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Business Excellence Models In UK Universities:

Two Contrasting Case Studies

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**Declaration**

The work in this thesis was developed and conducted by the author between 30th September 2013 and 30th April 2019. I declare that, apart from work whose authors are explicitly acknowledged, this thesis and the materials contained in this thesis represent original work undertaken solely by the author. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## Abstract

The overall aim of the research was to explore the reason(s) for the apparent disparity in acceptance and adoption of Business Excellence Models (BEMs) in UK universities and to identify ways to help quality assurance staff make the best use of these models. BEMs provide organisations with management frameworks based around quality and are praised for allegedly improving global competitiveness and performance. BEMs are also criticised for allegedly being fads, over-promising and contradicting the nature of HE. This study also investigated whether BEMs were seen as fads and what makes them sustainable. Two contrasting case studies in London were examined: a research-intensive Russell Group university and a teaching-focused newer (Post 92s) university. 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Vice Chancellors/Pro-Vice Chancellors; senior managers; heads of department and professional services/quality assurance staff.

In contrast to previous literature, only one interviewee thought BEMs were fads. All the Russell Group interviewees thought BEMs were applicable to the HE sector whereas some interviewees from the newer university were more sceptical. Advocates of BEMs cited their intrinsic value as well as operational benefits. Critics said BEMs were too complicated and conflicted with academic freedom. Although all the participants agreed that effective leadership was vital for successful implementation, they disagreed on what this meant. Some emphasised motivation and inspiration but others highlighted the need to occasionally force change. Participants generated six criteria for evaluating BEMs. Four of these ((a) improved student experience; (b) adequately trained and mentored staff; (c) increased community engagement and (d) compatibility with league table requirements) are found in previous literature. Two ((a) strong personal tutoring and (b) students informing resource allocation and report generation) are not. Participants also identified seven Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that influenced their institution's choice of BEM. Three of these (team, process and collaboration) are found in previous literature. Four (location, brand, personal tutoring and transparency) are not. Finally, a conceptual framework was developed to explain how BEMs can be sustained. Three elements of the framework match previous literature (human resource management, institutionalisation and feedback). Four (leadership, resource allocation, monitoring and collaboration with the Student Union) are new.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides some context for the research background and focus. It includes a review of the governmental and market influences shaping the modern university; an exploration of the role of the modern university, and a presentation of the main research question and sub-questions.

## 1.1. Introduction to this research

University leadership has been learning from industry how to improve its managerial practices. I conducted an investigation into current practices focusing on Business Excellence Models (BEM) that are based on Total Quality Management and Lean Six Sigma. While the literature predominately suggests that TQM is a good fit for Higher Education (HE), in practice, there is a lack of adoption of the major TQM-based BEMs in higher education as compared to other service sectors.

In the UK, the HE sector seems to favour more traditional approaches over TQM and Lean-based practices, which seems to contradict the sector's need for improvement. So, why has the UK HE sector been reluctant to adopt BEMs? How beneficial does the university leadership perceive these BEMs to be? And finally, how can a university efficiently apply a BEM?

Universities can benefit a great deal from a well-implemented BEM, particularly if it saves money and helps the students' voices to be heard. While the former is a continual source of pressure and competition (exceptionally when funding is being continuously cut), the latter is becoming more and more vital; tuition fees raise students' expectations and ensure their increasingly vocal demands have to be heard. This research aims to explore the practices and effectiveness of applying BEMs in universities as well as the staff's perceptions towards those BEMs.

## **1.2. Higher education context in the UK**

### ***1.2.1. The changing nature of universities***

Universities have been changing for as long as they have existed (Altmann & Ebersberger, 2012). Throughout the ages, societal, economic and political factors have forced universities to change in many ways. These changes are driven by three main factors (Brockliss, 2000); (1) the size of the university sector has increased, (2) the number of students has increased, and (3) and the mission of the university has changed (Youtie & Shapira, 2008).

The university developed from *a warehouse of knowledge* (the mission of universities in the Middle Ages) to a 'locus of knowledge development' (Youtie & Shapira, 2008). The shift from knowledge storage to knowledge creation continued to be the norm up until the end of the twentieth century when a third dimension was added to modern universities, namely responsiveness towards, and support for, their regional industries and local communities (Etzkowitz, 2003). This change has given universities a fundamental share in the innovation system (Mowery & Sampat, 2005), involving them in a new and growing set of activities beyond being an 'ivory tower' (Rothaermel, Agung, & Jiang, 2007).

### ***1.2.2. The changing context of HE in the UK***

#### ***1.2.2.1. Government reform***

Some government reforms in the UK HE sector are intended to make universities more business-like. These efforts are not new per se (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1985; Lambert, 2003; Shore & Roberts, 1993). This has been coupled with a growth in managerialism in academia (Lomas, 2007) as evidenced by the development of mission statements, strategic planning and performance indicators.

Universities and other HE institutions are under pressure from governmental financial constraints (G. Dick & Tari, 2013) and from university rankings that focus on student satisfaction rates and employability (Foskett, 2010; Tambi, Ghazali, & Yahya, 2008). These pressures are forcing universities to change the way they manage their processes.

Thus, universities are more keen than ever on adopting quality management systems (Sohail, Rajadurai, & Rahman, 2003) with the aims of (1) improved student satisfaction, (2) improved quality of learning, (3) better degree results, and (4) lower costs (G. P. M. Dick, Heras, & Casadesús, 2008; Sahney, Banwet, & Karunes, 2008)

Since the 2000s, universities have been seen by many as businesses and they market themselves to compete in the global education market (Salter & Tapper, 2002). This changing context of HE is arguably a response to the shift in student demands.

#### *1.2.2.2. Managerialism as a trend in HE*

Managerialism has become the major ideology of society (Shepherd, 2018). In higher education, top-down corporate management models are so prevalent that managerialism is said to have ‘seeped into every “nook and cranny” of university life’ (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007, 27)

Nonetheless, managerialism remains a challenge to define especially since it is an under-theorized concept (Klikauer, 2015). That is why there is no single, agreed definition and also why different authors highlight different definitive characteristics when describing the concept (Teelken, 2012). So, for some, the defining attribute of managerialism is the emphasis on private sector practices (Deem, 1998) while, for others, it is the focus on reforming structures and processes (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, viii)

Having said that, an amalgamation of different opinions on the defining attributes of managerialism yields the following list of six main characteristics (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010):

- A widening separation of management activity from academic work
- More control and regulation
- An alleged power shift whereby authority moves from academics to managers
- A business mentality that highlights income generation
- Government policies that require universities to cater for socio-economic needs
- The marketisation of HE (i.e. competition for resources and customers)



The last three characteristics, namely, business mentality, socio-economic focus and marketization are tenets of neo-liberalism (Deem et al., 2007, 9) which has prompted some authors to use the term ‘neo-liberal managerialism’ in lieu of managerialism alone. Neo-liberal managerialism is also referred to as new managerialism and is said to have become prevalent in universities (Shepherd, 2018).

#### *1.2.2.3. The change in student attitudes*

In recent years, student attitudes and commitments towards entering university have shifted (Lomas, 2007). Higher education participation rates have steadily grown over the last two decades, with the exception of a one-off dip in the academic year 2012/13. This coincided with the introduction of a higher tuition fee cap, during which participation in higher education went from 49% in 2011/12 to 43% in 2012/13 (DfES, 2016). In 2017, almost half of all young people (49%) were receiving higher education (DfES, 2016) with the largest ever proportion of UK’s 18 year olds entering higher education (UCAS, 2017).

#### *1.2.2.4. The rise of mass higher education and the government’s response*

This move to a “mass higher education system” (Gordon, 2002) has been characterized by changes in the socio-economic status, cultural backgrounds, expectations and aspirations of students. These changes, coupled with the majority of students having to pay tuition fees for their education, put more pressure on universities to demonstrate not only the intrinsic value of the education they provide but its value-for-money (Biggs, 2003).

In order to address student concerns about the value of education, the UK government has required universities to be much more transparent, so that there is a free flow of information towards those who have a vested interest in said universities (Lomas, 2007) especially current and prospective students. For this reason, the Task Group on Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education was set up. The group was tasked with standardizing the information about HE quality and standards, and then making this information freely available. The group’s report (HEFCE, 2002) also recommended the collection and publication of qualitative data such as: (1) external examination reports, (2) student satisfaction survey results, (3) strategies of learning and teaching, and (4) reviews of major programmes’ results. The publication of such

information was believed to enhance accountability (HEFCE, 2003) and improve quality (DfES, 2003). Current students could use the information to evaluate the quality of the education they were receiving and prospective students could use it to make more informed decisions about which university to attend (Lomas, 2007).

#### *1.2.2.5. Students as customers*

For more than a decade, students have been identified as customers in government literature (DfES, 2003; QAA, 2009) and referred to as “stakeholders at the centre of the higher education process”. The government also contends that providing sufficient information about universities helps students grow into “intelligent customers” and become stakeholders in quality improvement (DfES, 2003).

The government introduced the National Student Survey in 2005 (HEFCE, 2005) with the aim of gauging student perceptions and helping them choose more appropriate programmes that better cater for their needs and aspirations. Initially, the survey received generally positive reviews and was welcomed by The National Union of Students, who dubbed it “a credible and good quality source of information” (Weavers, 2003).

#### *1.2.3. The marketization of HE and the Corporate university*

Marketization, a term derived from economic liberalism, means the gradual introduction of free market principles into a sector or region (Brown, 2010; Maringe, 2010).

Government policies have deliberately tried to create pseudo-market conditions, in the belief that this improves standards and increases student choice (Waring, 2017). The tripling of tuition fees at English and Welsh universities was one such policy specifically designed to increase marketization (Kaye & Bates, 2017; Waring, 2017).

In response, HEIs began to adopt the kind of management-led approaches and cyclical restructuring commonly found in business and industry (Boden & Epstein, 2006). Vice chancellors came to see themselves as chief executive officers; department heads were expected to become line managers; and academics were positioned as workers (P. Scott, 2000). Academic departments were transformed into business units, run by management teams. Special attention was paid to achieving business targets and operating within strict budgetary constraints (Whitchurch, 2013). In addition, the salaries of HEI senior managers started to rise much faster than their academic counterparts (Grove, 2016).

This resulted in a wide difference between the remuneration of senior managers and senior academics, providing further evidence of corporatisation (P. Scott, 2000).

Alongside these structural changes, there has been an increase in the use of metrics for quality control purposes. Two of these metrics, the National Student Survey and the Research Excellence Framework, have become extremely influential, despite extensive criticism of their dependability and validity (Waring, 2017). A third, the Teaching Excellence Framework (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2016), was being rolled out during the data collection period. There is no doubt that the use of these metrics has made the culture within HEIs more corporate.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to expound the purpose of a university, but it has been hotly debated (Barnett, 2001, 2013; Collini, 2012, 2017). Critics of managerialism and marketisation contend that academics constitute the very heart of a university and should not therefore be subject to management imperatives. At best, these are wasteful and distracting; at worst, they create a democratic deficit because they are neither debated nor questioned (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p.85). Moreover, critics of corporatization claim it derives from isomorphic rationality or groupthink (Rutherford & Meier, 2015), concepts that run counter to the principles of democracy and academic freedom. Advocates are aware of these criticisms but believe i) management-led models lead to improved efficiency and reduced costs, and ii) these two outcomes are absolutely essential, given the increasingly demanding, diverse and convoluted context within which universities operate (Whitchurch, 2013).

### **1.3. Research objectives**

This study aims to investigate the applicability of the Business Excellence Models in Higher Education by asking two overarching questions:

*“Why might one UK university embrace Business Excellence Models while another does not? How can quality assurance staff make the best use of these models?”*

In order to answer this question, I will answer the following sub-questions:

- ✓ *What motivates a university to implement or not implement a Business Excellence Model (BEM)?*
- ✓ *How is the decision to implement a BEM enacted and with what consequences?*
- ✓ *To what extent do university staff view BEMs as business fads or fashions?*
- ✓ *How might BEMs be better initiated, implemented and sustained?*

To answer these questions, I conducted qualitative case-study research. I believe this is the most appropriate approach, given that the research questions are both descriptive and explanatory and there is a need for in-depth description of the studied phenomenon.

#### **1.4. Thesis structure**

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 presents and discusses the existing literature on quality management and the application of business excellence models in higher education. Chapter 3 discusses the research approach and the underlying methodology used to formulate and answer the research question. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews at the two institutions. Chapter 5 presents a discussion and interpretation of the findings, in light of the existing literature. The final chapter concludes with a summary the major findings. It also includes a consideration of the limitations of the research; recommendation for further research and a personal reflection on the research process.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction to quality and quality management

Quality originated as a concern within the industry. It then gradually turned into a societal concern which started a debate about the validity of applying frameworks that originated in business and manufacturing into the public sector (Manatos, Sarrico, & Rosa, 2017).

Defining Quality Management is an almost impossible task (Manatos et al., 2017). However, quality management is commonly accepted to denote a 'philosophy or an approach to management' made up of a 'set of mutually reinforcing principles, each of which is supported by a set of practices and techniques' (Dean & Bowen, 1994, p.92)

There has been a plethora of definitions and viewpoints on quality, which are supported by philosophies and theoretical frameworks developed by pioneers such as Deming, Juran, and Crosby. These philosophies later developed into Total Quality Management (TQM).

#### 2.1.1. *Quality management*

Shewhart (1931) seminal contribution was to replace an array of vastly dissimilar definitions of quality with a single model that was widely accepted but different from what had gone before. Instead of quality reflecting luxury, it now meant meeting the requirements of products and services, most of which were not at all luxurious (Shewhart, 1931; Tervonen et al., 2008). His further work on statistical process control (SPC) and his submission of the Control Charts was a pivotal breakthrough in quality management.

Dick et al (2013) defines quality management as a holistic philosophy that aims at the maintenance and continuous improvement of all the organizational functions; the goal of such philosophy is to meet and exceed the customers' or/and stakeholders' requirements.

In Post-War United States, manufacturers focused on maximizing production volume.

However, on the other side of the Pacific, Japan desperately needed to rebuild efficiently. It was at this time that gurus such as Deming and Juran introduced statistical quality control techniques and control charts (Radford, 1997). Amongst the techniques introduced were analytical decision-making tools. Examples of these tools include plotting and monitoring variation (using normal distribution among other basic statistical control techniques). Once the processes were “under control”, observation helped diagnose and correct deviations. The Deming Prize then became a driving force for many Japanese companies aspiring to excel.

The 70’s brought increased global competitiveness and allowed for more open markets, enabling higher-quality Japanese products to reach the US market. Consumers were impressed and made sound purchasing decisions favouring the Japanese products (Fisher and Nair, 2009). As a response, American companies had to invest in quality control. Among the first models was the Parameter Design developed by Taguchi at Bell Laboratories, USA (Taguchi and Organization, 1986) as a framework for quality improvement.

By the 1980s, Deming was one of the most influential experts in the quality revolution owing to a peak in interest in quality by consumers, companies and governments. Deming’s teachings were embraced by then-market-leaders, including General Motors, Ford Motor Company and Procter and Gamble. These teachings quickly developed into the TQM philosophy.

#### *2.1.1.1. Deming’s philosophy*

Deming worked for the US government on statistical sampling techniques but never explicitly defined or described quality (Redmond et al., 2008). Deming believed that minimizing variability and increasing certainty brings forth more adherence to standards and hence improved quality.

In his seminal book, *Out Of The Crisis* (1986) Deming lists four principles for improving services:

1. Appreciation for a system
2. The collaboration of the system components.
3. The job for management is to optimise the system.
4. An understanding of variation in the organisation.

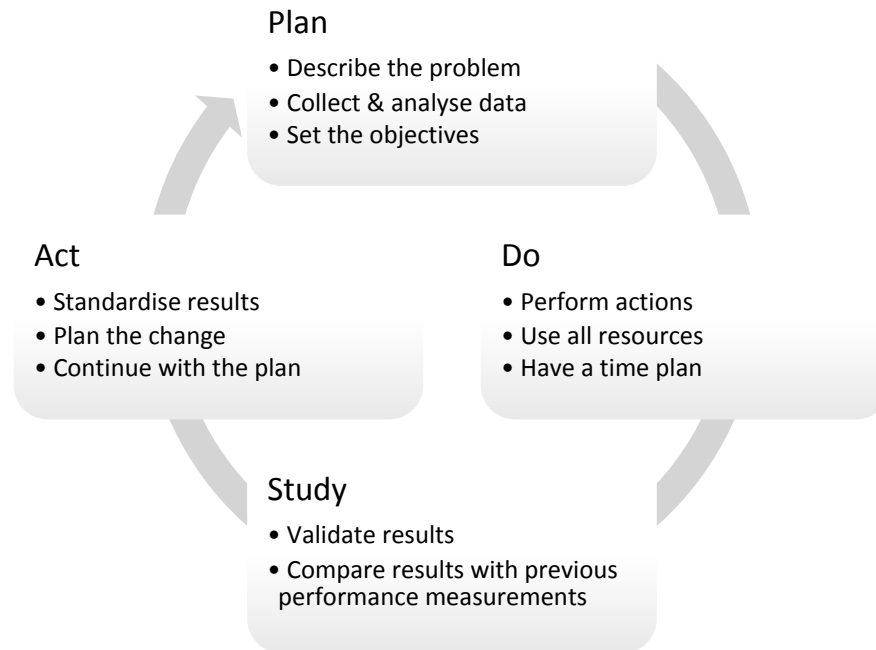


Figure 1 Deming's PDSA Cycle (Deming, 1986)

#### 2.1.1.2. Juran's philosophy

Juran believed that most quality problems stemmed from ineffective management. According to Juran, Quality management consists of three basic processes (Juran, 1993): Quality planning, Quality control, and Quality improvement.

#### 2.1.1.3. Deming PDSA model

The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle was introduced by Deming as an approach to create and maintain TQM through continually improving the organisation's activities. The PDSA (also known as the Plan-Do-Check-Act PDCA Cycle) has proven to be worth implementing and not a fad (Karuppusami and Gandhinathan, 2006) it could be argued that Deming's PDCA cycle promotes a systematic testing of our knowledge theory or world-view (Rawson et al., 2016) and is applicable within quantitative evaluation of the sustainability of TQM initiatives (Kumar et al., 2004; Karuppusami and Gandhinathan,

2012).

#### *2.2.1.1. BEM definition*

Researchers have used various terms to refer to essentially the same thing; what is sometimes called Quality Management or Quality Management Systems refers to the same thing as Excellence Models (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013) and so on.

The following table combines the major terms used to describe such models, as well as the authors who use each term in an aggregated manner (all within the education context). It should be mentioned however, that these different authors are not using different terms to mean the exact same thing. Instead, they are using them to indicate minor differences that are important to the authors, themselves, but need not concern us for the time being.

What all of these terms are trying to describe is a TQM-based holistic approach to Quality Management; they all use the same examples to describe what they refer to (the examples are namely Total Quality Management, the EFQM Excellence Model and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award). That is why it is fair to assume they are all approximately referring to the same thing. From now on, I will use the term Business Excellence Models to refer to these models or management approaches.



<b>Term</b>	<b>Authors who use it</b>
<b>Quality Management Systems</b>	(Barrow, 1999; Dick & Tari, 2013; Spencer-Matthews, 2001; Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994)
<b>Quality Management Systems And Models</b>	(Mehralizadeh & Safaemoghaddam, 2010; Temtime & Mmereki, 2011)
<b>Excellence Models (Or Models Of Excellence)</b>	(Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; João Pires da Rosa, Pedro M, 2001; Pratasavitskaya & Stensaker, 2010; Sampaio, Saraiva, & Rodrigues, 2009)
<b>Industry Models</b>	(Harvey & Williams, 2010a)
<b>Quality Models</b>	(Blanco-Ramírez & Berger, 2014; Grant, Mergen, & Widrick, 2002; Thandapani, Gopalakrishnan, Devadasan, Sreenivasa, & Muruges, 2012)
<b>Excellence Quality Models</b>	(Alonso-Almeida & Fuentes-Frías, 2011)
<b>Industrial Quality Models</b>	(Burquel & van Vught, 2010; Hasan, 2010; Pratasavitskaya & Stensaker, 2010)
<b>Business Excellence Models</b>	(Asif & Searcy, 2013; Boulter, Bendell, & Dahlgard, 2013; Coulson-Thomas, 2013; Gotzamani, 2005; Popli, 2005)

Table 1 The different terms used to describe Business Excellence Models

### *2.2.2. A review of prevalent BEMs*

#### *2.2.2.1. Total Quality Management (TQM)*

Total Quality Management (TQM) is not easy to define but its core principles are easily

recognised; continuous improvement, customer focus, human resources management and process management (Isaksson 2005; Shibani et al., 2012). TQM is holistic in application, as opposed to being applied only within one aspect of product/service quality (Zink, 2007).

TQM originated in manufacturing companies but then spread to the service sector and was applied in businesses such as healthcare and banking. A typical TQM implementation is constructed around the critical factors of the organisation (Juran, 2003). Conversely, successful TQM application transforms the culture of the organisation gearing it towards superior product delivery (In'airat and Al-Kassem, 2014).

TQM is sometimes considered a management philosophy since its application is on the long term such as continuous improvement (Mohammed et al., 2016). TQM is a very popular approach, which is defined by The American Society for Quality as “a management approach to long-term success through customer satisfaction where all members of an organization participate in improving processes, products, services, and the culture in which they work.” Similarly, ISO 8402 defines TQM as “*a management approach of an organisation centred on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long term success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organisation and society.*”

Total Quality Management is an approach based on the idea that customer satisfaction is the goal of every organizational unit. Thus all the efforts in the organization must be collaborated towards satisfying the customer (Cartmell, Binsardi, & McLean, 2011). At its core, TQM has five major stages: (1) customer identification; (2) customer evaluation; (3) design of delivery process; (4) development of strategies for optimization; and (5) promotion of continuous improvement (Campatelli, Citti, & Meneghin, 2011). TQM has been successfully applied in both public and private sector organizations (Tari & Juana-Espinosa, 2007). It is a process-oriented system whose core belief is that quality derives from fulfilling a customer's requirements.

