Goals Document)	Maintain close relations with national, regional, & international institutions; assist and coordinate efforts of Arab Universities; preserve unified culture and civilisation; assist in developing its natural resources; attention to Arab and Islamic Heritage; remain faithful and committed to values of Islam; Arabic language as medium of instruction; enhance cooperation amongst Arab universities to realise Arab national goals; promote joint projects; cooperation with global universities; cooperation of Arab Universities in terms of teaching methods and facilities such as libraries, labs; Cooperating to promote Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Arab Universities.
AROQA (Mission and Objectives Document)	Promote excellence; raise quality of education; Pan-Arab; improve teaching; rank Arab universities as best in the world; provision of quality assurance services (consulting & training); accreditation services (through a network of global accreditation agencies); promote collaboration in research, collaboration with Arab, regional and international organisations; conferences and workshops
AQAIIW (Constitution)	Operates as an association of quality assurance agencies in countries of the Islamic World; enhance capacity of quality assurance agencies of Islamic World; facilitate collaboration, exchanges of best practice, experiences & expertise among quality assurance agencies of the IW; encourage co-operation with regional and international quality assurance organisations;

**Appendix 3: Table 3.2 Styles
CDA Analysis of Organisations involved in GCC Regional Quality Assurance**

Organisation	Styles
ANQAHE (Analysis of Constitution)	<p>The network is governed by a General Assembly; The Board and General Secretary Committee. The General Assembly meets once a year and is composed of full and associate members, each represented by one nominated person. The Board consists of 11 elected members. The General Secretary is responsible for managing the website & publications; preparing Annual Report; prepare and record GA and Board meetings; collect fees; all work of Board members is voluntary and without salary.</p> <p>The General Secretariat costs of establishment and operation are covered from funds; approved to hire administrative support; Secretariat is used as the ANQAHE headquarters, allowing the Board, President and Secretary undertake their work. ANQAHE President Dr. Jawaher S. Al-Mudhahki is CEO Bahrain BQA. ANQAHE Secretary General is Dr. Tariq Alsindi General Director Directorate of National Qualifications Framework for Bahrain BQA.</p>

<p>Oman Quality Network in Higher Education (Guidelines)</p>	<p>Network of equal peers, all leadership roles to be shared. Establish working parties as required. MoHE and OAC do not pay annual fee, but provide support services for hosting of website and administrative support.</p> <p>HEI Representatives are required to hold senior positions and have quality assurance responsibilities; at least one of the two members from each institution to be Omani.</p> <p>Executive Committee responsible for day to day activities; EC includes seven people all of whom must have QA experience and engender trust; serve a two year term; EC members are elected using confidential ballot during quorate AGM. Government officials are not eligible for nomination to EC; the EC to include three Omani citizens and a HEI can only have one representative; EC establish a code of conduct to guide activities; meetings held at member locations on a rotational basis; OAC provides part time services of an administrator, who also manage the website; MoHE and OAC from time to time make professional and expert advice available to OQN.</p>
<p>Association of Arab Universities (Mission and Goals Document)</p>	<p>Functions through the General Conference (highest authority made up of representatives of member universities normally Presidents); Executive Council is formed by General Conference - consists of President of the Conference, Secretary General; one member to represent every member from each Arab country and two assistant secretary generals; the role of EC is to discuss urgent issues preceding the Conference annual session; General Secretariat is composed of Secretary General & two Assistant Secretaries General & recruited administrative staff.</p>
<p>AROQA (Mission and Objectives Document)</p>	<p>Endorsed by Secretary General of the League of Arab States (who is also Honorary President of AROQA Board of Directors). Other BoD members include Secretary General of Association of Arab Universities; Director of Education & Scientific Research League of Arab States; MOE Saudi Arabia;</p> <p>BoT members include former University of Bahrain president; Regional Coordinator for UNDP Higher Education Project; MoHE Saudi Arabia; President of Jerash; University; President of Sudan University; World Bank Senior Education Specialist</p>
<p>AQAIIW (Constitution)</p>	<p>Governance is through the Roundtable and Executive Board. The Executive Board president is the CEO of Bahrain's national BQA while the Executive Secretary is Bahrain's General Director of QQA National Qualifications Framework Directorate with the Bahrain BQA acting as the Secretariat for the organisation. A review of the most recent minutes (2013) indicate that the Secretariat is responsible for the production of documents including working papers on matters relating to membership of the QA-Islamic; new membership applications and associated recommendations; as well as the production of the Strategic Plan while another EB member was responsible for review to include an individual from Council of HE Turkey & Indonesia National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.</p>