Spanbauer (1995) listed the following core principles for successful TQM application in higher education: (1) leadership, (2) training and empowerment, (3) customer focus, (4)

culture, (5) data focus, (6) the scientific method, and (7) team building.

The Total Quality approach is based on the idea that customer satisfaction is the barometer or benchmark for every effort in the organization (Cartmell et al., 2011).

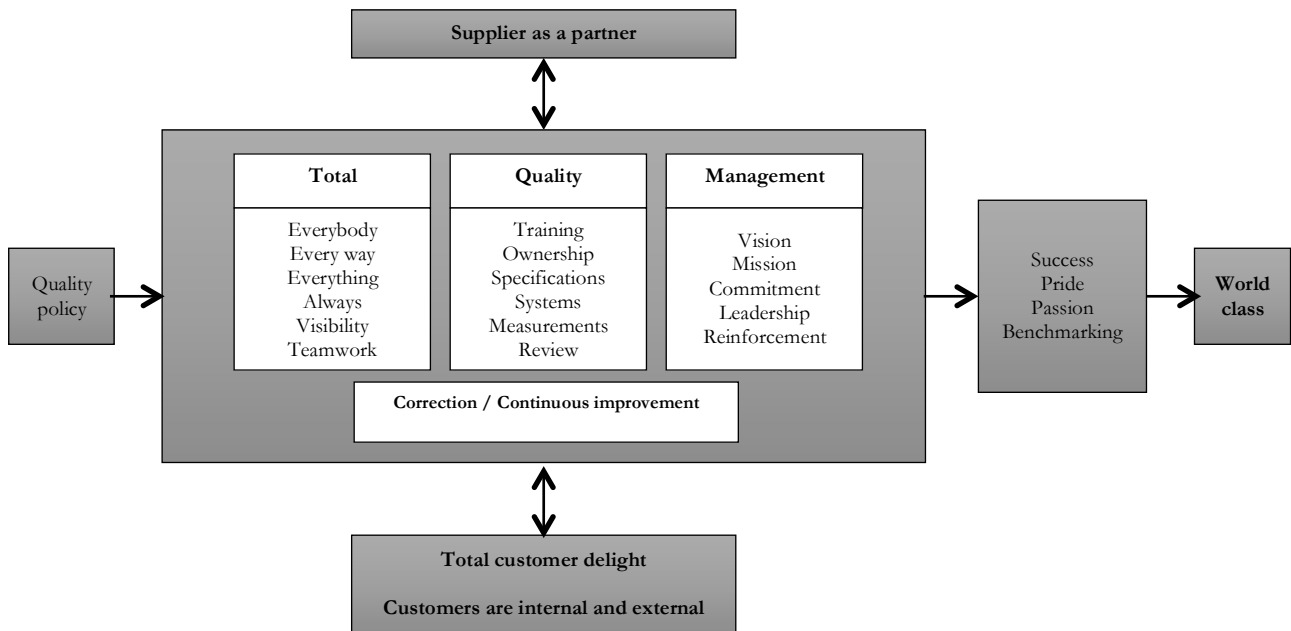


Figure 2 TQM framework - total commitment across the supply chain (Source: Ridley, n.d.)

Quality-related activities became popular in the 1980s and the 1990s in the U.S.

Karathanos (1999) only focused on whether or not the education sector is keeping pace with the quality-related initiatives, having already assumed that the application of such initiatives in the education sector is desirable. He then went on to argue that national efforts needed to be accelerated.

Since TQM is one of the holistic models, it is considered a comprehensive approach as opposed to a limited approach such as the ISO 9000.

Pryor, Hendrix, Alexander, & Collins (2010) note the implementation of Strategic Quality Management can address many challenges and problems that universities face, through integrating excellence initiatives to plans and tactics.

Pryor, Hendrix, Alexander, & Collins (2010) view the implementation of Strategic Quality Management (SQM) as a process with four inputs, namely: (1) **products** —e.g., courses and curricula; (2) **processes** — i.e., how work gets accomplished; (3) **relationships** —

i.e., the teaming of faculty, staff and administrators to operate universities and units within them as high performance teams; and (4) the **services** that they provide to students and other customers and stakeholders (p. 12). The expected outcome of the SQM is a reduction in the challenges facing the university, through aligning quality initiatives with strategies and plans.

Most quality improvement approaches and quality awards (listed below) are based on a TQM philosophy (Gershon, 2010).

#### *2.2.2.1.a. TQM fundamental concepts*

The fundamental concepts of TQM are<sup>1</sup>

1. Focus on the customer: there's a strong emphasis and a strong investment in identifying, understanding and meeting the customer needs. Organizations are even encouraged to exceed customer expectations.
2. Role of leadership: leaders' role includes unifying the purpose and managing the environment of the organisation. They create the environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organisation's objectives.
3. Involvement of people: people are the essence of an organisation regardless of their level. People's involvement allows their abilities to be used properly.
4. Process approach: goals are met more efficiently when the resources used in achieving those goals are managed as a process.
5. System approach to management: identifying, understanding and managing a system of interrelated processes for a given objective contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation
6. Continual improvement: continual improvement is a permanent objective of an organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: **Chartered Quality Institute** [www.thecqi.org](http://www.thecqi.org)

7. Factual approach to decision making: in order for decisions to be effective they should be based on logical and intuitive analysis of data.
8. Mutually beneficial supplier relationships: the ability to create value is enhanced where mutually beneficial relationships exist between the organization and its suppliers.

The American Society for Quality add two extra fundamental concepts<sup>2</sup>:

9. Integrated system: Although an organization may consist of many different functional specialties often organized into vertically structured departments, it is the horizontal processes interconnecting these functions that are the focus of TQM.
10. Communications: During times of organizational change, as well as part of day-to-day operation, effective communication plays a large part in maintaining morale and in motivating employees at all levels. Communications involve strategies, method, and timeliness.

TQM has been adopted into higher education and has been broadly successful (Asif, Awan, Khan, & Ahmad, 2011; Cruickshank, 2003; Harvey & Williams, 2010a; Houston, 2007; Kanji, Malek, & Tambi, 2010; Sakhivel & Raju, 2006; Venkatraman, 2007; Weinstein, 2009). However, there is still a range of opinions about the value of TQM in the HE sector and this will be discussed at length in section 2.2.4.2 The applicability of quality models in higher education.

#### 2.2.2.2. *ISO 9000*

ISO 9000 was first published in 1987 (BSI Group, 2008) and was based on the BS 5750 series of standards from the British Standards Institution (BSI) (BSI Group, 2014) that had been proposed to ISO in 1979. The ISO standards were then revised in the years 1994 and 2000 (Gotzamani, 2005). Since its conception, ISO 9000 standards have been commonly applied (Campatelli et al., 2011). In fact, ISO 9001:2008 is implemented by over one million companies and organizations in over 170 countries (ISO 9000 Quality

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<sup>2</sup> Source: **American Society for Quality** [www.asq.org](http://www.asq.org)

Management, 2014). Thandapani et al., (2012) claim many benefits to obtaining an ISO 9000 certification including achieving global competitiveness and a high degree of quality in products, processes and services. However, Douglas, Coleman, & Oddy (2003) and Sampaio, Saraiva, & Rodrigues (2009) think that its greatest value lies in being a first step on the road to Total Quality Management, which means that these authors among others suggest that the ISO Standards are applied as a means for further quality improvement.

According to their website, the ISO standards aim to ensure that products and services “consistently meet customer’s requirements”, and that the quality of those products and services are “consistently improved”.

ISO 9000 is a family set, meaning it includes sub-standards, which are:

- ISO 9001:2008: these standards identify the requirements of a quality management system
- ISO 9000:2005: these standards cover the basic concepts and language
- ISO 9004:2009: these standards focus on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a quality management system
- ISO 19011:2011: these standards act as guidance on internal and external audits of quality management systems.

#### *2.2.2.2.a. ISO 9000*

ISO 9000 was first published in 1987 (BSI Group, 2008), originally based on the BS 5750 series of standards from the British Standards Institution (BSI Group, 2014) and was then revised in the years 1994 and 2000 (Gotzamani, 2005).

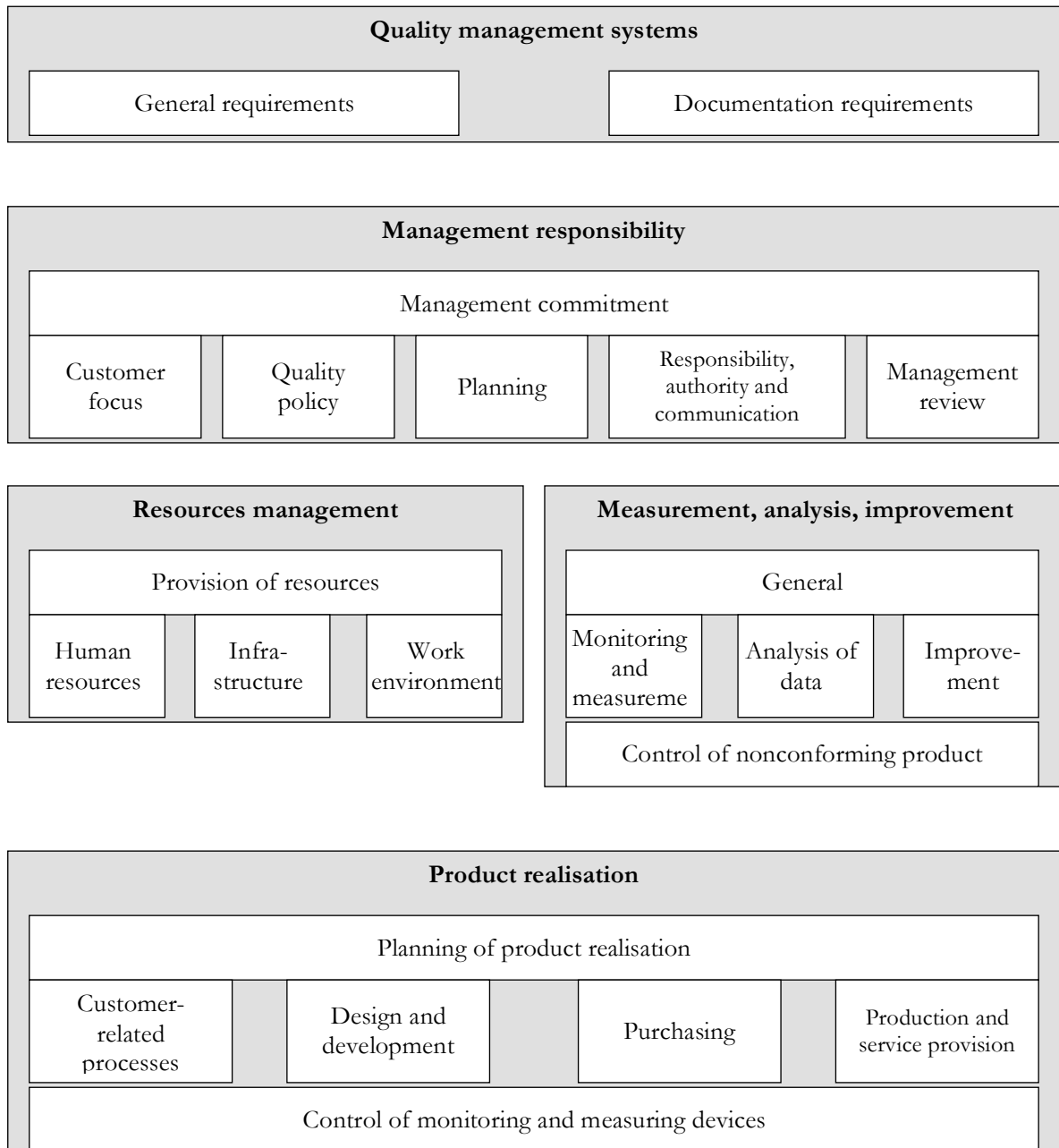


Figure 3 The Structure of ISO 9001 (source: www.sqs.com)

2.2.2.2.b. *ISO fundamental concepts*

The core concepts of the ISO 9000 standard are the focus on Quality Management Systems (QMS), management responsibility, resource management, product realization and measurement, analysis and improvement (Gotzamani, 2005).

- A Quality Management System (QMS): QMSs guidelines for performance improvements are similar to TQM guidelines. They include (1) customer focus, (2) leadership, (3) people, (4) process approach, (5) system approach, (6) continual

improvement, (7), factual decision-making and (10) mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

- Top management commitment: ISO 9001:2000 standard requires top management to:
  - Decide on a clear direction for the organisation which is done through creating quality policy and quality objectives.
  - Communicate the quality policy and quality objectives throughout the organisation and promote customer satisfaction.
  - Be well-educated in quality management and quality related issues, including customer needs and expectations, as well as regulatory and legal requirements for the product and/or service that the company provides.
  - Administer managerial reviews regularly in order to keep an eye on the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the QMS as well the key performance indicators in relation to the above-mentioned quality policy and quality objectives.
  - Provide the required resources to achieve the quality objectives
- Focus on process management
- Focus on the customer: the ISO9001:2000 requirements related to customer satisfaction are:
  - Determine customer needs and expectations;
  - Communicate throughout the organization the importance of meeting customer needs and expectations;
  - Effectively communicate with customers to determine requirements and get feedback;
  - Use customer satisfaction information for the review and improvement of the quality system; and
  - Provide all necessary resources for customer satisfaction
- Simplicity and reduction of documentation; and
- Continuous improvement and setting of goals



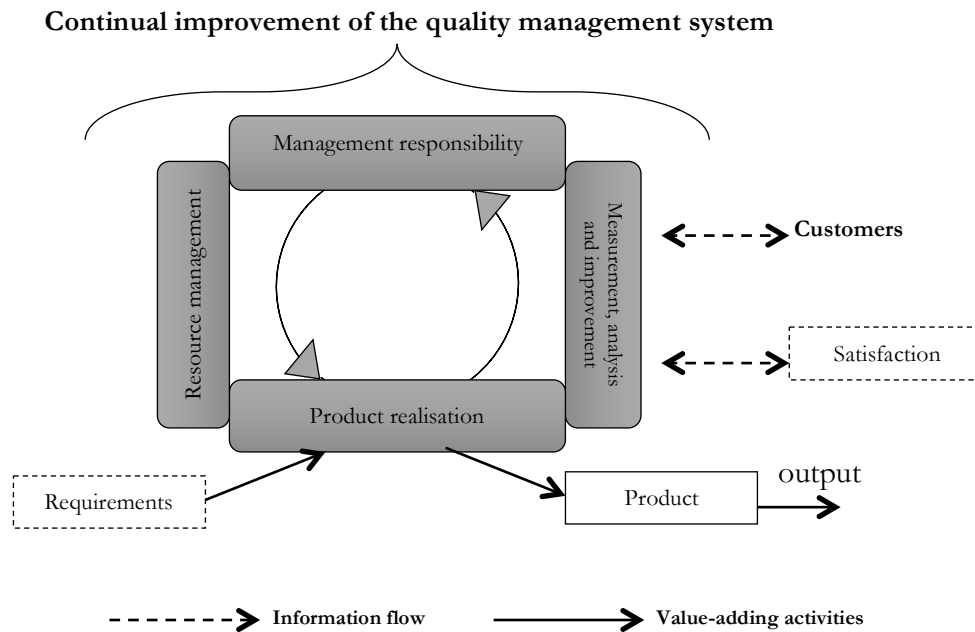


Figure 4 Model of a process-based quality management system (source: [www.sqs.com](http://www.sqs.com))

ISO 9000 has been implemented in higher education with some difficulty and contested effectiveness (Dumond & Johnson, 2013; Pawlowski, 2007; Venkatraman, 2007)

### 2.2.2.3. *The Deming Prize*

This was first instituted by the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) in honour of W. Edwards Deming (JUSE, 2004). Presently, the Deming Prize has four categories; the Deming Prize for Individuals, the Deming Distinguished Service Award for Dissemination and Promotion (Overseas); the Deming Prize; and the Deming Grand Prize (former Japan Quality Medal). All of these are awarded to individual or organizations committed to Total Quality Management<sup>3</sup>.

Researchers often advocate that the top quality awards in practice are the Deming Prize, the MQNBA and the EQA awards (Thandapani et al., 2012). Starting with the Deming Prize, this was first instituted by the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) in honour of W. Edwards Deming (JUSE, 2004). Subsequently many other coveted quality awards emerged in the world (Tan, Wong, Mehta, & Khoo, 2003) most of them based on either the American MQNBA or the European EQA (Tan et al., 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Source: **Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE)** [www.juse.or.jp](http://www.juse.or.jp)

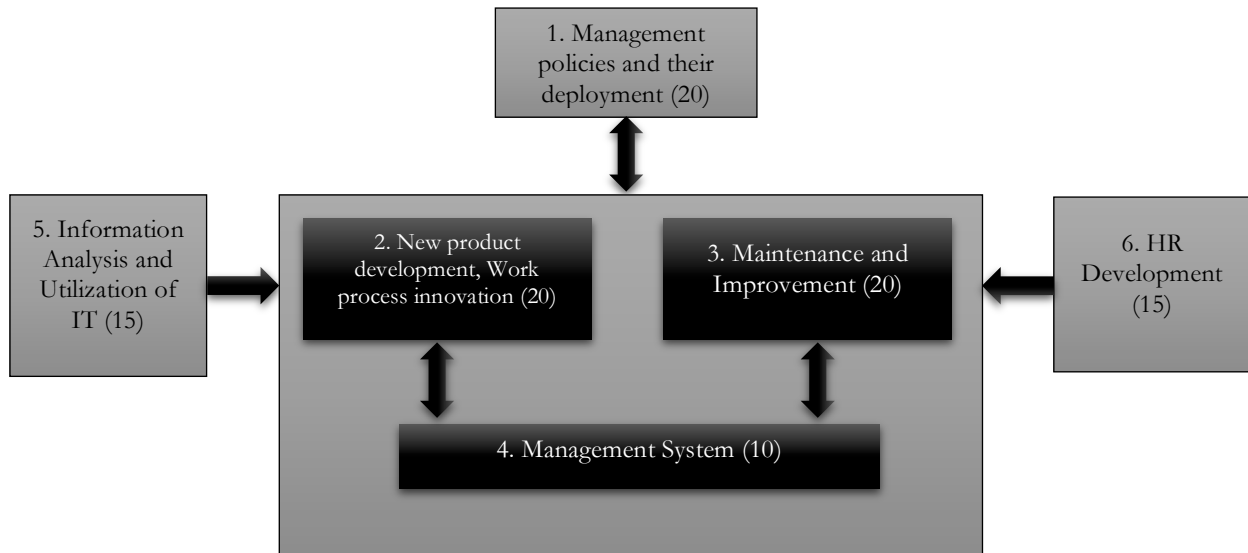


Figure 5 The Deming Prize (source: juse.or.jp)

#### 2.2.2.3.a. The Deming Prize fundamental concepts

Applicants to the Deming Prize must describe progress in each of the following (Dodangeh et al., 2012):

1. How are policies created and communicated? What results have been gained?
2. How are areas of responsibility determined? How is collaboration improved and quality control conducted?
3. How is quality control commanded, and how is training accessible to employees? How much are QC and statistical techniques understood? How are QC circle events working?
4. How is information collected and distributed within different parts, inside and outside of the company? How well is it incorporated into practices? How quickly?
5. Are important problems found and analysed against general quality and the production process? Are they understood correctly, utilising the appropriate statistical methods?
6. How are standards applied, managed and incorporated into the system? What effect do they have on the development of company technology?

7. Are quality measures re-examined for maintenance and enhancement? Are responsibility and power or authority examined? Are control charts and statistical methods examined?
8. Are all elements of the production operation that are necessary for quality and reliability (from product development to service) scrutinised, in line with the quality assurance management system?
9. Are products of sufficiently good quality being vended? Have there been improvements in quality, quantity and price? Has the whole organization been improved in quality?
10. Are the pros and cons of the current status identified?

In addition to the above criteria, judges also consider each of the following:

- Profits
- Cost controls
- Research
- Product development and design
- Equipment maintenance
- Instrumentation and inspection
- Manufacturing processes
- Inventories
- Safety
- Personnel and labour relations
- Delivery performance
- Education and training
- Quality assurance coordination
- Complaint handling
- Customer opinion utilization
- After-sale service
- Relationships (Associates, subcontractors, suppliers, customer companies)

As explained in 2.4, Edward Deming's principles and contributions have been successfully implemented in the higher education sector (Maguad, 2011; Padró, 2009; Redmond, Curtis, Noone, & Keenan, 2008; Winchip, 1996).

#### *2.2.2.4. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA)*

MBNQA is a Quality award criteria that was instituted in 1987 by approval of the US congress to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act (Dodangeh et al., 2012).

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) is presented annually by the President of the United States to organizations that demonstrate quality and performance excellence. Three awards may be given annually in each of six categories:

1. Manufacturing
2. Service company
3. Small business
4. Education
5. Healthcare
6. Non-profit

Among the benefits of applying a quality initiative based on the MBNQA is improved competitiveness (Alexander, Jares, & Latham, 2007; Davis & Standing, 2005; Thandapani et al., 2012).

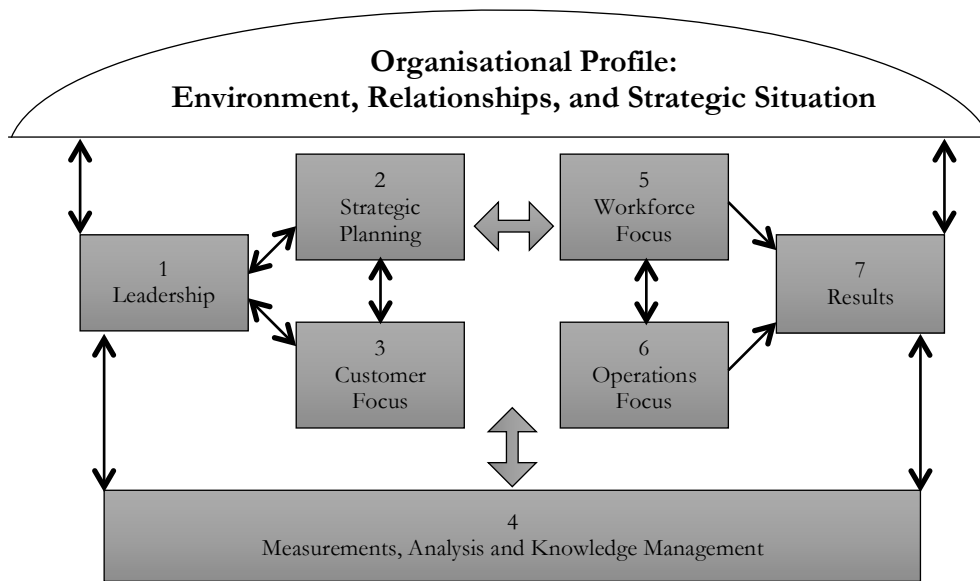


Figure 6 Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework - a systems perspective (Source: www.baldrige21.com)

2.2.2.4.a. *The MBNQA fundamental concepts*

According to The American Society for Quality (2017) the fundamental concepts of MBNQA are:

- “Leadership: How management leads the organization, and how the organization leads within the community.
- Strategic Planning: How the organization establishes and plans to implement strategic directions.
- Customer and Market Focus: How the organization builds and maintains strong, lasting relationships with customers.
- Measurement, Analysis, And Knowledge Management: How the organization uses data to support key processes and manage performance.
- Human Resource Focus: How the organization empowers and involves its workforce.
- Process management: How the organization designs, manages and improves key processes.
- Business/organizational performance results: How the organization performs in terms of customer satisfaction, finances, human resources, supplier and partner

performance, operations, governance and social responsibility, and how the organization compares to its competitors”.

MBNQA has been successfully implemented and had a positive impact in the higher education sector t (Asif, Raouf, & Searcy, 2012; Badri et al., 2006; Ruben, Russ, Smulowitz, & Connaughton, 2007).

#### *2.2.2.5. The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)*

The EFQM Model was developed with customer satisfaction as the main objective, a concept inherited from Total Quality Management (Cartmell et al., 2011).

The European Quality Award<sup>4</sup> (EQA) is the most popular excellence model along with the MBNQA and the Deming Award (Thandapani et al., 2012). It was established in 1989 and first awarded in 1992 (EFQM, 2014). One benefit of using the model is improving quality through self-assessment and benchmarking (McAdam & O’Neill, 1999). In fact, the self-assessment element of the model is so prevalent that some authors regard it as a ‘self-assessment model’ (Benavent, Ros, & Moreno-Luzon, 2005; Samuelsson & Nilsson, 2002). To overcome the dangers of being too self-absorbed, McAdam & O’Neill (1999) suggest integrating the model with strategic balanced scorecards<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Now referred to as EFQM Excellence Award.

<sup>5</sup> The balanced scorecard (BS) was originally introduced by Kaplan and Norton (1992). Since then it has increased in popularity and has been further developed as an approach within TQM.

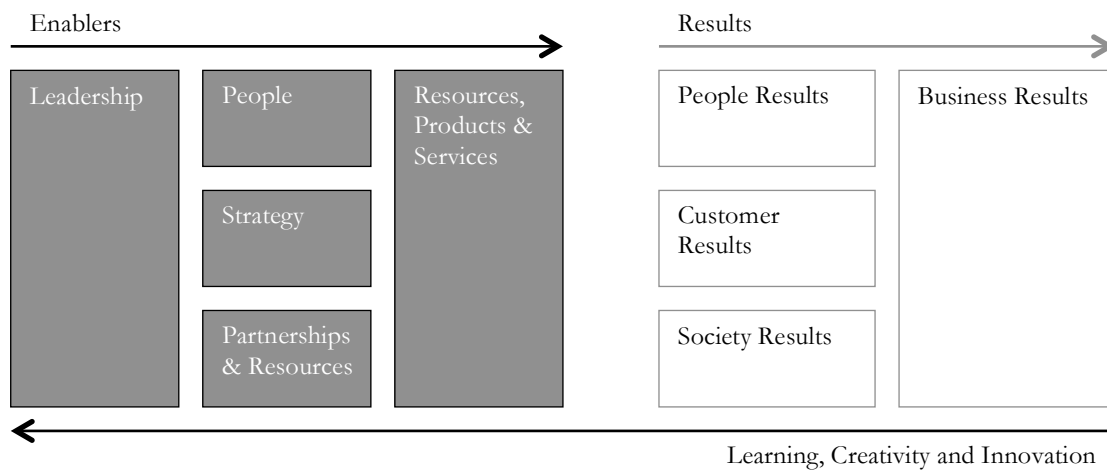


Figure 7 The EFQM Excellence Model Criteria (Source: [www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org))

#### 2.2.2.5.a. The EFQM fundamental concepts

There are five Enablers and four Results areas. The enablers are the things an organization needs to do to develop and implement its strategy (EFQM, 2013). The Enablers are:

- **Leadership:** leaders allow excellent organisations to form the future and materialise it, operating as role models for the values and ethics and inspiring faith and hope. They are adaptable, enabling the organisation to foresee and respond in a timely manner to ensure the on-going success of the organisation.
- **Strategy:** excellent organisations device their mission and vision by utilising a strategy that emphasizes stakeholder.
- **People:** excellent organisations value their people and generate a culture that permits the equally beneficial attainment of organisational and personal goals.
- **Partnerships & Resources:** excellent organisations design and manage external partnerships, suppliers and internal resources in order to maintain their strategy, policies and the effective operation of processes.
- **Processes, Products & Services:** excellent organisations create, manage and develop processes, products and services to produce increasing value for stakeholders including customers.

The results are what the organisation achieves, in line with its strategic goals. The Results are:

- Customer Results
- People Results
- Society Results
- Business Results

According to the EFQM (2013), excellent organisations (1) achieve and (2) sustain outstanding results that meet or exceed the need and expectations of their (1) customer, (2) people, (3) society and (4) business stakeholders.

### *2.2.3. Comparing different Business Excellence Models*

The different excellence awards have similarities, but comparing them against each other reveals the slight differences; the following table is adapted from Dodangeh et al.(2012) and it shows a comparison between the major excellence models.



Subsystem	ISO 9000:2000	Deming Prize	Baldrige Award	EFQM
Management leadership/operational performance/continuous program elements/wall-to-wall deployment	2	3	4	4
Market research/planning design procedures/product-service development	3	1	4	4
Purchasing- procurement proficiency/contracting methods/supplier performance	3	1	2	3
Handling/labelling/storage/safety	1	1	1	2
Documentation/records/control procedures/policies/traceability	4	3	1	2
Human resources management/training/development/education	2	2	4	4
Transformation and added value (production/service process activities)	3	3	4	4
Process quality control/standards/quality results/benchmarking/auditing	4	3	4	4
Inspection/testing/test equipment/tagging/corrective action/control of non-conforming output	3	4	3	4
Packaging/handling/inventory procedures	2	1	1	2
Marketing/distribution/delivery/installation/operation	0	1	2	3
Customer service/customer satisfaction/guarantees-warranties	1	1	3	4

**Codes: 0 No attention, 1 Slight attention, 2 Moderate attention, 3 Heavy attention, 4 Great attention**

Table 2 A Summary of Comparison between Major Business Excellence Frameworks Subsystem (Source: Dodangeh et al., 2012).

Knowing these differences helps organizations deploy the most appropriate model and achieve business improvement (Beatham, Anumba, Thorpe, & Hedges, 2005; Conti, 2004).

#### *2.2.4. The implementation of quality models*

Implementing an excellence model is a job mainly for leadership. As Calvo-Mora, Leal, & Roldán (2006) put it “top management leads the excellence development of key processes in the university through appropriate leadership” (p. 1). This means that it is the leadership that constitutes the basis for establishing an excellence model. Leadership uses human resources as their main enabler for this, as the literature suggests, appropriate management of people is key for motivation (Detert & Jenni, 2000) to achieve the desired development. For Eskildsen & Dahlgard, (2000) appropriate people management is important but not enough. For this reason, they suggest combining it with the appropriate management of other resources (such as materials and finances). Either way, it is leadership that is the main enabler of this change. According to Alfaro-Saiz, Carot-Sierra, Rodríguez-Rodríguez, & Jabaloyes-Vivas (2011) the application of a quality model is a job for leadership. It can be very laborious and time consuming, but it is worthwhile. Furthermore, the role of leadership in quality management does not end with creating excellence but is also critical for sustaining it (Osseo-Asare, Longbottom, & Murphy, 2005).

##### *2.2.4.1 Roles of the excellence models in organizational success*

Seeking to apply an excellence model is crucial for organizational success (Dodangeh et al., 2012), because applying an excellence model serves as a guide for quality improvement and a tool for monitoring progress towards business excellence. The education sector began its application of different quality initiatives in the early 1990s (Karathanos, 1999) and, since the turn of the century, higher education institutions have become increasingly worried about quality and increasingly keen to develop TQM programmes to address the issue (M. Rosa, Saraiva, & Diz, 2001).

#### *2.2.4.2 The applicability of quality models in higher education*

The extent to which excellence models are applicable to higher education is somewhat contested (Harvey & Williams, 2010a). While Harvey & Williams, (2010a) for example, believe that the EQA is effective at improving quality in universities; others, such as Houston (2007) think that TQM as a whole is a ‘poor fit’ for higher education because universities are inherently different from other types of organizations. Houston argues that because of this, a proper application of TQM in higher education requires major changes to either the TQM model or the higher education institutions so that they resemble those organizations that the model was designed for in the first place. Moreover, Mehralizadeh & Safaeemoghaddam (2010) note that evidence from the application of TQM is not compatible with the assumed criteria; meaning that the TQM as a model for excellence promises more than it can deliver.

It could be that the benefits of applying a quality model in Higher Education institutions is not as clear-cut as some authors claim. Among those defending this point of view are Davies, Douglas, & Douglas (2007) who argue that whilst certain aspects of the university are a good ‘cultural-fit’ for the EFQM model of excellence, others (such as those that shape academic culture) are not. In this sense, some aspects that could impact the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model cause potential barriers, while others represent potential aids. The potential barriers include; (a) individualism; (b) “the notion of academic freedom” (p. 5); and (c) the likely resistance to any ‘managerial’ approach. On the other hand, the potential aids include; (a) the environment of co-operation and support of HE; (b) modifying the language and terminology to suit the HE context; and (c) professionalism (appealing more to the academics’ love of professionalism, by Emphasizing that the ‘improvement’ aspect of the new model is a demonstration of professionalism). Furthermore, changes can be made to the model to provide a better fit for the environment. In this respect, Davies, Douglas, & Douglas (2007) suggest the applicability of the EFQM model in higher education can be increased by; (a) training that incorporates context-specific examples to assist the

implementation; (b) conducting self -assessment workshops<sup>6</sup> to help management grasp the model completely. Similarly, Thandapani, Gopalakrishnan, Devadasan, Sreenivasa, & Muruges (2012) suggest that for Engineering Educational Institutions, the application of quality models should be accompanied by official accreditation, because this may address those elements of the institution that are not a good cultural fit with the quality model.

As mentioned above, some authors are critical of the usefulness of excellence models in higher education. Mehralizadeh & Safaeemoghaddam (2010) argue that TQM promises more than it delivers, does not follow a clear philosophy, and does not consider the productivity of the institution. They conclude that, in general, it is more successful in non-academic (administrative) higher education application than academic-higher education. Robert Birnbaum (cited in Temple, 2005) makes the argument that fads come and go but higher education tends to adopt them when they are dying and being discarded by corporations, adding that the failure of those fads is inevitable in higher education due to the unparalleled complexity of the sector. However, as Birnbaum himself predicts, fads will continue to come and go, so Temple (2005) suggests that the best thing to do about this is to have management that is self-confident and decisive to determine how to best manage their institutions.

### **2.3. Lean Manufacturing and Lean Six Sigma**

Lean was created and championed by Toyota as a philosophy and a framework for the last 50 years. It has been empirically proven to improve performance and deliver immediate, substantial and long-lasting improvements (Baines, Lightfoot, Williams, & Greenough, 2006;

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<sup>6</sup>The workshop approach is a self-assessment approach, recommended for the implementation of the EFQM excellence model (Maistry, Hurreeram, & Ramessur, 2017). The workshop approach consists of five phases; (1) Training. (2) Data collection. (3) A scoring workshop. (4) Prioritisation of improvement actions. (5) A review of progress (EFQM, 2013).

Hines, Holweg, & Rich, 2004; Stone, 2012). The International Motor Vehicle Program (IMVP)<sup>7</sup> at MIT teaches this Toyota's approach and calls it "Lean Production".

Lean Manufacturing has some distinct advantages when applied to higher education in comparison to other higher education change initiatives. These advantages are (Balzer, 2010, p.15):

1. The validity of LHE is supported by substantial evidence;
2. LHE is a comprehensive approach (which is not distinctive to LHE as many other approaches claim to be comprehensive such as the above-mentioned TQM);
3. LHE balances the long-term needs of the university with the needs of its staff;
4. LHE offers practical tools for implementing and sustaining change.

Lean Manufacturing has been used as a process of excellence for over a decade in many organisations (Näslund, 2008; Snee, 2010). However, its application in the higher education (HE) sector has received little attention to date (Antony, 2015). Lean, a methodology for continuous improvement (CI), aims to achieve three goals in the organisation; (1) the elimination of costs that are a result of poor quality (COPQ), (2) the improvement of the bottom-line results and (3) the creation of value for the organisation and its customers.

### *2.3.1. Lean's fundamental concepts*

Lean's core principles date back at least as far back as the early 1950's, when Taiichi Ohno, an engineer at Toyota, first pointed out the potentially dramatic reduction in waste in mass production (Jones & Womack, 1996, p.15). Some authors even date the principles of Lean to the early 1900's when Henry Ford revolutionised mass production with moving assembly lines and the standardisation of parts (Smook, Melles, & Welling, 1996).

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<sup>7</sup>The International Motor Vehicle Program (IMVP) is the oldest and largest international research consortium aimed at understanding the challenges facing the global automotive industry (Hides, Davies, & Jackson, 2004). IMVP was founded at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1979 and has had a major impact on the global automobile industry through its interdisciplinary automotive research and seminal publications.

Lean was first popularised and integrated in the USA in the George Group in 1986 (Salah et al., 2010). However, the term Lean Six Sigma (LSS) itself dates back to around 2000 (Timans et al., 2012). LSS core principles were created in 2003 and were based on the principles of Six Sigma (Kubiak, 2011). Interest in Lean and LSS has been on the rise ever since then; in both manufacturing and service industries (Laureani & Antony, 2012). In the manufacturing sector, for example, larger industrial organizations such as Motorola, Honeywell and General Electric have widely adopted Lean (Laureani and Antony, 2012). A few small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that work in manufacturing have also successfully adopted Lean (Kumar & Antony, 2008), although among SMEs, Lean is not particularly popular (Achanga, Shehab, Roy, & Nelder, 2006; Antony, Kumar, & Madu, 2005). In the services sector, lean is increasingly applied (Allway & Corbett, 2002) with potentially more benefits to be achieved in this sector rather than in traditional manufacturing (Majed Alsmadi, Almani, & Jerisat, 2012).

### *2.3.2. Lean for manufacturing versus Lean for services*

While Lean is designed to remove waste from each process that delivers a service or product, it can be used to look at the overall service delivery and consider which services are more important to which customers (Antony, Rodgers, & Gijo, 2016).

One of the heavy influences of Lean is Six Sigma, which was initially developed by Motorola (Tennant, 2001, p.6), with the goal of reducing variations in both manufacturing and business processes. In fact, Lean and Six Sigma are so closely interlinked they are seen as having complementary process excellence methodologies (Salah et al., 2010; Shah et al., 2008). This is no surprise as both Lean and Six Sigma can be traced back to the core TQM philosophy (Dahlgaard & Mi Dahlgaard-Park, 2006)

Six Sigma (and consequently Lean) promotes the cyclic improvement process of Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control (DMAIC). Six Sigma was so successful in eliminating waste that it was adopted by a large number of businesses in the Fortune 500 (Antony et al., 2016).

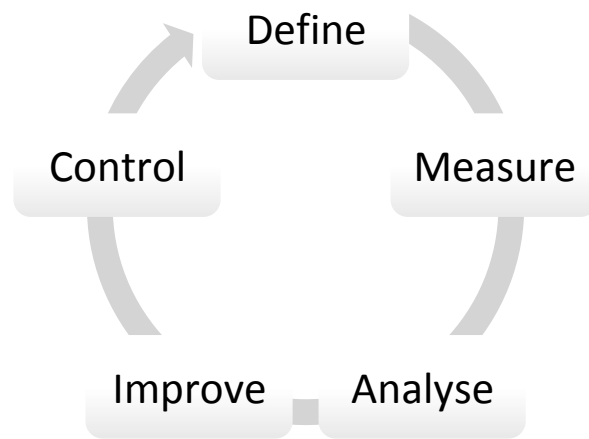


Figure 8 The DMAIC cycle

Not only are the methodologies of Lean and Six Sigma complementary to each other, but the actual tools and techniques used by each are often rolled together in an effort to ensure maximum benefits in quality assurance and improvement.

Stripped down to their core concepts, both Lean and Six Sigma profess that: continuous improvement is an organization-wide responsibility; maximum efficiency is a goal for every process; waste should be reduced to the absolute minimum possible and variations of each process should be studied and well-understood.

What is vital to note is that the above-mentioned concepts apply to product and service processes; for-profit and not-for-profit activities; and to the public and private sectors.

### ***2.3.3. Lean in service sector***

Having been applied in manufacturing since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Bhamu & Singh Sangwan, 2014), Lean principles spread into the service sector (Hadid & Afshin Mansouri, 2014). This is consistent with the suggestion that Lean principles are borderless in implementation (Womack, Jones, and Roos, 1990). Hines, Holweg, and Rich (2004) claim that Lean has evolved in its application from production process to adding value, or from “shop floor” waste elimination to value enhancement of the services aspect of

the manufacturing process. This is done through modifying the production process to add and eliminate activities based on whether or not those activities add value to the customers. Figure 9 demonstrates the relationship between value, cost and waste in the service industry. The figure shows how the service becomes increasingly appealing to the customer, the farther it is above the cost-value equilibrium. The cost-value equilibrium indicates the circumstance in which there is a win-win situation between the service provider and customer. There is an underlying assumption here that the customer is buying a service not looking for a personal transformation (which is what some educationalists believe is the primary purpose of learning). Nevertheless, the focus on value-adding cost reduction allows service providers to improve customer perceived value of the service by adding features to the service that are relevant to the customer.

According to the figure, the act of adding value can happen through one of two methods; (a) the elimination of certain activities which translates in a shift on the x-axis and (b) the development of certain activities which translates in a shift on the y-axis.

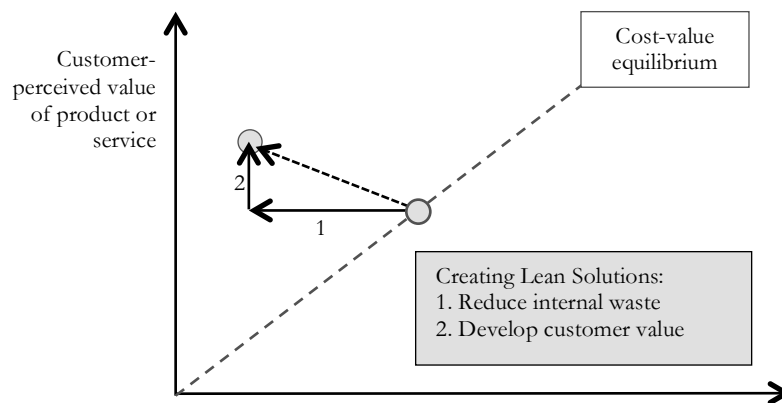


Figure 9 Relation between Value, Cost and Waste in Services (Hines, Holweg, and Rich 2004: 997).

As the figure suggests, adding value is an effective way to improve the customer-perceived value. This notion can be further understood in light of some suggested definitions of waste. Bhuiyan and Baghel (2005) defines waste as something that customers are not willing to pay for. Waste, particularly in services, can be described as mistakes, disruptions or delays in providing services to customers (Brandao de Souza 2009).



Lean principles have been applied successfully in both manufacturing and services sectors (Piercy and Rich, 2009). However; it has been mostly applied where the goods are tangible, i.e. where the manufacturing process or the service produces a tangible good. Examples of these include supply chain management and health services. Piercy and Rich (2009) claim the Lean Principle is equally applicable where services provide intangible goods such as call centre services or financial services which might be true. However, a valid argument could be made that education is not about this kind of intangible good, rather it is about individual transformation, which no customer would require or even expect from a call centre interaction. It has also been suggested that Lean principles are particularly effective when used in service sector HRM, but the study underpinning this claim was confined to the health sector (Krishnan and Parveen, 2013).

#### *2.3.4. Effective application of Lean principles*

Conventionally, Lean is assumed to be in application when certain principles are in evidence (Bowen and Youngdahl, 1998). Among these principles are flexibility, customer focus, empowerment and knowledge management and the integration of value chain. Abdi, Shavarini and Hoseini (2006) propose similar criteria, except in this case only four principles are the measure of Lean implementation. The four principles are: (1) Learn through being thoughtful about Lean in the service, (2) Expect through anticipation, (3) Analyse through regulation of the operations, and (4) Navigate through seeking expert opinion.

Allway and Cobertt (2002) demonstrate that Lean relies heavily on senior managers. The job for senior managers includes the two major tasks of (1) identifying and (2) collaborating the processes that add value to the service. Allway and Cobertt conclude that an organisation wishing to reap the benefits of Lean should try to deliver to its customers the highest possible value so their expectations are not only met but also exceeded. This result is compatible with other research results (Emiliani, 2004; Dahlggaard and Dahlggaard-Park, 2006).

Many studies found excessive waste in service organisations (Jimmerson, Weber, & Sobek, 2005; Liker & Morgan, 2006; Tudor, Noonan, & Jenkin, 2005), including a leading Danish service organisation that wasted a staggering 74% of its total expenditure.

Nevertheless, a few of these studies' authors are Lean consultants which suggests a conflict of interest and presses a closer examination their results, especially when they set up their own definition of wastes which could theoretically be stretched boundlessly to include a gargantuan range of activities. On the other hand, these results and the definitions that they are based on come from a practitioner prospective (Allway and Cobertt, 2002; Suárez-Barraza, Smith, and Dahlgaard-Park et al. 2012).

#### **2.4. Quality management in higher education**

In the last two decades there has been an increase in the number and diversity of quality models used by HEIs (Leiber, Stensaker, & Harvey, 2018). This has been coupled with a lively discourse about quality in higher education on topics such as 'progress, pitfalls and promise' (Beerkens, 2018) and 'the future of quality' as well as QA (Brennan, 2012; Harvey & Williams, 2010a, 2010b; Newton, 2013; Rosa, Sarrico, & Amaral, 2012; Stensaker, 2008). This resulted in QA in HEIs playing an increasingly important role (Künzel, Pietzonka, Futterer, & Suchanek, 2012; Liu, Tan, & Meng, 2015; Stensaker, Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman, & Westerheijden, 2011).

Higher education institutions are driven to engage in reforms by many forces, which mostly come from globalization and internationalisation (Harvey & Williams, 2010b; Zgaga, Teichler, & Brennan, 2013, p.11), the decrease in state funding for public universities (Quinn, Lemay, Larsen, & Johnson, 2009), supply and demand issues, competition, accountability, and technology (Bowen, 2014, p.66 ; Mehralizadeh & Safaemoghaddam, 2010, p.1). The quest for quality is attributed to a number of other factors as well (Barth, Adomßent, Fischer, Richter, & Rieckmann, 2014; Godemann, Bebbington, Herzig, & Moon, 2014; Mehralizadeh, 2005; Temple, 2005). The combination of these factors has made it vital

for higher education institutions to improve in order to be able to cope with changes in teaching, learning and research (Dommartin cited in Steed, Maslow, & Mazaletskaia, 2005).

#### *2.4.1. A matter of terminology*

There appears to be a dislike of using the term ‘management’ in some of the literature dealing with higher education (Manatos et al., 2017). This is why in public services, there is a trend of using different terms to refer to management. Furthermore, within HE, the literature is mainly based on sociology and educational science and less on management (Amaral & Magalhães, 2007). One example of this is an aversion to using *quality management* and referring to it as *quality assurance* instead especially within the context of HE. However, technically speaking, quality assurance is narrower in scope than quality management because it is only concerned with the assurance and compliance components of quality management. So, the two terms are not interchangeable.

#### *2.4.2. Uniqueness of HEIs*

Many researchers argue that HEIs are unique in their culture towards change. Some claim the reason for this uniqueness is HEIs’ incompatibility with rapid change (Angehrn and Maxwell, 2008). However, the context within which they exist is ever-changing. There are changing social contexts, forms of interaction with society, impact on society (Brennan, 2008), stakeholders’ needs, competition, quality standards and awards, improvement initiatives, technological improvements and globalization (Anderson and McAdam, 2004). In this context, quality has become a major concern of HEIs (Mehralizadeh et al., 2007). Numerous definitions of quality exist; Crosby (1979) defines quality as “*zero defects*”, while Deming (1986) defines quality as “*a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to the market*”. Juran and Godfrey (1999) defines it as “*fitness for purpose*”. Various authors contend that the complexity of higher education makes it hard to reach a consensus on how to best manage quality in HEIs (Mehralizadeh et al., 2007; Becket and Brookes, 2008; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003; Campbell et al., 2002; Middlehurst, 2001; Cheng and Tam, 1997; Owlia and Aspinwall, 1996; Harvey and Knight, 1996)

Furthermore, there is lack of research into quality management in HEIs despite the growing emphasis on adhering to quality standards and increasing competition (Dick and Tarí, 2013)

To confront these challenges, some HEIs have been trying to employ quality management approaches with the aim of achieving continuous improvement (Becket and Brookes, 2008). These quality management approaches usually originate in industry, particularly the manufacturing sector.

#### *2.4.3. Validity of QM in HE*

A major worry with quality in HE, covering teaching, research, services, and institutional-level approaches (Stensaker, Langfeldt, Huisman, & Westerheijden, 2011), gave rise to a debate about the applicability of QM tools to HE. According to the Bologna Declaration of 1999, the most important challenge throughout was the ‘critical rethinking’ of quality and improvement (Bologna Process Committee, 1999), and the design of quality models in a language that was cognisant of the culture of HE and adaptable to the mission of HEIs (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2009, pp. 16, 17). The debate about the validity of quality management in HEIs was further exacerbated by a concern about its applicability across teaching, research and services (Stensaker et al., 2011). Within this debate, the most important challenge was the design of quality models that utilise a language familiar and accepted within HEIs and the need for quality models to support the development of a quality culture (EQNA, 2009, 2015)

#### *2.4.4. Challenges facing quality efforts*

Any university designing and implementing an initiative to improve quality will face many challenges. Three are unique to public administrations (PAs), as identified by Campatelli, Citti, & Meneghin (2011) (1) PAs tend to have complex processes; (2) they are generally inexperienced in process improvement; and (3) they do not assign enough human resources to the task. Because Campatelli, Citti, & Meneghin (2011) have confined their research to public administrations, it could be argued that these challenges only apply to public

universities and not necessarily to private universities. Moreover, Campatelli, Citti, & Meneghin provide no evidence upon which their claimed are based.

Osseo-Asare, Longbottom, & Murphy (2005) also examine the challenges facing quality initiatives in universities and conclude that the most prominent challenge is sustaining quality improvement. They have developed a conceptual framework to help universities sustain quality initiatives as well as deal with other, related challenges, such as: unifying practices and activities; ensuring value congruence; combating miscommunication, and empowering and supporting staff. In order for quality improvement to be sustained, their framework offers five recommendations (see Figure 10); (1) daily tasks must be grouped into sets of practices under leadership criteria; (2) leadership is responsible for the mission, vision and values, this is done by making conscious decisions about what to prioritise concerning the allocation of time and resources to teaching or research or both; (3) leadership must manage internal and external communications by ensuring the ICT infrastructure is in line with the quality aims of the institution, maximize the use of ICT for the purpose of supporting quality, synergize the ICT efforts and make the best out of available feedback; (4) leadership is responsible for staff empowerment through creating an inspiring environment, that is both free and well-aligned in terms of responsibilities and authorities. Such an environment will allow staff members to offer the best use of their experiences, suggestions and ideas and; (5) leadership is responsible for staff support through feedback, good evaluation and career support.

So, according to Osseo-Asare et al. (2005) the solution to the challenges lies with the university's leadership, which they define as the chancellery, deanery, heads of departments and programme leaders.

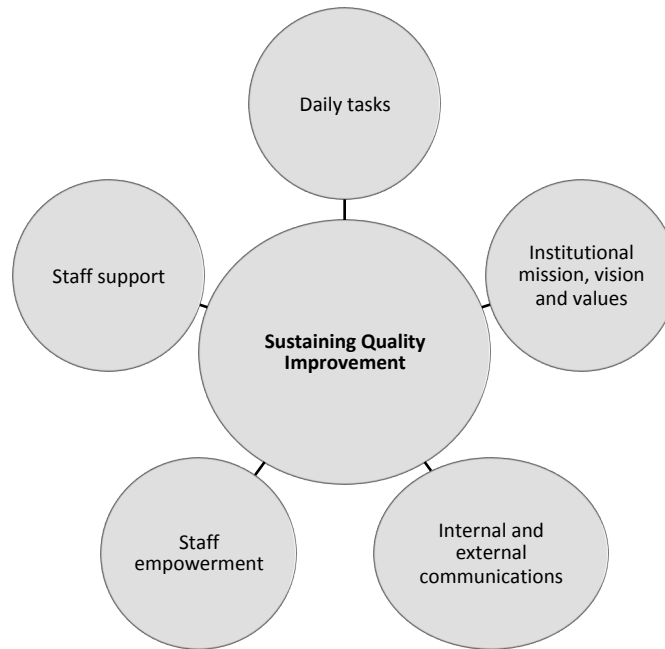


Figure 10 A conceptual framework for sustaining quality improvement (adapted from Osseo-Asare et al., 2005)

#### 2.4.5. *BEMs in HEIs*

More and more organisations have embedded quality management especially since the beginning of this century. They have come to understand that long-term improvement requires a substantial amount of attention to be paid towards the quality of daily practices (João Rosa, Tavares, & Amaral, 2006; Manatos et al., 2017).

The case for holistic quality approaches in Higher Education is compelling. Faced with many challenges, UK universities are required more than ever to be adaptive and sometimes proactive. The challenges centre on changes in market forces and funding opportunities.

These challenges force a university's leadership to respond because most universities committed to improvement (be it in their Statement of Purpose or the Corporate Vision and

Mission Statements<sup>8</sup>). The responses to these pressures can be reflected in either small and incremental change or a radical change.

Discussions with senior leadership and thoughtful examination of the challenges facing higher education in the UK reveals the following concerns:

1. Greater competition for funding resulting in significant reductions and reallocations.
2. The increased tuition fees reflecting a trend to view public higher education as a personal good as opposed to a societal good (Balzer, 2010) meaning that the main customers of higher education are the students, rendering them the main beneficiaries. This is why more and more of the cost of higher education is being redirected towards students and their families.
3. The increase in tuition fees cap which raises student expectations and puts more pressure on university leadership<sup>9</sup>
4. The fact that the industry (represented by business and political bodies) focuses on short-term interests. Subsequently, these beneficiaries funnel their funds and other types of support into job training and research fields that have immediate commercial impact. Public support (which is still a large driver in UK universities) is also shifting from student support (evident by the House of Commons vote to raise the tuition fees) to commercially competitive programmes. The main focus is becoming more and more graduate employability. This shift is tellingly expressed as a move from “higher” to “hire” (Balzer, 2010) education. However, recent developments in the political climate hint at possible reconsideration and reduction of student fees.

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<sup>8</sup> While the **Vision Statement** describes where the organisation wishes to be in the future and the **Mission Statement** outlines exactly what the organisation is and what it is not. The **Statement of Purpose** is different as it describes in an inspiring manner how the organisation impacts everyone it is trying to serve. In the case of a university, this includes students, parents, funding bodies, industry, the local and/or global community, the government and the research community (Holweg, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> When asked about this, one senior manager responded “I think now the fact that everybody pays fees, higher fees, and they’re taking loans for that and that you’re leaving university with a considerable debt, people are more willing to be clear about what they think is good or bad.”

5. More demands in higher education for accountability and transparency.

These are the main challenges currently facing higher education leadership. In response, some universities are relying on strong leadership and well-formed strategies by adopting best practices and benchmarks from the field of education and other quality-focused fields.

One trend is for these leaders to introduce university-wide initiatives aimed at creating and sustaining quality and effectiveness (Balzer, 2010, p.11). In this regard, universities have a wide range of options to choose from and adapt to their own requirements. However, the vast majority of these options are top-down<sup>10</sup> programmes that were first introduced in the manufacturing sector. These options include Management by Objectives, Total Quality Management, Six Sigma, and Lean Manufacturing. For those interested in such solutions, there needs to be an organisation-wide approach that is tested and proven to be effective in the service sector where there are labour-intensive processes similar to those at a university. The solution should serve as a model for universities to introduce change and help maintain a better level of performance with significantly better quality standards. One major criticism of this assertion is the fact that it assumes a “one size fits all” reality, which is not necessarily true.

#### *2.4.6. Lean in higher education*

A number of higher education institutions (HEIs) have embarked on the Lean initiative hoping for systematically improved efficiency (of business processes) and methodically eliminated waste (LeMahieu, Nordstrum, & Greco, 2017). This is true for both the USA (Comm & Mathaisel, 2005b, 2005a) and the UK (Brian Hwarng & Teo, 2001).

Lean Production, which was first developed for manufacturing plants, has been extended to other settings such as the service industry. It has also been applied in both the private and

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<sup>10</sup> Top-Down Management is an approach to management in which the board decides what results are to be achieved and how, and passes the plan down the hierarchy or management level (Source: BusinessDictionary.com)



the public sectors. Its application in higher education is fairly recent (Antony, 2015; Balzer, 2010, p.13). Lean Higher Education (LHE) is the application of Lean in higher education.

#### *2.4.6.1. From TQM to Lean in HEIs*

The education sector has evolved substantially over the last forty years (Gibbs 2013) with many changes having been made to create excellence in the service. The trends to provide excellent services in higher education as well as continuous improvement and innovation in the sector reflect the vast variation in terms of focus and mission in higher education globally (Gibbs 2013).

Spanbauer (1995) suggests that TQM is the right way to respond to changes in the higher education sector resulting from within academia, itself, and the global market. TQM-based Lean principles were also suggested in the context of higher education with promises of prosperity (Dahlgard, Kristensen and Kanji, 1995). According to Dahlgard, Kristensen and Kanji (1995), Lean in higher education should be underpinned by the following five principles: (1) leadership, (2) customer focus, (3) continuous improvement, (4) inclusivity and involvement, and (5) data focus. These partly overlap with the seven core principles of TQM mentioned earlier (see 2.2.2.1. Total Quality Management (TQM)),

On the one hand, they both focus on the role of leadership as the main motivator and customer focus as the main goal. On the other, they differ in what resources and processes are to be used in order to achieve that goal. Whereas TQM focuses on human resource management through team building, training and having a healthy culture, LHE focuses on inclusivity and involvement.

Both models focus on data, although TQM is yet again more descriptive than LHE. Finally, LHE focuses on continuous improvement (CI). This is not to say that TQM is incompatible with CI, it is just not as prevalent in TQM as it is in LHE.

Category	TQM	LHE
Main driver	Leadership	Leadership
Ultimate goal	Customer focus	Customer focus
Enablers	Culture	Inclusivity and involvement
	Team building	
	Training and empowerment	
	Data focus	Data focus
	The scientific method	
		Continuous improvement

Table 3 Comparison of core principles between TQM and LHE

Dahlgard, Kristensen and Kanji also recommended the PDCA (plans, do, check and act) model to be applied in higher education, which constitutes the basis for organisational continuous improvement practices or Kaizen.

At the same time, Kells (1995) recommended TQM be applied in higher education and gave great importance to the role of leadership. A distinction was made between formal and informal leaders, with both of them being equally important to the success of the TQM initiative. In contrast to Kells, Spanbauer (1995) mostly empathised the importance of customer-focus as the main driver of the TQM initiative.

More recently, Emiliani (2005) concluded that the application of continuous improvement is beneficial to the university in terms of both of the administrative and teaching practices.

Comm and Mathaisel (2005b) used questionnaires to examine the application of Lean principles in 18 US universities, both public and private. The research demonstrated the

viability of Lean in any type of higher education institution, be it university or college. However, the study was solely focused on the administrative practices of the HEIs and not on teaching. The study also demonstrated waste reduction across all HEIs, which translates to added value to services.

Thirkell and Ashman (2014) studied two UK universities that they referred to as Old University and New University. Using qualitative methods, they examined how the two universities implemented Lean principles in a few of their activities. The results were fairly critical of Lean application in universities. The main issues were problems in communications and a lack of comprehension of Lean principles among the university staff. As a result, the implementation of Lean principles across the universities was very limited. It is suggested that the most significant role lies within human resources as the major promoter of Lean principles (Thirkell and Ashman, 2014).

#### 2.4.6.2. *Lean Higher Education (LHE)*

LHE follows a set of guiding principles aimed at improving a university’s processes. It starts with a definition of the value of the process, followed by a detailed description of the how the process flows and how to eliminate waste hence “adding value to the process” which will in turn make the process flow more smoothly. The previous steps are seen as a cycle, so in essence the improvement is never ending. That is why, at its core, Lean pursues perfection in every process it is applied to. Table 4 describes the five steps of LHE (Balzer, 2010).

<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Define</b>	<b>Define the process value from the point of view of its beneficiaries</b>
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Identify</b>	Identify the flow of the process, from the points of view of both the beneficiary and the provider
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Eliminate</b>	Eliminate as much waste as possible adding value to the process

<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Push to Pull</b>	Fine tune the process so it flows smoothly, this means instead of the processes being “pushed” by the provider, they should be “pulled” by the beneficiary
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Perfect</b>	Repeat until perfect which entails continuous improvement (CI) and business process reengineering (BPR)

Table 4 Principles of Lean Higher Education (LHE)

#### 2.4.6.3. *The diverse applications of Lean in Higher Education*

Lean is “a set of principles and practices” developed since the 1930’s by Toyota Motor Company (Lean Enterprise Institute, 2000) with the aim of creating operational excellence as a strategic critical success factor (CSF). The “Toyota Way” (Liker, 2004), highlighted continuous improvement (CI) and respect for employees as a cornerstone philosophy for quality enhancement. The manufacturing process at Toyota benefited immensely from the application of this philosophy (Byrne, 2013; Womack and Jones, 1996, 2005). Then, Toyota extended Lean to more and more aspects of its business, from production quality, supply chain logistics and finance to customer satisfaction and customer service (Womack et al., 1990).

Over the past several decades, Lean has been incorporated worldwide in both the public and the private sectors (Bhatia & Drew, 2006). Lean Higher Education (LHE) has enabled post-secondary institutions to seek improvements and better answer the demands of the higher education marketplace (Balzer, 2010): this is done through (1) exceeding the expectations of students and faculty members and other constituents; (2) reducing costs and waste; (3) meeting public demands; and, (4) most importantly, strategically employing all available resources to fulfil the institutional objectives, while at the same time achieving the outreach missions of higher education (Balzer, 2010; Holm and Waterbury, 2010; Waterbury and Holm, 2011).

Numerous case studies describe Lean implementation and success stories in industry (as opposed to in education) (Pickrell et al., 2005; Kumar et al., 2006, Laureani and Antony, 2010). By contrast, a very limited number of studies on LHE implementation exists, most often based on case study research in the USA (Doman & Doman, 2011; Waterbury, 2015). These studies typically present small project teams (<10 persons) partaking in multi-day workshops with the aim of improving a certain process, such as student admissions, offering a new major or remodelling a research lab.

Despite the limited amount of research, numerous colleges and universities worldwide have launched and successfully achieved improvement goals from LHE initiatives (Balzer, Francis, Krehbiel, & Shea, 2016). And while the majority of HEIs have reported improved results, some have concurrently expressed scepticism about the theoretical and the practical aspects of LHE. Theoretically, the perceived organizational culture and the potential contradiction with academic freedom were the main points of concern (Jenicke, Kumar, & Holmes, 2008). Practically, the main challenges included lack of understanding the LHE tools, resistance to change and lack of leadership support (Emiliani, 2015; Wiegel and Brouwer-Hadzialic, 2015).

#### *2.4.6.4. LHE in recent years*

Over 15 years, LHE has proven its potential for improvements in HEIs both in the core activities (teaching and research) and in the supporting services (Balzer et al., 2016).

Examples of these improvements include:

1. A reduction in student waiting time by 96% without adding any new staff
2. A reduction in the reply time for students' requests for further information by 99%
3. A reduction of repair time for facilities by 88%
4. A reduction in the hiring process overall time by 50%
5. And most notably, a financial savings of \$27.2m in a US public university (over a four-year period) (Balzer, 2010; Balzer et al., 2015; Krehbiel et al., 2015).

However, one has to wonder, if these improvements are genuine, why have all universities not adopted LHE immediately?

#### *2.4.6.5. Systems approach to improvement*

One popular opinion about Lean is that it must be understood as a systems approach (Holm and Waterbury, 2010; Holm and Waterbury, 2011) and that this systems approach is enhanced by transparency in communication (Antony et al., 2012; Yazdani and Barton, 2013). Kang and Manyonge (2014) provided a systems approach to lean principles from a manufacturing background coupled with examples of how to apply those in HEIs. Balzer et al. (2015) also presented a systems approach to guide successful LHE implementations. The proposed institution-wide implementation of LHE included the following steps:

1. Current climate assessment;
2. Leadership awareness and understanding for LHE;
3. Running a pilot study of a small-scale project; (which arguably is not needed given the promised improvements are as dramatic as indicated above)
4. Creating and reinforcing structures to introduce and sustain LHE; and
5. Facilitating the transition to LHE with respect to members of staff and a focus on continuous improvement.

#### *2.4.6.6. Challenges to applying Lean in HEIs*

##### *2.4.6.6.a. Particularity of higher education*

Given that Lean originated and thrived in a manufacturing setting, its adaptation into HEIs follows three main schools of thought; (1) some authors suggest there is no need to adjust Lean before its introduction to HEIs (Thirkell and Ashman, 2014; Wiegel and Brouwer-Hadzialic, 2015); (2) a majority of authors claim Lean cannot be transferred directly from manufacturing to HEIs but instead requires adjustments (Balzer, 2010; Emiliani, 2015; Waterbury, 2011); and (3) a notable minority claims that it is the HEIs current models themselves that need to adapt to keep up with quality improvement requirements (Balzer et

al., 2016). This last opinion is not new. On the contrary, Dahlgaard and Østergaard, (2000) argued that it is higher education that needs new organisational structures to prepare for an effective implementation of Lean.

#### *2.4.6.6.b. Lean in the public sector*

The opposition to Lean in the public sector has generally argued the public sector is unique and that Lean combines tools and techniques that cannot be transferred from the services industry. However, at least at the administrative level, both the private and the public sectors are similar and can benefit equally from applying Lean. In the words of Antony, Rodgers, & Gijo (2016) “there is no health or local authority unique way of paying staff nor an education or police specific way of human resources”.

It is imperative to note that, for the most part, Lean has been applied to activities that are mostly administrative in nature, areas such as operations, support services, student services and things of that nature (Douglas, Antony & Douglas, 2015). By contrast, Lean application in either teaching or research is still very limited (Emiliani, 2006). Universities, therefore, are advised to incorporate Lean thinking and practice in not only the administrative activities, but also in the academic activities as well (Douglas et al., 2015, p. 979). However, Emiliani does not provide a reason why universities are advised to do so, especially when one considers the fact that Lean has so far been confined to other areas suggest teaching and learning are not compatible.

#### *2.4.6.6.c. Conflict with scientific enquiry*

There are many reasons why Lean’s application in the academy is fairly elusive; the main arguments include –as discussed earlier- a contradiction between Lean (and standardizations in general) and the nature of scientific enquiry and research, and assertion that Lean is incompatible with the highly-regarded notion of academic freedom. This sort of argument has been exhaustively addressed in the context of HEIs. With some being in favour of Lean (Jenicke et al., 2008; Zairi, 1995) and other who are doubtful of it (G. S. Easton & Jarrell, 1996; Koch, 2003). Lean has also been reviewed within other service sectors such as

healthcare (Grabau, 2016; MacDonagh, 2014) and in financial services (Koning, Does, & Bisgaard, 2008; Wang & Chen, 2010).

#### *2.4.6.6.d. Conflict with academic freedom*

In addition, the notion of academic freedom has been and continues to be the major catalyst in the debate around Lean and HEIs. As put by Waterbury “academic freedom and autonomy will continue to challenge Lean implementation” (Waterbury, 2015, p. 948).

Academic freedom is (in the truest meaning of the term) a defining characteristic of both the ancient and the modern university and perhaps the argument against Lean can be boiled down to a defence of this highly revered staple of academia. “Academic freedom, the most sacred of all values in higher education, is appropriate for academics, not administrative operations” (Vyas and Campbell, 2015, p. 20).

However, the possible conflict between a systematic method for quality control and academic freedom is not entirely new neither it is unique to Lean; the Education Act, which has been defining and shaping HEIs since 1990, has been accused of infringing on university autonomy since it demands that academic freedom must be consistent with “national interest” (Brennan, Vries, & Williams, 1997, p.64). The act has been reviewed and updated many times with only one version back in 2004 that includes an explicit reference to academic freedom (Palfreyman, 2007, p.24). The Higher Education Act of 2004 (2004 c. 8) made it clear in part 3, section 32, under General duties of relevant authority stated that (Higher Education Act, 2004)

(1) The Director must perform his functions under this Part in such a way as to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education (including part-time higher education in so far as his functions are exercisable in relation to it).

(2) In the performance of his functions under this Part, the Director has a duty to protect academic freedom, including -in particular- the freedom of institutions—



- (a) To determine the contents of particular courses and the manner in which they are taught, supervised or assessed, and
- (b) To determine the criteria for the admission of students and apply those criteria in particular cases.

Nevertheless, the current law, the Education Act 2011 (Education Act, 2011) (2011c. 21), does not include any such clauses. Conversely, a bill that is currently in parliamentary ping-pong (since 22.11.2016) called Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (2017 c. 29) will bring back a clause on the need to protect academic freedom. Oddly enough, the new bill states that the duty to protect academic freedom lies with the Office for Students (OfS) (Higher Education and Research Act, 2017).

Critics point out that the addition of such clauses adds “nothing of substance that actually provides a definitive statement” (Birtwistle, 2004, p.1).

The university culture in general might be at odds with introducing any BEM. First of all, since academics have a reputation for being non-conformists (Holmes & McElwee, 1995) it will be a challenge to introduce any initiative to them. Secondly, academics are also critical by profession, which is a potential barrier to any BEM implementation (Ho & Wearn, 1996). Finally there is the issue of academic freedom, which is arguably the most important element in academic culture that frustrates the introduction of BEMs (Koch, 2003).

But this claim is not necessarily true. It is human nature to oppose change and academics do sometimes use academic freedom to protest unwanted change (Rannan, 1998).

Having said that it is possible to imagine BEMs threatening academic freedom depending on how it is applied. Technically speaking, BEMs might conflict with academic freedom through its emphasis on customer satisfaction. Also, BEMs generally introduce new policies that could impact academic freedom negatively. Finally, standardisation (when applied myopically) would definitely conflict with academic freedom (Davies et al., 2007).

#### *2.4.6.6.e. More challenges to leadership*

The delivery of successful Lean is dependent on the ability of the organization to address these challenges. The organization should start with a clear vision of what needs to be achieved, coupled with the commitment of senior leadership and the support of all levels of people involved.

The approach to the application of Lean is also a challenge because the commitment to continuous improvement needs to be a shared goal among the people affected by it (as opposed to bringing in consultants who tell people how to do their job). Essentially, change has to come from within. This emphasises the importance of a healthy organisational culture of improvement and commitment to excellence.

#### *2.4.6.7. The potential for LHE*

In the age of high resource competitiveness and growing demands for accountability and cost efficiency, LHE can offer universities improvements to their processes that are both robust and effective. The following arguments support this theory.

- LHE can help to substantially improve the processes that have indirect impact on success. For example, an application of LHE in the university's student careers centre benefits graduates, employers and the business community by helping the centre better manage its resources and processes (Balzer, 2010, p.17). This entails (but is not limited to) serving more students, speeding up response times, keeping the current staff levels and cost reduction. LHE is also very effective in university facilities management (Isa & Usmen, 2015) continual cost reduction (Krehbiel, Ryan, Alfred W, & Miller, 2015), and improved course structures in teaching (Langstrand, Cronemyr, & Poksinska, 2015)
- LHE can be scaled up to any level of functionality. The application of LHE can be limited to a single process or can incorporate every activity within the whole organization. These are referred to as the micro and macro levels. An example of the micro-level application is using LHE to manage temporary invigilation contracts with

PhD students. On the other hand, macro-level applications of LHE are also beneficial to the university. An example of that is the application of LHE is the students' recruitment and enrolment process. This all-encompassing application will see the students' experience and their flow from outside the university throughout their enrolment and registration process. It can also be extended to incorporate the students' academics and on-campus life aspects.

Overall, LHE applications can provide a framework for introducing and sustaining improvement. With the support and commitment of leadership, it could be argued that the cost of not investing in LHE could be fatal (Emiliani, 2015, p.153) as LHE provides an effective tool for implementing successful change.

## **2.5. Management fads and fashions**

Management fads can be defined as innovative theories or practices that are (a) presented as being at the forefront of management progress and (b) widely spread in a very fast manner as organizations seek to secure a competitive advantage by adapting those theories or practices (Ponzi & Koenig, 2002) . This definition poses two questions, namely what constitutes a "very fast manner"? and what is considered the "forefront of management progress?" And who is responsible for this judgement? Ponzi & Koenig's attempt to define management fashions seems to raise more questions more than it answers.

Management fads are relatively new and their origins can be traced back to American corporations operating in the 1980s (Crainer & Dearlove, 2006) . They are usually seen as poorly-understood, but nonetheless negative (Strang & Macy, 2001) .

### ***2.5.1. Fads and fashions, are they all the same?***

To clarify the difference between fads and fashions, Wasson (as cited in Ponzi & Koenig, 2002) defines fads as ideas that emerge quickly, and get adopted quickly and enthusiastically only to decline just as quickly. Fashions, on the other hand, plateau for a while during which

time; they are perceived as being mature and stable. Of course, much like a fad, a fashion will eventually decline (Figure 11).

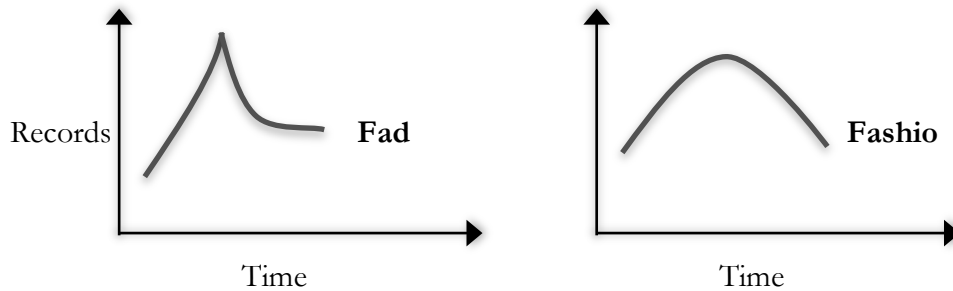


Figure 11 Fad & fashion lifecycles (Source Wasson as cited in Ponzi & Koenig, 2002)

### *2.5.2. Defining characteristics*

The main characteristic of a management fashion according to Ponzi & Koenig (2002) is that they all fail the test of time. Based on annual accounts from various scientific indexes of three management fads, it was suggested that a typical management fashion lasts for approximately five years (Ponzi & Koenig, 2002). This suggests, however, that the faddish characteristics associated with a certain management approach should be dropped once it passes the 5-year benchmark. Indeed, Ponzi & Koenig use this argument to show that knowledge management (having outlived the typical fad 5-year marker) has successfully established itself as a viable management approach.

### *2.5.3. Major criticisms*

Despite the widespread application of TQM in many fields, it is still a contested paradigm for management (Mehta, Verma, & Seth, 2014). Although TQM outlines some general guidelines and principles about quality, it is not a perfect model. But that is to be expected since no one model or paradigm offers an ideal, one-size-fits-all solution for different organisations (EQNA, 2012). Here are the main criticisms of models based on TQM.

### *2.5.3.1. Fashion setters and an overrated uniqueness*

One major critical voice is Abrahamson in his ground-breaking paper ‘management fashion’ (Benders & Van Veen, 2001) where he conceptualized the term management fashion and claimed that certain fads and fashion setters set such management fashions (Abrahamson, 1996). At their core, these fashions have an implicit notion that certain management techniques are always leading management progress.

This is done –according to Abrahamson (1996) - through a meticulous process in which the fashion setters have to (a) ensure the proposed management technique adheres to the emerging shared preference among managers, (b) produce corresponding literature using appropriate rhetoric, and (c) distribute their work as soon as possible before other fashion setters do the same. If they fail to do so, prospective fashion setters like business schools, management gurus and professional societies will seem to be following established trends rather than leading progress.

One clear shortcoming of Abrahamson’s description of management fads and fashion is that he uses the two terms (fads and fashions) interchangeably. It is sensible to question whether these two terms mean the same thing for him. Unfortunately, Abrahamson does not clarify that. It may well be that the two terms (‘management fad’ and ‘management fashion’) were so newly-coined that the finely grained differences between them had not yet become salient.

Abrahamson’s arguments were accused of being inconsistent and incomplete (Cahill et al., 1996). Worren also highlights that Abrahamson’s arguments have to do as much with labels as with the principles themselves. In other words, language is clearly another barrier that needs clarifying just as much as the concept of management fashion discussed in Abrahamson’s article.

This is not to undermine Abrahamson’s insights. McKinley (Cahill et al., 1996) for example, argues that the claims put forward by Abrahamson could be extended in application to all academic management literature, as academics value novelty very highly (Mone & McKinley,

1993) and are (according to McKinley) influenced by fashion. This argument stems from the notion that organizational and managerial studies put a lot of value on uniqueness. In other words, management researchers have to strive to make “unique contributions to their discipline” (Mone & McKinley, 1993, p.1) . However, this alleged ‘uniqueness’ of contribution is not exclusive to management research; in fact, it could be generalized to all fields of research.

#### *2.5.3.2. Cure-all remedy that lacks rationality*

The underpinning criticism against management fashions according to Abrahamson is that (a) management fashions only need to appear rational and progressive without actually having to be so, and (b) currently only socio-psychological forces shape the demand for these management fashions, whereas other forces should have a role as well, namely technical and economic forces. Christensen & Michael (2003) object to the cure-all remedy that management fashions claim to offer. As an example, they point out that no competent doctor prescribes medicine without first examining the patient and considering the symptoms just because this prescription worked with the last two patients! This oversimplified (and probably ill-fitting) example is presented to emphasise the shortcomings of the generic advice that management fashions claim to offer.

Ansari, Fiss, & Zazac (2010) agree with Abrahamson that there exist some management practices that are characterized by faddish and fashion-like attributes. The origins of these fads were expanded by Ansari et al. (2010) who built upon what Abrahamson (1996) introduced earlier. While Abrahamson first attributed fads to socio-psychological characteristics, Ansari et al. attributed them to a plethora of characteristics, including economic-based, rational accounts. This is a result of Ansari et al.’s categorization of the attempts to explain the origins of such fads, wherein they found that such origins can be grouped into two major groups; (1) the economic-oriented literature which presents the most dominant perspective in the literature, and (2) the sociological-oriented literature that accounts for a smaller portion of the literature.

#### *2.5.4. In defence of management practices*

Of course, the case against the so-called management fads does not stand unchallenged; both theoretical and practical accounts can be cited to support the claim that management fads are useful.

##### *2.5.4.1. Theoretical justification*

Wilson (2002) explains that it is wrong to assume that management approaches lack effectiveness just because they sometimes have faddish attributes. According to Huselid (1995) the majority of the literature is conceptual and supports the claim that human resource management practices can help in building and sustaining a competitive advantage in the organization. This is the case especially when managerial efforts are aligned with the organization's strategy.

Collins (2003) claims that labelling developments in management as “faddish and insubstantial distortions” (p.1) is unhelpful even though it has become a favourite pastime for some researchers (Collins, 2001) . It is better, Collins argues, to view management development as a process, which, when critically analysed, has the potential to improve our understanding of both our environment and ourselves.

Another theoretical criticism from Collins (2003) is that typically it is assumed that such fads are disseminated from the guru to the practitioner, even though this linear-spread assumption is incorrect. In reality, Collins states that the relationship between the guru and the practitioner is (a) two-way and (b) active and collaborative rather than passive or submissive.

##### *2.5.4.2. Practical justification*

Practically, it has been documented that effective practices in management (especially personnel management) are very stable and cannot be considered as fads (Pfeffer, 1996) . Furthermore, Huselid (1995) demonstrated that financial performance improved as a result

of adopting innovative management practices (including Total Quality Management). The author comprehensively examined the relationship between organizational performance and work practices in over 1,000 firms. The results clearly showed an economically and statistically significant impact on both short-to-intermediate and long outcomes.

Even more pragmatically, Strang & Macy (2001) make the point that fads might be a necessary evil as the business community is becoming increasingly determined by “media-driven accounts of success” (Strang & Macy, 2001, p.1). Management approaches that were once considered as passing fads seem to overstay, such as competitive benchmarking, for example, that was dubbed as a fad at the time, but is still very much being used. These fads were and still are being adopted by many organizations. This led to the prediction that such fads would continue to come and go in cycles (Strang & Macy, 2001) .

#### ***2.5.5. Reflection and conclusion***

So far, two themes have emerged regarding management fashions, these are (a) the perception of being at the forefront of management progress and (b) the fast rate of diffusion among organizations. It seems that the matter of management fads is still an open debate, and therefore it remains legitimate to focus on how to get the best out of these ‘fads’ by asking questions about when it is best to apply a certain management approach, how and by whom. Adopting fads has its best value where innovation has been seen to have a modest positive effect on outcomes. It is in those conditions where management decision-making should favour the “faddish cycles” (Strang & Macy, 2001).

### **2.6. Summary**

This chapter has presented what the literature has to offer in the five main themes that are linked to the research secondary questions. First, quality management was introduced as a concept within the historical context. Then the major business excellence models (BEMs) were presented highlighting their core concepts followed by comparison if different BEMs.



The third and fourth themes investigated Lean Six Sigma and the appropriately-named Lean Higher Education (LHE). This theme included a review of LHE fundamental concepts and the challenges facing university leadership when applying LHE.

The fifth and final theme explored the claim that some BEMs could be fads. In order to explore this, I made a distinction in the terminology found in the literature, mainly the use of these words -fads and fashions- almost interchangeably. I tried to highlight the different contexts where either of the two words might be used. Then I presented the major criticism against BEMs and the defending arguments.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

### 3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology used to explore the research question regarding current challenges and best practices in applying successful Business Excellence Models (BEMs). As a realist practitioner (see below), I was interested in following a methodology that allows a pragmatic examination and evaluation of current practices employed by each university case study.

### 3.2. Researcher's paradigm

I have adopted a critical realism (CR) stance; a philosophical view of social reality that is relatively new and not limited to any field of research or method. CR evidently “embraces all social sciences” (Lewis, 2009) and helps the researcher focus on the studied phenomenon from the social construct and the perceptions of reality.

CR is a “relatively new philosophy of science that takes tenets from both interpretivism and positivism” (Lennox & Jurdi-Hage, 2017) and attempts to overcome the limitations of these research traditions (Bergin, Wells, & Owen, 2008; McEvoy & Richards, 2006).

It is not easy finding a definition to Critical Realism (CR) due to the difficulty in pinning down realism. CR, being a relatively new philosophical position, is almost impossible to grasp with a distinctive characteristics (Lennox & Jurdi-Hage, 2017). and therefore, “little guidance is available on which precise methods – including methods of data collection, coding, and analysis – are best suited to applied CR research” (Fletcher, 2017).

The power of CR is in its potential for social transformation, which CR offers as a result of going beyond the empirical in its investigation. In other words, the transformational power of CR is a result of its “commitment to deep, underlying, non-observable structures and generative mechanisms” (Williams, 1999).

Despite the fact that CR is a philosophy of science with unique emancipatory and explanatory power, how to accomplish its programme is less straightforward. This is a result

of a lack of examples and case studies that illustrate how CR could be successfully utilised in different fields. This lack of examples has been noted by many (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Fletcher, 2017; Williams, 1999) CR has even been deemed as a “philosophy in search of a method” (Reed, 2009).

A suggested list of loose arguments are proposed by Sayer (2002, p.6-7) to help grasp the nature of realism

- 1- “The world exists regardless of our knowledge of its existence
- 2- We are fallible in our knowledge of the world, what we have instead is a set of theories that try to describe the world. These theories should be tested rigorously and repeatedly
- 3- The development of knowledge happens in a certain fashion that is neither completely continuous nor completely discontinuous.
- 4- The world is filled with objects (natural or social) that act in particular ways according to their powers and vulnerabilities
- 5- The world also has events which create with the object mentioned above a differentiated world
- 6- Social events are concept-dependent, this means that researchers need not only to describe the events but also read into them and explore what they mean. In other words, events can and should be interpreted
- 7- Research and the production of knowledge is a social activity. Where the conditions influence the outcomes. Research is also a linguistic phenomenon. Researchers’ awareness of this fact is important.
- 8- Social science must be critical of the studied object. Researchers need to be critical in their approach to science”

In light of Sayer’s attempt at defining Critical Realism (CR) and in relation to the two opposing views of the nature of social reality; positivism and relativism. It is worth mentioning that CR could be perceived as being somewhere in between the two opposing stances.

A positivist viewpoint assumes that the object is observable and can be studied 'from a distance' without influencing the outcome of the study. The role of the positivist researcher is most often to use quantitative tools to study the social phenomenon and predict its future based on the yielded result. This methodology is therefore based on the assumption that the social world is similar to the physical world; in other words, "as in the physical world, so in the social world".

Conversely, a relativist viewpoint is opposing in both theory and practice. A relativist cannot study the phenomenon from a distance, as it will be affected by the interaction of the researcher. Practically, the relativist researcher will usually use qualitative tools to study the social phenomenon and produce non-generalizable results. The reason why the results cannot be generalized is because they are context-specific. Theoretically, the relativist viewpoint assumes an inherent difference between a physical phenomenon and a social one. Understanding the world, therefore, must take into consideration the individuals who are doing the understanding and the individuals who are generating the data.

The Critical Realism viewpoint of the social phenomenon belongs somewhere between these two extremes, exhibiting elements of each (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 2013; Groff, 2004; Laudan, 1996; Maxwell, 2004; Sayer, 2002; D. Scott, 2005).

### **3.3. Research design**

In light of the fact that my epistemological framework is interpretivist (see below), my research will focus on qualitative data and methods rather than quantitative. This should suffice for the time being, because unlike quantitative research, there is no overarching framework for how qualitative research should be conducted; but rather, we see that each type of qualitative research is guided by a set of particular philosophical stances. These philosophical stances are taken in relation to each phenomenon.

According to Abbott & McKinney (2013, p. xvii) good social research requires good research design, that helps pose the right questions, test them and draw sound conclusions. Research design as a process is better addressed after having decided on a research topic

(Figure 12). In order for the design to be considered as “good research design” it has to be (1) justifiable and (2) suitable for answering the research question.

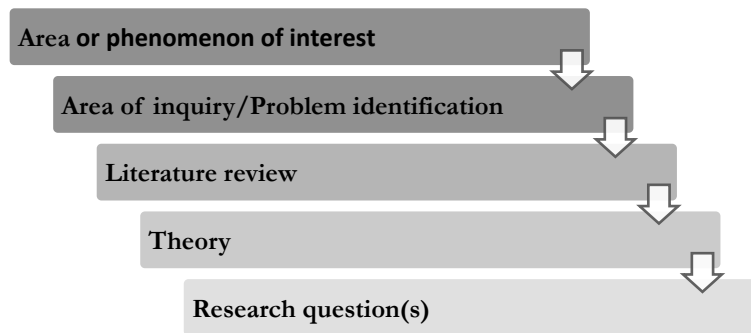


Figure 12 Expanded design process. Source Vogt et al., (2012, p.12)

Adopting the above figure, I developed the research design Figure 13

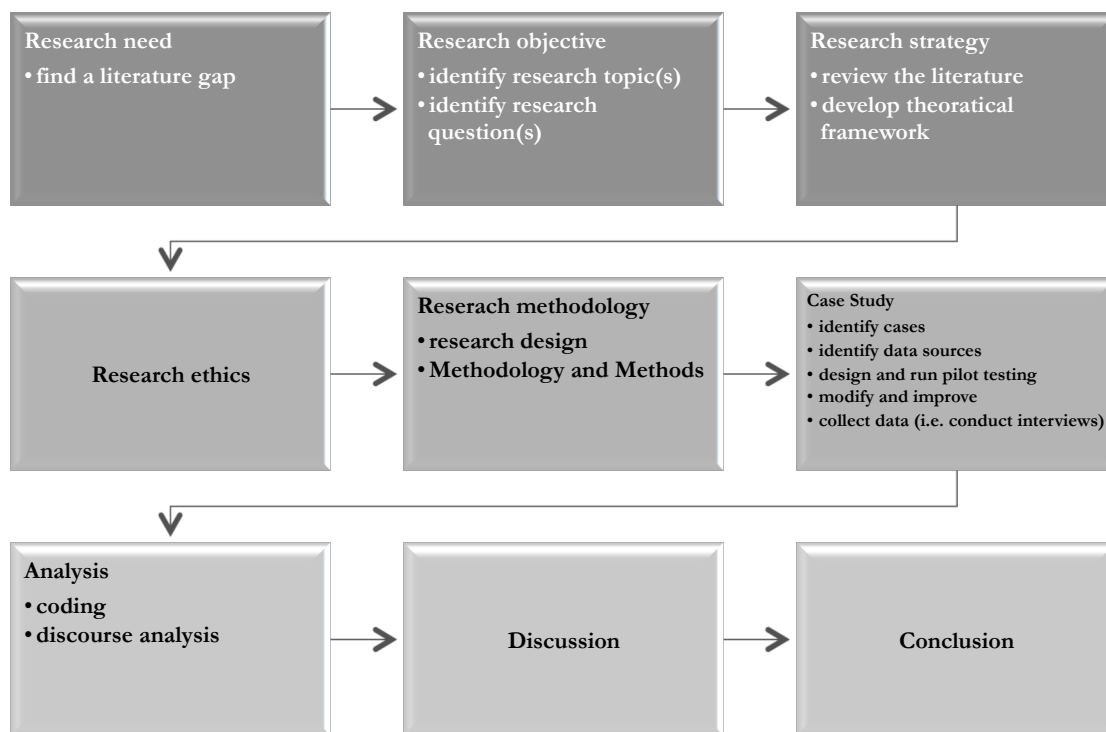


Figure 13 The Research Design for the study

Above, I have changed "case studies" to "cases"

However, the research process is not exclusively linear; instead, major elements interact and evolve over time (Figure 14).

In my research for example, the analysis phase led to a change in coding. In order to do that the sampling had to be modified as well. This took place as the following:

Initially, there were two case studies (codes CS1 and CS2) within each case study a dozen interviewees existed that were put into two sub-groups and given code names (CS1-1, CS1-2 ... etc. and CS2-1, CS2-2 ... etc.). However, the early analysis shifted my focus from the combining all interviewees within the same case study together into sub-grouping them according to case study and position. the sub number of sub-groups grew from the number of case studies into the number of case studies times the number of strata ( $2 \times 4 = 8$  sub-groups). This shift in focus was reflected in new code names that reflect both the case study and the stratum (position). Once the new codes were used a major discrepancy was highlighted because some sub-groups were now empty and there was a need to resample the case studies to include a minimum of respondents within each sub-group.

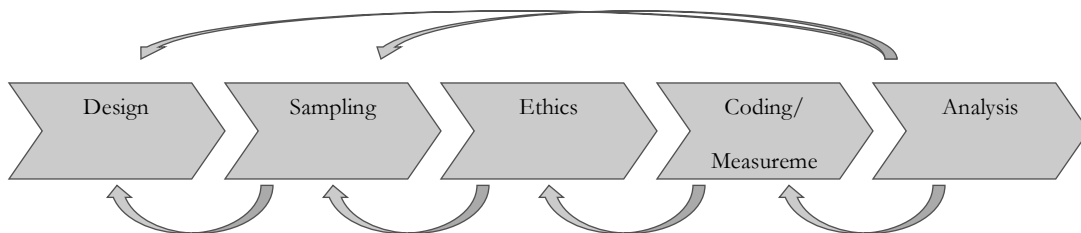


Figure 14 Natural sequence of methods choices with feedback

### *3.3.1. Research approach and methods*

It is clearly important to choose an appropriate research approach. In the following section, I will discuss the one chosen for this study and explain why alternative approaches were discounted.

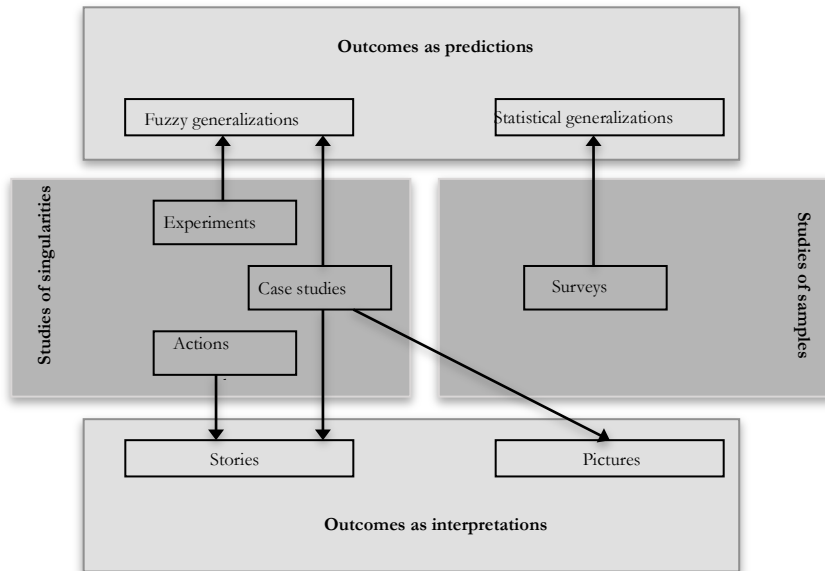


Figure 15 An overview of empirical educational research (Bassey, 1999, p. 4)

This overview groups outcomes of educational research into two groups; (a) interpretive outcome and (b) predictive outcome. Bassey fashioned the concept of fuzzy generalisation as well as the notion that experiments yield “fuzzy generalisation” results (Bassey, 1998). I find this notion to be counterintuitive especially when consulting Bassey’s definition of fuzzy generalisation as a way of “way of encapsulating the researcher’s claims, which replace the certainty of a scientific generalisation with fuzziness or uncertainty”.

I think Bassey’s categorization of outcomes is somewhat myopic; statistical and uncertain/fuzzy generalisations are not mutually exclusive, in other words, both fuzzy and statistical generalisations are sometimes not applicable to new cases. However, whereas statistical generalisations specify the probability of their applicability in other cases, fuzzy generalisations do not. Furthermore, the claim that statistical (and by contrast to Bassey’s own definition, scientifically certain) generalisation is derived exclusively from surveys is over-simplistic. Albeit, the majority of experiments are condition-dependent and sometimes probabilistic, they are still deterministic. In algebraic terms,  $X$  always produces  $Y$ , given the conditions  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$  are met. By contrast, statistical results (which are usually produced through a sample of the population) are always probabilistic. This probability is reflected in the confidence interval, which refers to the likelihood of error. In my view, survey results

cannot be considered strong evidence unless the samples is representative of population that allows the statistics to be safely extrapolated and that doesn't change throughout the timeframe of the survey. Hence, a more realistic version of Bassey's model would include the two types of generalisation as a result of both surveys and experiments.

According to this overview (see Figure 16), what is unique about case studies as a research method is the ability to be employed for both interpretive and predictive outcomes. Case studies can generate one of three different forms of outcome; (1) fuzzy generalization, which are qualitative-based predictions (e.g. it is unlikely that ..., it is very probable that ...), (2) stories, which are narrations of certain situations aimed at providing a detailed 'picture' of the case study; and (3) pictures, which are similar to stories in function (interpretation) but different in form (descriptive rather than narrative).

My study will combine both descriptive pictures and fuzzy generalization. So the outcome will provide a clear understanding of the case studies as well as helping to build a qualitative-based prediction.

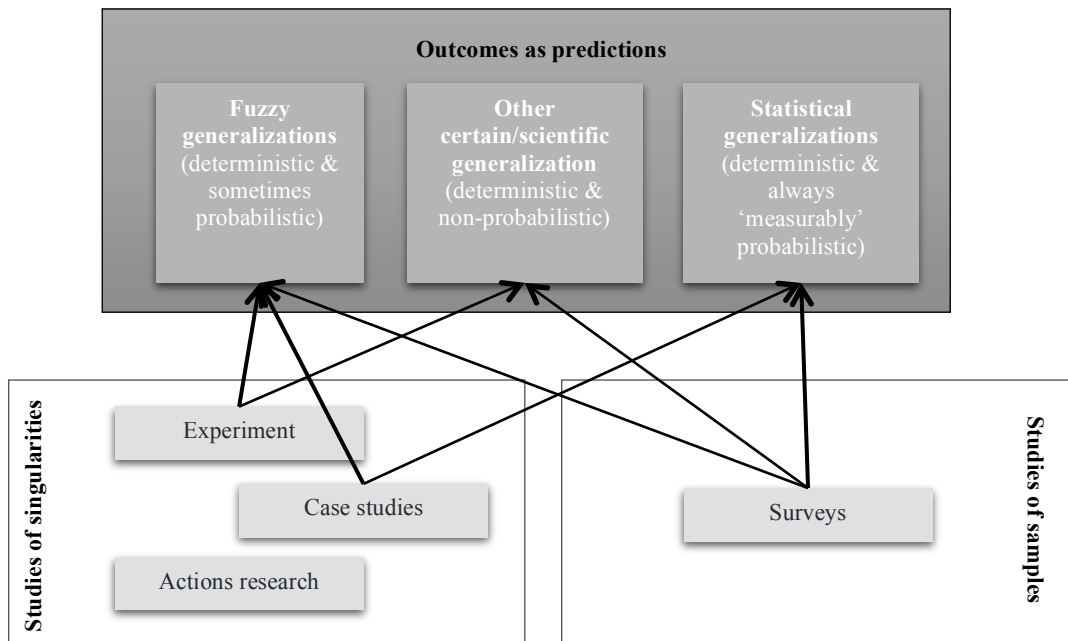


Figure 16 An updated overview of empirical educational research (adopted from Bassey)



### 3.3.2. Further support for case study research

Yin (2014, p. 9) lists five different research strategies; experiment, survey, archival analysis, history and case study. Yin clarifies the differences between these strategies, based on three criteria; the form of research question they answer, the level of control they require, and whether or not they focus on contemporary events (Table 5).

<b>Method</b>	<b>(1) Form of Research Question</b>	<b>(2) Requires Control of Behavioural Events?</b>	<b>(3) Focuses on Contemporary Events?</b>
<b>Experiment</b>	how? why?	yes	yes
<b>Survey</b>	who, what, where, how many, how much?	no	yes
<b>Archival analysis</b>	who, what, where, how many, how much?	no	yes/no
<b>History</b>	how? why?	no	no
<b>Case study</b>	how? why?	no	yes

Table 5 Relevant situations for different research methods (Yin, 2014, p.9)

I will follow in the same footsteps as Yin, and reflect on my research in the light of these three questions:

#### 3.3.2.1. Form of Research Question

As mentioned earlier, my study aims to investigate the applicability of the Business Excellence Models in Higher Education by asking two over-arching research questions: and four subquestions, as follows:

*“Why might one UK university embrace Business Excellence Models while another resists them? How can quality assurance staff make the best use of these models?”*

- ✓ *What motivates a university to implement or not implement a Business Excellence Model (BEM)?*
- ✓ *How is the decision to implement a BEM enacted and with what consequences?*
- ✓ *To what extent do university staff view BEMs as business fads or fashions?*
- ✓ *How might BEMs be better initiated, implemented and sustained?*

It is clear that the majority of the questions fall under the how/why category, especially the main research question. This points at three potential research strategies; experiment, history and case study.

#### *3.3.2.2 Requires Control of Behavioural Events?*

I do not have any control over the behavioural events of the research, since I am interested in finding out best current practices, not experimenting with hypothetical situation. In other words, the form of the enquiry is ‘what is...’ not ‘what if...’. This leaves history research and case study research strategies.

#### *3.3.2.3 Focuses on Contemporary Events?*

My focus is on current events rather than historical ones. Thus, the proper research strategy is case study.

It is important to clearly define what is meant by “historical” and at what point a current event becomes historical. Historical research aims to "establish facts and draw conclusions about past events ... [using] ... primary historical data sources, (such as archaeological remains as well as documentary sources of the past" (Walliman, 2010, p.9). On this basis, my research concerns current, not historical events.

Case study research is exceptionally appropriate when there is a need for in-depth description of the studied phenomenon. This is especially true when the context of the

research is how to improve quality and the implementation of best practices, especially for examining the application of TQM (Bardoel & Sohal, 1999).

### 3.3.3. Case study: method, methodology or approach?

Whether case study is a method or a methodology is a moot point. Some regard it as a methodology that encapsulates the assumptions, methods, data collections instruments, analysis and interpretation (such as Yin, Stake and - in education- Andrew Pollard) regard Case Study Research as an approach to research. What is meant by approach is the plan and the procedures for the research and spans all the steps from assumptions to methods, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014, p. 3) which from an etymological point of view sounds more like methodology than approach.

Other authors (namely Elliott & Lukeš) regard Case Study Research as research *genre*. Here the word *genre* refers to a way of framing a particularly bounded unit. The genre provides guiding principles for the research design. Swales (2004) lists six different metaphors for the term genre and assigns ‘guiding principles’ to case study research as a genre. The assignment is derived from an assumption that the term genre is used as a metaphor of frame of social activity.

Metaphors	→	Variable Outcomes	
Frames of Social Action	→	Guiding Principles	G
Language Standards	→	Conventional Expectations	E
Biological Species	→	Complex Historicities	N
Families and Prototypes	→	Variable Links to the Centre	R
Institutions	→	Shaping Contexts: Roles	E
Speech Acts	→	Directed Discourses	S

Figure 17 Metaphors of genre (Swales, 2004, p. 68)

Personally, I regard case study as a genre to research. I find my views about case study to be more conceptually abstract, resonating with those of Elliott & Lukeš (2008) who regard case study as more than a method of research but rather a genre.

The debate about the nature of case study is ongoing, and it has implications on how we view and conduct and research. It is however still important for researchers to decide for themselves and declare how they view case study research in order to ensure coherence throughout their research and justify their decisions for themselves and for their readers.

### *3.3.3.1. Case study criticism*

Of course, case study research is not without criticism; the major misconceptions masked as weaknesses of case study research are; “(a) Theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge; (b) one cannot generalize from a single case, therefore, the single-case study cannot contribute to scientific development; (c) the case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building; (d) the case study contains a bias toward verification; and (e) it is often difficult to summarize specific case studies.” Flyvbjerg, (2006)

Probably the most critical of these possible ‘shortcomings’ is the lack of generalizability, which arguably underpins each of the five misconceptions identified by Flyvbjerg. In fact, case study research is primarily criticised for its apparent inability to generalize due to the relatively small sample size (relative to other research strategies), Campbell (1975) claims that the study of a single case or a single ‘foreign setting’ as he puts it by ‘an outsider’ causes contradictions in generalization between what is observed and what the observer projects it to be. Campbell also adds another shortcoming of case study research evident by the possible lack of control over the case study.

Another aspect to the generalizability argument is that samples used to choose the case study are not representative of the total population. Although this representativeness can be increased by strategic selection of cases (Charles.C. Ragin, 1992) however a typical representative case may not offer as much information as an atypical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). That is why representative cases are not ideal when the objective of the research is to maximise the amount of information about a certain phenomenon.

According to Flyvbjerg (2006) the conventional wisdom that claims case study research lacks generalizability is largely false and misleading for several reasons; (a) generalization happens

in all kinds of research, either on large samples or in small samples, so the difference between case-study-based research generalization and survey-based research generalization is in the scale; (b) generalizability can be perfectly valid when the cases (that are studied) have been selective properly, so in essence the choosing of the cases; (c) historically speaking, case study research has had tremendous success in many disciplines including physics, biology, psychology and economics; and (d) the fact that generalization is overrated and not very often practiced, Flyvbjerg here cites economist Mark Blaug who claims that while economics claim loyalty to the hypothetic-deductive model<sup>11</sup> they seldom practice it. I think that, ironically, Flyvbjerg generalizes Blaug's argument for generalizability from economics to all other disciplines.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that according to Kuhn (1987), any discipline will suffer if it does not have a wide range of case studies, those case studies provide the discipline with exemplars (good-practice prototypes), the lack of which would render the discipline ineffective.

### *3.3.3.2. Type of case study*

Different approaches exist to categorise case study research based on the purpose of the study. Table 6 summarises two prevalent models of aforementioned categorisation.

Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier (2012, p.20) differentiate between three major types of case study research based on their purpose; (1) describing a case, (2) investigating a problem or a question, and (3) understanding process or interaction.

Whereas Yin (2014, p.238) differentiates between another three major types of case study research based on their purpose; (1) descriptive case study of a phenomenon in real-world context, (2) explanatory case study of why and how a certain situation came to be, and (3) exploratory case study of a question or a problem.

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<sup>11</sup>A scientific method relating to the testing of the consequences of hypotheses, to determine whether the hypotheses themselves are false or acceptable. (oxforddictionaries.com)

Arguably, what Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier (2012, p.20) refer to as investigating is what Yin (2014, p.238) calls exploratory, and what they refer to as understanding is what he calls explanatory. The latter category is where I believe this research to fall within. I would also like to argue that each ‘type’ of case study research lends itself to the other two types and that case study types are not exclusively mutual.

	<b>The Purpose of the case study research</b>		
<b>Hamilton &amp; Corbett-Whittier (2012)</b>	Describing a case	Understanding process or interaction	Investigating a problem or a question
<b>Yin (2014)</b>	Descriptive case study of a phenomenon in real-world context	Explanatory case study of why and how a certain situation came to be	Exploratory case study of a question or a problem

Table 6 Types of case study research based on purpose

#### ***3.3.4. The use of case study in this research***

Case study research was employed to answer the research questions. This is because case study research is most suitable for answering how and why questions (Hussey & Hussey, 1997), in particular, when the a certain phenomenon is being studied within context (Yin, 2014). The research did indeed answer the research question(s); “*Why might one UK university embrace Business Excellence Models while another resists them? How can quality assurance staff make the best use of these models?*” Consequently, I would argue that the choice of research methodology was appropriate.

Two case studies were introduced and examined (case study A, case study B). The decision to investigate multiple cases was made early on in the research process for several reasons. The chief among which is to cater for two different types of university; the Russell Group universities and the New Universities (Post 92s). I have argued earlier that it is important to

distinguish between the two types of universities because they have quite different histories and they face different challenges particularly in terms of funding and student expectations. The other reason for choosing to study two cases is to gain insight in comparing the cases.

There is a claim that evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling resulting in the overall study that employs multiple cases to be regarded as being more robust (Yin, 2014). I think this is not necessarily true, as on the face of it, this claim seems to directly contradict and undermine the nature of qualitative research by shifting the focus towards quantity. The potentially detrimental consequence of such a stance is that it is a slippery slope to giving research with multiple cases a false sense of 'authority', over otherwise well-studied piece of research that examines a single case. The focus should not be on the number of case studies be it numerous or single, but on the quality of research and the depth of analysis and insight within the reasonable limits of time and other resources of that specific research.

Multiple sources of evidence were employed to triangulate the data. The sources are 18 interviews and documents from both cases. It would have been very hard to conduct more interviews because of the nature of elite interviewing.

The collaboration of multiple data sources allowed me to gain insights into each case. By the same token, interviewing people from different organizational functions with varying ranks was helpful (academics versus professional staff and across several levels of management). As it provided me with a wider understanding of key issues (such as when interviewees attributed a certain phenomenon to different factors or when the same factor was perceived to have a different effect).

Much time and effort was spent setting up interviews and gaining access to potential interviewees. The response rate was higher than average (27%= 23 out of 85 responded) among those who responded there were only 5 rejections and 18 approvals (78% approval rate within respondents). In other words, 1 in every five of those who were originally contacted agreed on doing an interview. The main issue was time management, as those who would be contacted took too long to respond and most of the time their initial response was

to reject. I always offered to work around their schedule and exactly 50% of them agreed to do the interview eventually. So, I think it was worthwhile trying to get their approval and working around their schedule. The downside of course, is during this time I was unable to contact other potential interviewees and had to wait until I received a definite rejection. This meant that the data collection period lasted for mid January 2015 to early September of the same year.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured as mentioned earlier. The time of the interviews varied notably from 22 minutes to just over 61 minutes with an average of just above 36 minutes. The relatively short amount of time is due to the fact that participants are members of academic and professional staff who occupy senior positions in their organizations. Therefore, participants were very keen on keeping the interviews as short as possible. It actually took many deliberations to come to the agreements of the above-mentioned 30-40 minute interviews.

### **3.4. The Realist Evaluation Cycle**

As a basis for designing and running a successful realist evaluation, I consulted the literature and based my approach on the Realist Evaluation Cycle (Figure 18) (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.85) which has been adapted from the famous Wheel of Science (Figure 19) (Wallace, 1971) which usually starts with theory; a narrative concerned with identification and explanation of regularities (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Critical Realism (CR) provides its own terminology for formulating context for the observed phenomenon (Whitbeck & Bhaskar, 1977). Context, Mechanism and Outcomes are usually referred to as C, M & O respectively. This first theory stage is executed with literature synthesis. An astute CMO configuration should be very much based in reality and current practices. The second stage is the hypothesis stage where potential causes of the phenomenon are proposed and tailored to the case study, the proposition of such causes relates to the “What might work?” and the tailoring relates to the “for whom in what circumstances?” it is evident that having a better CMO configuration will yield a more potentially relevant hypotheses. This is because understanding the “whom” and the



“circumstances” relied heavily on having a more coherent context, more accurate mechanism and more representative outcomes.

It is no surprise that this stage (the hypothesis stage) is particularly vital for the success of the realist evaluation process or cycle. In fact, I would argue that this is the core of the realist practice since the researcher aims to measure the extent to which a suggested program will or is likely to have a positive outcome. This is usually a characteristic of the second and third iteration of the cycle.

The third stage is the observation stage or the data collection. A relatively laborious and somewhat mechanic stage completely guided by the CMO configuration. Finally, the fourth and final stage is the conclusion stage dubbed *program specification* by CR literature. Here the researcher strives to present the outcome of in the form of answer to the question, “What works for whom in what circumstances?”

For my research, I have adapted the Realist Evaluation Cycle to reflect my actual practice; mainly emphasising the literature review as well as the analysis part of formulating outcomes.

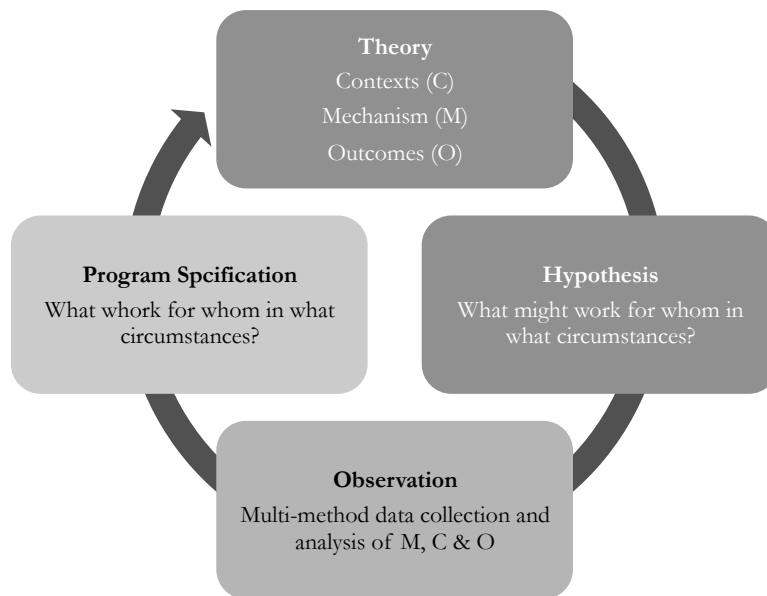


Figure 18 The Realist Evaluation Cycle (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)

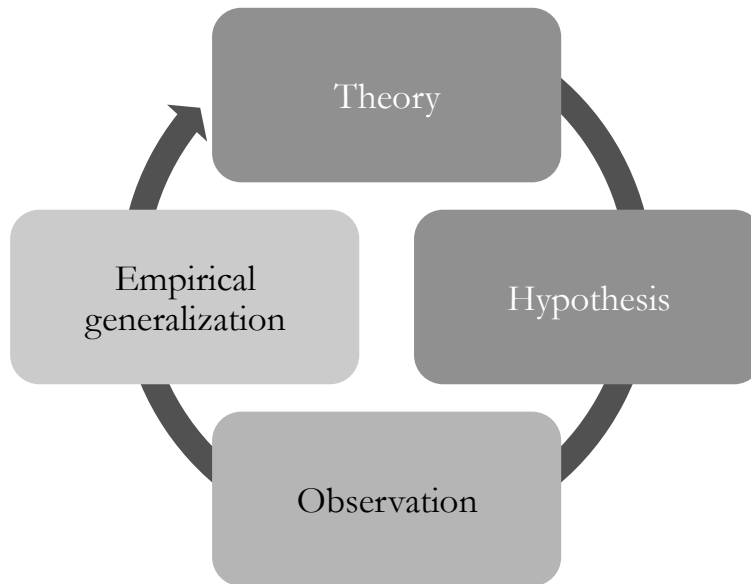


Figure 19 Deduction & induction, the Wheel of Science (Wallace, 1971)

Critical Realism has been successfully and increasingly used in social science research (Clegg, 2005) educational research (Clegg, 2005; D. Scott, 2005), other service-based industries such as health (Bergin et al., 2008; McEvoy & Richards, 2003), business research (A. Ryan, Tähtinen, Vanharanta, & Mainela, 2012; Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011) and strategy and policy planning (Downward, 2006; Mir & Watson, 2001). Critical Realism as an approach offers a pluralistic method that is led by the problem. This feature makes the Critical Realism approach a particularly good match for practice-based research and case study research (G. Easton, 2010).

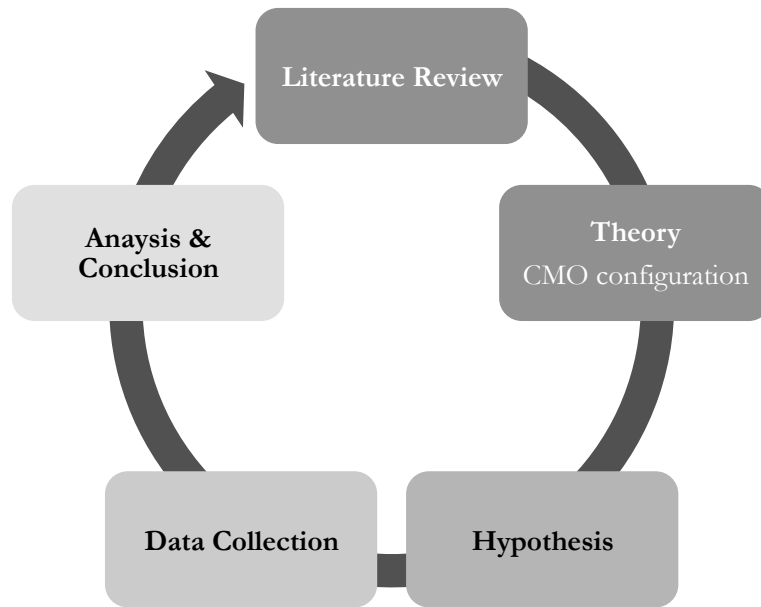


Figure 20 The Realist Evaluation Cycle in Practice (adapted from Pawson and Tilley, 1997)

### 3.5. Data collection

My approach was to conduct interviews with university leadership and with staff members associated with projects that focused on quality enhancement.

#### 3.5.1. *The data collection instrument*

My research aims to explore the practices and effectiveness of applying BEMs in universities that have started such models. Furthermore, the research is also measuring perception of success by those who were/are heavily involved in the model. This extends to team relations & dynamics, interactions, hierarchy, and the environment in which the BEM project was carried out. A critical realist stance views these involved people as active participants of the BEM project and therefore a direct interview is the most appropriate method to explore their experiences.

The field research consisted of in-depth interviews. Primary data was drawn from interviews with universities quality managers (as discussed earlier). Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the viewpoints of the interviewees on a range of topics concerning the importance and criticality, the creation, and the maintaining of excellence in their respective universities. Appendix A shows the interview schedule used over the 5 month period of data

collection. Data collection followed a semi-structured approach where a list of topics was discussed at a pace set by the interviewee. Interviewees were also encouraged to expand on any topics they deemed relevant.

Given the high status of the interviewees, I felt face-to-face interviews were more suitable than distant interviews (telephone or Skype). Other ‘minor’ reasons why I felt face-to-face interviews were appropriate are (1) reducing the powerlessness that I anticipated to have in the interview (Walford, 1994) and (2) a less-than-perfect attempt to capture the nonverbal cues from the interviewees, hoping to reduce any dishonest responses (Morris, 2009) and steer away from the agendas their agendas (Fitz & Halpin, 1994).

### *3.5.2. Ethical considerations*

Appendix A includes documents relating to ethical approval and considerations. University of Warwick ethical approval was granted prior to data collection. All participants were emailed the ethical approval document as well as the participant information document (see appendices X and Y). Participants agreed to participate prior to meeting in person. They were not sent copies of the questions in advance in an effort to reduce prepared answers that might be dishonest.

Participants were asked to sign a consent form that allowed the use of their data for research purposes (see Appendix D: participant consent form & information sheet). Participants were anonymised by omitting all direct identifiers that could reveal their true identities. These include mainly names and addresses. Indirect identifiers were also hidden to my best ability. Accordingly, it will be extremely hard for someone to cross-reference the available information from this research with other publicly available information to identify any particular participant. A prime example of indirect identifiers is the participants employment histories (which were mentioned multiple times).

The interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the participants.

In order to ensure that I adhered to proper policy for (1) gaining consent, (2) participants' right to withdraw and (3) privacy, I followed the following suggestion provided by BERA (2014):

#### *3.5.2.1. Voluntary Informed Consent*

- I asked to get voluntary informed consent after making sure the participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress
- The consent was gained prior to the research getting started
- I made sure the participants understood the process in which they are to be engaged and how necessary their participation is
- I communicated with clearly to the participants how their input will be used and how and to whom it will be reported

#### *3.5.2.2. Right to Withdraw*

- I recognised and informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason
- I made sure to never used coercion or duress of any form to persuade participants to re-engage with the work

#### *3.5.2.3. Privacy*

- I recognised the participants' entitlement to privacy and took the necessary steps to ensure their rights to confidentiality and anonymity
- I made sure that the data I have gathered is kept securely and does not lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

### *3.5.3. Sample selection and the interview process*

The sample for the study is located in two university settings. In the case study literature, there is a legitimate debate over the definition of a unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Grünbaum, 2007). In this research, the unit of analysis was regarded as the case study itself. So every university represented a case study and a unit of analysis.

The number of case studies is 2 London-based universities; 1 Russell Group and 1 post-1992 universities (both well up in the league tables).

I think it is important to distinguish between Russell Group and post-1992 universities because these are two types of universities with quite different histories, funding regimes and research/teaching focus.

Both case studies are based in London. This is because universities in London face more competition than any other city in the UK because of the sheer number of students. With a significant percentage of those students being international. This is not unique to London of course, but it is very prevalent in this city in particular.

The sampling of the two case studies was done at random. After having compiled a list of all potential candidate universities operating in the Greater London area, I have grouped the results into two groups; research-oriented universities and education-oriented universities. The universities were numbered within each group. I then used the software Microsoft Excel to generate a random number between 1 and the number of universities in each group (e.g., =RANDBETWEEN(1,23) will return the value of a random number between 1 and 23 at random). The university with the corresponding number was chosen as case study. Once I had the case studies chosen, I moved to determine the potential participants.

The interviewees were members of the universities' academic and professional staff, they covered a wide range of roles in order to ensure that all aspects of the study are addressed.

Interviewees came from a combination of top-level and middle-level management backgrounds (who administer quality directly or indirectly)

- Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor
- Strategic Management Team member
- Quality managers
- Senior manager
- Department head

- Member of improvement groups
- Member of academic staff

There would not have been enough time or resources to conduct interviews with all members of the Strategic Management Team nor all department Heads, so the suggested approach for sampling members of the population within a certain case study is a stratified (divided into strata as the list above since these strata might yield different results) systematic-random sampling will be employed. The main benefit of stratified sampling its ability to result in samples distributed in the same way as the population (in terms of the criterion for the strata). Of course, the stratified sampling can only be deployed if the identification of stratifying units is relatively easy.

A systematic-random selection of the participants across the four strata was undertaken

1. Strata no.1 (Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor)
2. Strata no.2 (Strategic Management Teams)
3. Strata no.3 (Department head)
4. Strata no.4 (Quality & Improvement groups)

After the numbers were decided and the possible candidates identified, I chose a random sampling technique to contact potential participants. So, I compiled a list of all potential participants with their contact details organised within the strata suggested above. So I had 67 entries for candidates from case study A (see Appendix B: List of all potential participants from case study A) and 55 entries for candidates from case study B. once the list was complete I grouped the potential participants in their respective stratum and numbered them accordingly. I then used the random function in Microsoft Excel to determine the candidates to contact and interview. The number of candidates within each sub group was determined on the basis of time limitations. So, I decided to conduct total of 18-20 interviews. Which meant 9-10 interviews within each case study. The number of participants from each stratum could be the same. This is due to the limited availability of participants who are in senior

positions and the fact that there are less people in senior management strata. For example, within case study A, the number of people within each stratum are as follows:

1. Strata no.1 (Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor): 2 candidates.
2. Strata no.2 (Strategic Management Teams): 15 candidates.
3. Strata no.3 (Department head): 18 candidates.
4. Strata no.4 (Quality & Improvement groups): 25 candidates.

Notice the probability of a participant being from one strata is different from one strata to another, this is a result of a weighing mechanism that favours members of strata no.3 (Department heads) over members of strata no.1 and 2 with a 3:1 weight. Also, it favours members of strata no.3 (quality managers) over members of strata no.1 and 2 with a 2:1 weight. In other words, Strata 1 will contain only a handful of people whereas strata 3 may contain 30 or more.

The result of allocating a total of 20 interviews is presented below (Table 7).

	<b>Russell Group</b>	<b>Post 1992</b>
	Case study no.1	Case study no.3
<b>Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor</b>	x	x
<b>Strategic Management Teams</b>	xx	xx
<b>Department head</b>	xxx	xxx
<b>Quality &amp; improvement groups</b>	xxx	xxx

**Table 7 A systematic-random selection of the participants across the four strata**



The sampling within each of the two case studies was done using the random function in Microsoft Excel. So for the first stratum I used the random function to elect the candidate from this group randomly (i.e. RANDMNETWEEN(1,2)). In order to make things easier I made a table of functions where I would enter the number of possible candidate within each stratum as Population and the number of required participants as random function no.# (Figure 21) then the candidates were decided randomly by picking contacts from the list of all potential participants whose serial number correspond with the randomly generated numbers.

	A	B	C
1	<b>Strata (sub-groups)</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
2	Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor	2	1
3	Strategic Management Team member	9	1
4	Department head	13	2 or 4
5	Member of improvement groups	24	2 or 4
6			
7	<b>Sampling from Case study No.1</b>		
8	<b>Sampling algorithm from Stratum no.1</b>		
9	choosing from:	President/Chancell	Formula
10	Population (total)	2	
11	Sample (required)	1	
12	random function no.1	1	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B14)
13			
14	<b>Sampling algorithm from Stratum no.2</b>		
15	choosing from:	Registry	Formula
16	Population (total)	15	
17	Sample (required)	2	
18	random function no.1	2	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B23)
19	random function no.2	1	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B23)
20			
21	<b>Sampling algorithm from Stratum no.3</b>		
22	choosing from:	Dean/Vice-Dean	Formula
23	Population (total)	18	
24	Sample (required)	3	
25	random function no.1	10	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B32)
26	random function no.2	11	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B32)
27	random function no.3	1	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B32)
28			
29	<b>Sampling algorithm from Stratum no.4</b>		
30	choosing from:	Department Head	Formula
31	Population (total)	25	
32	Sample (required)	3	
33	random function no.1	9	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B41)
34	random function no.2	10	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B41)
35	random function no.3	20	=RANDBETWEEN(1,B41)

Figure 21 Random sampling of candidate participants from case study A using MS-Excel

**3.5.4. Invitations & response rate**

I emailed and/or phoned the participants’ offices (i.e. secretaries and personal assistants) at separate times. The reasoning for not contacting all potential participants at the same time is fact that I did not have a clear idea of the response rate for such invitations and would not have wanted to dismiss a potential respondent in case I was overwhelmed by approvals. Also, the setting up period was relatively lengthy and required great care making it impossible to send batch invitations.

The actual response rate was relatively low; of the 133 individuals contacted, 18 were willing to participate, yielding a response rate of %13.5.

The result of contacting candidates and setting up interviews is presented below (Table 8).

	<b>Russell Group</b>	<b>Post 1992</b>
	Case study A	Case study B
<b>Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor</b>	x	x
<b>Strategic Management Teams</b>	xxx	xxx
<b>Department head</b>	xxxx	xx
<b>Quality &amp; improvement groups</b>	xx	xx

Table 8 Actual numbers of interviews across the four strata

A breakdown of responses in each case study is presented in Figure 22 & Figure 23.

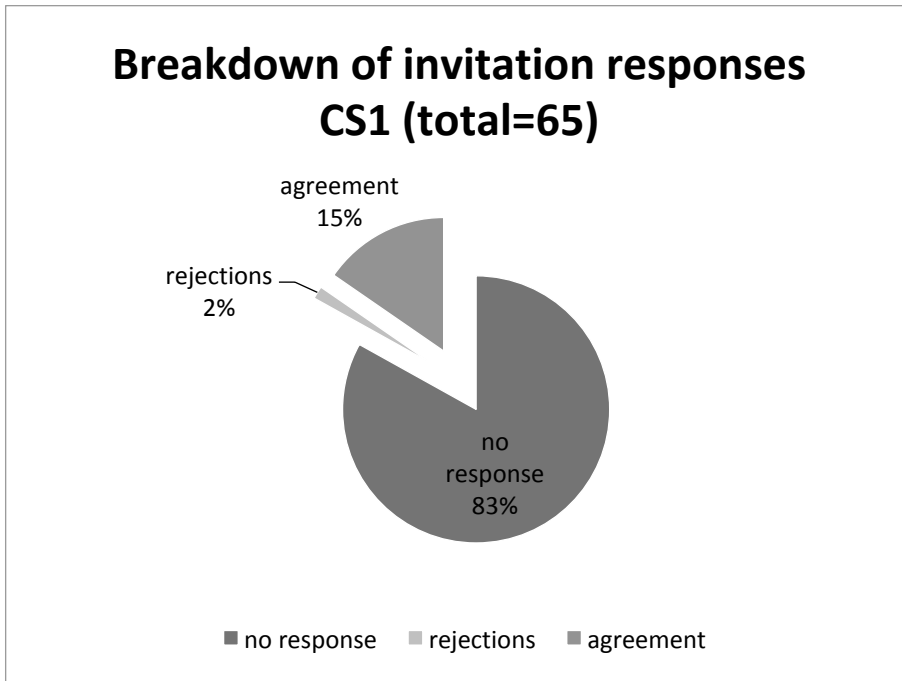


Figure 22 Response rate breakdown for Case Study no.1

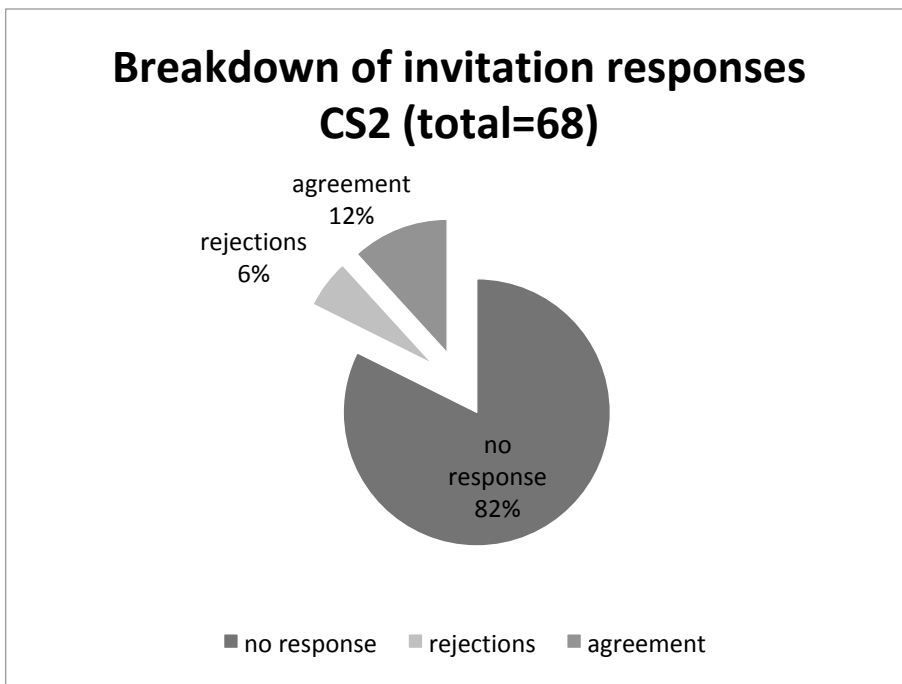


Figure 23 Response rate breakdown for Case Study no.2

### 3.6. The participants

This section explores the professional background of the interviewees drawing principally on the publicly available data as well as the responses made during their respective interviews. (Although the nonverbal communication made prior, during and after the interviews could have arguably provided some valuable insights, I decided to discard these. This was done assuming the nonverbal nature of the enquiry and the corresponding questions would attenuate the significance of the nonverbal communication. Besides, I am neither particularly trained to pick up and interpret those, nor were I equally attentive to gestural cues during the interviews).

The reasoning behind this section is embedded in the critical realism ontology; the pre-existing social, political and professional structures influence the social reality (Mouzelis, 2007), this reality was captured and then transcribed and analysed.

In other words, I will be pointing out how the participants' careers might have influenced their opinions and hence suggest that the recommendations drawn from their answers should be taken in context.

#### 3.6.1. *Participants of case study A*

Table 9 presents a brief summary of the participants from case study A with some background information for context.

<b>Interview/ participant code name</b>	<b>Stratum</b>	<b>Department category</b>	<b>History<sup>12</sup> (as of the time of the interview)</b>
<b>A01</b>	Department head	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extensive experience in the industry.</li><li>• Started working in HE in the 90s</li></ul>

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<sup>12</sup> Details about history (such as specific dates) are not disclosed for anonymity reasons

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joined the case study university about a decade ago.</li> </ul>
<b>A02</b>	Department head	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joined the case study university in the 80s</li> <li>• Extensive managerial experience including several roles as director</li> </ul>
<b>A03</b>	Department head	Natural sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hired recently in the case study university (7 months).</li> <li>• Has extensive experience in the united states.</li> <li>• Non-academic background</li> </ul>
<b>A04</b>	Member of improvement groups	Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration officer for education quality</li> <li>• Oversees the collaboration of oversees offices</li> </ul>
<b>A05</b>	Strategic Management Team member	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive leadership background</li> <li>• Started working in HE in the mid 2000s</li> <li>• Started current position several years ago</li> </ul>
<b>A06</b>	Strategic Management	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joined the case study university in the 00s</li> </ul>

	Team member		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive managerial experience including several roles as director</li> <li>• Experienced in university examination (both in the UK and abroad)</li> <li>• Worked and continues to work for the QAA</li> </ul>
<b>A07</b>	Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive experience in HE senior management as well as the HEFCE</li> <li>• Worked as VC for several universities prior</li> <li>• Joined the case study university a few years ago.</li> </ul>
<b>A08</b>	Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic background with extensive research experience (since the 70s) in the UK, the US and Europe.</li> <li>• Has worked in HE administration since the 2000s</li> <li>• Joined the case study university a couple of years ago.</li> </ul>
<b>A09</b>	Strategic Management	Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research in engineering background</li> </ul>

	Team member		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked in HE senior management for 20+ years</li> <li>• Joined the case study university a couple of years ago.</li> </ul>
<b>A10</b>	Member of improvement groups	Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently a Reader who has published extensively.</li> <li>• Worked in other universities prior to joining the case study university</li> <li>• A leader in establishing web-based education.</li> </ul>

Table 9 Participants of case study A

Note: It is worth mentioning that one participant demanded that someone else join the interview. This was the participant from interview A09 who brought in their chief operating officer 16 minutes into the interview. The chief operating officer is referred to as participant no.2 from interview A09.

Next are two detailed introductions to participants who were particularly insightful.

#### *3.6.1.1. A01*

This participant is a department head in an engineering department. A01 has a degree in the same field with 25+ years experience in the industry, which was interrupted when A01 joined the case study university eight years prior to the interview.

During the career in the industry, A01 has gained an international experience and has either solely or jointly published cutting-edge research in their field, including some patents that have been transferred into the industry.

A01 had no teaching experience at the time of joining the case study university. Nor did A01 have any experience in university administration.

The professional background of A01 has undoubtedly informed her perspective on TQM. She was introduced to the concept by the first two companies for whom she worked and saw it as very relevant and applicable to HE. She said:

“TQM was ... a model which was implemented in the industry in which I worked ... I think TQM works very well in a production setting ... TQM is here to stay ... You can't avoid it; you have to do it; it's absolutely essential!”

It is probably the prevalence of TQM in the industry that influenced A01's points of view when referring to the applicability and relevance

“I think that TQM is here to stay [...]. You can't avoid it, you have to do it. It's absolutely essential!”

#### *3.6.1.2. A02*

Participant A02 joined the university from case study A in the mid-80s and has been a department head since 2010. A01 is very well published and has acted as dean of teaching and as director.

#### *3.6.1.3. A03*

This participant is a senior member of an improvement group and a previous department head. A03 had worked for 20+ years in their field before joining the HE sector and had come to the case study university 7 months prior to the interview:

“I think everything should be qualified by the fact that ... I've only been here for seven months!”

Additionally, A03 is from overseas and has all of their 20+ year-experience outside the UK. Their previous employer is a top overseas university. Although A03's experience is not in the British educational system:



“I’m still very new to this system of higher education but I have extensive experience [abroad]<sup>13</sup>”.

Because of the nature of the job, A03 communicates closely with other department heads and reports to the vice dean. This might have been the reason why A03 was the only interviewee to mention the importance of communication. In fact, A03 mentioned communication on three occasions during the interview and referred to it as a critical success factor.

During the interview, A03 kept referring to their case study university as a home to their colleagues who were seen as family. I found this interesting since none of the other interviewees employed similar vocabulary.

“I have friends who went [there] and they’ll tell you the first day, ‘You’re part of the family, you’re part of this long illustrious history’ ”

“[We say] we hope that because you care about your family, you look back over your shoulder and you’ll help the students that follow in your footsteps”

Indeed, A03 has worked extensively in leadership development and corporate management where this kind of language is widespread, which might have contributed to A03’s choice of words. However, I argue that the choice of words in this case reveals more about the speaker’s attitude than it does about the speaker’s history. In other words, I believe A03 had a genuine sense of belonging to the case study university. This assertion is further vindicated by A03 mention of the fact this university had employed multiple senior members of staff from the country of origin as A03.

The result of such attitude is vital in my opinion in getting people to accept change and get on board with the new programs, which is something that puts the following direct quote in perspective and makes the claim being made sound less farfetched:

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<sup>13</sup> Note: Brackets are placed around the word ‘abroad’ to indicate that the original word has been replaced to ensure anonymity.

“I think here, there’s a ridiculous amount of brilliant people here! And so if we were to sit down to have coffee together or be in another casual setting and I explain, ‘*this is what we are looking to do*’. I haven’t found any people who said, ‘*Oh, that doesn’t make sense.*’ [so] most people, when they learn more about what we’re doing, they embrace it”.

Change is a key theme with A03 as stated on multiple occasions in their interview;

“I think implementing a culture change whether it’s in a business or a university or whatever, it requires certain fundamental approaches...”

“We’re now in the landscape change, right? And these traditional sources of income changed [...] and I think they looked and said, “Now these traditional sources of funding may or may not be there. So how do we create new revenue streams?”

Of course, it could be argued that any introduction of a new program encompasses an element of change, but the change A03 kept referring to is more radical, a “culture shift” in staff attitudes as A03 put it.

The reason for A03’s seemingly radical view on the need for change could be found in how A03 perceives their role in the university (the fact that A03 had been hired 7 months prior to the interview into the case study university should be considered). According to A03 their employment and the employment of some of their colleagues highlights a need for a fundamental change. This need for change is allegedly a direct result of a change in customer/students needs

“And so I think in a lot of ways it’s the same for higher education and that’s why I was hired, there’s a lot of other people who been hired from [my home country]. [This university] will always be a great British institution. It’s in London it has a long standing history. But I do think that there’s a culture shift that they’re trying to promote and that is getting people to think about having a different type of relationship with their university. So I think it’s- as simple as- not always about money. But I think implementing a culture change whether it’s in a business or a

university or whatever, it requires certain fundamental approaches like what are the expectations of our customers or our students.”

This exchange perhaps reveals more about A03’s perceived responsibilities rather than their actual responsibilities.

#### *3.6.1.4. A04*

Participant A04 was a collaboration officer for educational quality. A04 says about BEMs “I think I probably don’t think a lot about them. I just use them”. A04 claims QAA is helpful as guidance rather than being set in stone.

#### *3.6.1.5. A05*

Participant A05 is a director of quality in the university from case study A. A05 had worked as academic registrar in two universities before assuming the role of director of quality. A05 has 15 years experience in leadership and quality management.

#### *3.6.1.6. A06*

Participant A06 is an emeritus professor who has an extensive managerial experience including several roles as director and dean. A06 joined the university from case study A in the 2000s. A06 has experience in university examination (both in the UK and abroad) and has worked for the QAA.

#### *3.6.1.7. A07*

Participant A07 is in charge of education at a senior level. A07 assumed this position in 2012 and has an extensive experience in HE senior management as well as the HEFCE. A07 had worked as vice chancellor for several universities prior.

#### *3.6.1.8. A08*

Participant A08 is a professor who assumed their senior position in 2013. A08 has a background in physics and mathematics. And has served as department head in several university prior to joining the university from case study A. A08 is very well published and had won several awards and prizes (including a prestigious prize on mathematics).

A08 has a purely academic background with extensive research experience in the UK, the US and Europe.

*3.6.1.9. A09*

Participant A09 is a professor who served as dean or department heads at several business schools. A09 joined the university from case study A in 2013 as dean of the business school. A09 is a graduate of one of the most prestigious universities in the world and has worked in academia in the US and the UK.

*3.6.1.10. A10*

Participant A10 is a medicine general practitioner of medicine who is published extensively. A10 is a world leader in establishing web-based education and had worked for other universities prior to joining the university from case study A.

***3.6.2. Participants of case study B***

Table 10 presents a brief summary of the participants from case study A with some background information for context.

<b>Interview/ participant code name</b>	<b>Stratum</b>	<b>Department category</b>	<b>History (if provided)</b>
<b>B01</b>	Vice-chancellor or pro- chancellor	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive experience in the industry.</li> <li>• Joined the case study university in the 90s.</li> <li>• Got the first senior managerial role in the early 2000s.</li> <li>• Chairs numerous improvement groups.</li> </ul>

<b>B02</b>	Department head	Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has experience in academia only</li> <li>• Has many publications in business and interdisciplinary studies.</li> </ul>
<b>B03</b>	Strategic Management Team member	Faculty of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very new in the university</li> <li>• Has no experience in BEMs or TQM</li> </ul>
<b>B04</b>	Vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor	Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New to HE but had worked in secondary education prior</li> <li>• Not an academic but a professional practitioner.</li> </ul>
<b>B05</b>	Strategic Management Team member	Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic and professional background.</li> <li>• Designed and taught modules on quality.</li> <li>• Heads several quality &amp; improvement groups.</li> </ul>
<b>B06</b>	Member of improvement groups	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Quality Unit</li> </ul>
<b>B07</b>	Member of improvement groups	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hired very recently in the case study university (less than a year).</li> <li>• Worked in a similar position in another</li> </ul>

			university.
<b>B08</b>	Strategic Management Team member	(Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A social scientist</li> <li>• A self-professed “non-practitioner”</li> <li>• Considers working in this area an “accident”</li> </ul>

Table 10 Participants of case study B

### 3.6.2.1. B01

Participant B01 is a professor and who is categorised in this research under the stratum *vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor*. B01 has a background in physical chemistry and an extensive research experience and is very largely published. B01 also sits on the editorial board of various journals. B01 also has very strong relationships with the industry.

In the university from case study B, participant B01 has been a lecturer, department head, dean, a director and finally member of senior management. The long history with the same institution allowed B01 to gain insights into the intricacies of university from case study B. B01 also received many training in leadership, which must have influenced his opinions on quality management and MBEs.

### 3.6.2.2. B02

Participant B02 is a department head at the university from case study B with a background of learning and teaching in business schools. B02 is purely academic in the sense of having all their experience in teaching and research without working in the industry. B02 also contributed in designing new courses.

B02 worked in one other university before joining the university from case study B and has a wide range of interests in business and technology research. B02 also established a multi-disciplinary research group that has international partnerships.

#### 3.6.2.3. B03

Participant B03 is very new in the university from case study B. B03 professed to not having any idea what BEMs were and no experience in using TQM. “I’m not familiar with frame working [...] but I do understand the importance of total quality and the importance” said B03. When asked about the university’s culture, B03 was critical of the general atmosphere and its lack in people and policies what is needed to support a quality-focused organisation.

#### 3.6.2.4. B04

Participant B04 is a professor who worked within the university from case study B for a few years. B04 has previously assumed the office of the dean on business faculty before becoming part of the senior leadership team (*vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor* stratum). B04’s educational background includes politics, economics and philosophy. B04 worked for more than two decades in civil service and government leadership.

B04 was insightful especially when it came to discuss the quality culture in the university from case study B. According to B04, most staff members do not even know about the type of quality management system in place. B04 said concerning this “why would they know about it? They probably read about it in the Harvard Business Review.” B04 added “The better of them are focused on the external party, which is the research funder, or the student”. In other words, it seems that B04 who is a senior management member, is of the opinion that quality management is the responsibility of management only. The rest of the institution are not required according to his understanding to knowingly engage with the BEM or even be aware of it.

#### 3.6.2.5. B05

Participant B05 has an academic and professional background. Prior to joining the university from case study B05 as a project manager in the Royal Navy and has an international outlook when it comes to leadership.

B05 is categorised within the stratum *strategic Management team member* and is very positive about the “rapidly improving” culture of quality awareness within the university. Only 5 years prior to the interview things were very different according to B05.

#### 3.6.2.6. B06

Participant B06 works for the Vice Chancellor's Office in academic quality. For the 18 months prior to the interview, B06 was the secretary for the QAA audit project and had attended all the meetings thereof. The insights gained from B06 had to do with the organisation of the audit project and power structure of the senior management.

#### 3.6.2.7. B07

Participant B07 had just started working for the university from case study B at the time of the interview, which is why B07 is categorised under the *member of improvement groups* stratum. B07 comes from an exclusively professional background. Prior to that B07 had worked in quality management units for another London-based university for more than 15 years.

#### 3.6.2.8. B08

Participant B08 is an experienced professional in quality management and academic quality. B08 heads the academic quality team since 2013. B08 is also a lecturer with a background in social sciences. B08 had worked for the university from case study B for two and a half decades. B08 is definitely a critic of BEMs and TQM. B08 said very tellingly “I’m a Social Scientist, I come into this



area of work really, if you like, by accident. I'm not a practitioner in that sense, I don't do it because I believe in it, I do it because this is my job.”

### *3.6.3. A comment on the language used by senior management*

In order to gain insights into the inner workings of the decision-making process and application of new quality initiatives, I explored various recent quality-oriented projects at both of my two case studies. The projects are dubbed quality-oriented because they had either directly or indirectly quality aspects to them. Some projects had the word quality in their titles; other had synonym words such as excellence.

The participants suggested the quality-oriented projects in question; each participant was asked to think of a recent project that they were involved in and that had an aspect of quality. A set of criteria was introduced for the participant to try and match their suggested project with its items. The criteria included: (a) the project has to be recent, (b) it has to have a quality aspect to it, (c) they should have had a part in the project and (d) no limit on time or scope were provided.

It was noticeable that none of the participants asked for clarification on the word “recently” and what is meant by it. In business talk, the word ‘recent’ refers to different timescales according to context. So in strategic projects, recent refers to the last couple of year (1-3 years) while in on an operational level, recent is more like less than 3 months time. Finally, when used in medium scope, or tactical level, the word recently usually refers to the last six months or maybe year.

Analysis of the participants’ answers revealed that all of them fall within the time scope of the last 1-6 months with one exception of a project mentioned that started about 24 months ago but is still on-going. In this sense, it seems the participants were thinking on a tactical level or medium-scope management.

## **3.7. Analytical approach**

As mentioned earlier, research with a critical realism approach leads with a phenomenon to be explored and then looks for an appropriate research method (which is not unique to CR).

The initial focus of my research was the practice and effectiveness of BEM application within a specific CMO configuration. This led me to a research method based on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. It is advisable to use a general analytical approach for qualitative data based on the three-stage process of data reduction, data display and finally conclusion and verification (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Robson, 2013).

### *3.7.1. Data reduction and display*

Data reduction in a critical realist sense is “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions”(Huberman & Miles, 2002, p.10). This is done to “focus and organise data in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified” (Huberman & Miles, 2002, p.11).

Semi-structured interviews are data-intensive (Miller & Tsang, 2011) and have been used in the context of critical realism research (Leca & Naccache, 2006; Priestley & Miller, 2012; Vincent, 2008; Wilkinson, 2014; Zalai, Carney, Sherman, Shapiro, & McShane, 2016). In these pieces of research, the researchers carried out semi-structured interviews with a critical realist approach constructed around a pre-defined social phenomenon.

My data reduction method is based around thematic coding responses of participants.

Data coding is an attempt to represent a view of reality. It is done through a systematically effort to identify topics into higher order themes. This is done through de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.31).

Thematic coding is ‘a process of segmentation, categorisation and relinking of aspects of the data prior to final interpretation’ (Grbich, 2007, p. 17). Arguably, thematic-based analysis is a good match with qualitative data because it allows the researcher to “remain in touch with the raw data throughout” Matthews & Ross (2010, p. 373-4). In other words, although the data will be summarised and categorised during the thematic coding process, it will still be easily linkable to the raw verbal and visual data. The interpretation, summarisation and

categorisation steps start with each participant's words and visual cues and put those against other participants' allowing the researcher to describe the data in themes.

In order to facilitate theme recognition, I followed Ryan & Bernard (2003)'s suggestion to look for:

- Repetitions
- Metaphors and analogies
- Indigenous typologies and categories (unfamiliar expressions)
- Transitions
- Similarities and differences
- Linguistic connectors (words like 'because' and 'since')
- Missing data
- Theory-related material

To ensure a cohesion in my coding efforts, I followed the five steps suggested by Robson (2013):

1. Code
2. Add comments and reflect
3. Spot patterns and identify similarities in phrases
4. Make generalisations that cover the consistencies in the data
5. Link back to theories and concepts

Having found this list helpful, I must say that steps 3 and 5 were not very easy to follow the first time around that's why I went back to the first step to recode some of the answers and alter my initial codes in light of summarizing the whole data set and becoming more familiar with themes and similarities. This enabled me to set the second wave of codes with more cohesion with the rest of the data and facilitated the step where I am supposed to spot similarities.

In total, I did two waves of coding, initial (which served an introductory role) and final.

### *3.7.2. Validity of the findings*

Validity is traditionally more associated with positivist research. Having used a realist approach, I think there's a point to be made about the relativism of the findings. This is to say that the findings need to be within reasonable boundaries, reliable, trustworthy and representative,

Yin (2014) advises setting up a plan before collecting data to increase validity and reliability. The plan which he calls a case study protocol includes an assessment of current skills of the researcher and mapping those with the required skills for successful data collection and analysis. In my case, I had an experience in doing non-constructed interviews (semi-structured and unstructured) prior to starting this research. One area for improvement for me was coding and qualitative data analysis, which I read about and trained for through the DTC and an online Qualitative Research Methods course<sup>14</sup>.

### **3.8. Summary**

This chapter described the methodology used in conducting the research and answering the research question. It was discussed that I used case study research and drawn my data from semi-constructed interviews with participants from two case study universities.

My overarching philosophy of research is Critical Realism, which is a philosophy and a paradigm to view the world that could be useful for conducting research. CR is driven by the phenomenon being studied or observed. To do that properly, the researcher need to first define what the phenomenon is from a CR stance. This is what I did briefly at the beginning of this chapter by describing the phenomenon of applying a BEM in the context of my research.

What I tried to demonstrate in this chapter is how the CR approach to the research and the use of case study has allowed a flexible and reliable methodology to exploring the issue of BEM application in English universities.

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<sup>14</sup> The course was provided by University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and completed via Coursera.org

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will present the findings about quality management systems. It will outline the TQM models discussed by participants as well as the form and trigger for implementing BEMs. It will also consider how far TQMs are applicable in HE and to what extent HE is a unique kind of service. The second section will discuss to what extent BEMs are perceived to be fads. The third section will look at the practical implementation of BEMs at the two universities, paying particular attention to evaluation criteria, critical success factors and the role of leadership. The final section will present the participants' views on how to sustain a BEM.

### 4.1. Quality Management Systems

This section will present the findings related to the TQM-based Models in both case studies. The findings include the form and trigger for implementing a Business Excellence Model and the applicability of these models in the context of HEIs.

#### 4.1.1. *TQM-based models*

Case study A is in the process of implementing an organization-wide quality initiative based on Lean Enterprise, with elements of TQM. It is one of the first English universities to develop a programme of this kind and on this scale. Case study B, on the other hand, had no such initiative in place at the time of the interviews. Participants from case study B had very positive things to say about TQM-based models, in theory, but failed, with one exception, to present any examples of its application at their university. The exception concerned a department head who cited a recent departmental initiative loosely based on TQM that aimed to improve student employability. Given that case study A was implementing Lean Higher Education and case study B was not using any kind of BEM, it is not surprising that case study A participants were more forthcoming on the topic. Table 11 (overleaf) is a Code Document Table generated from using the qualitative data analysis tool and it demonstrates the number of quotations linked to a set of codes (i.e. theme) across participants. It clearly indicates that participants from case study A were more willing than participants from case

study B to discuss TQM-based models, in general, and the specific BEM in place at their institution, even though all participants were presented with the same open-ended questions.

Theme	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
(1) Quality Management System and TQM	81	65	146
(2) Decision to implement BEM	36	14	50
(3) Implementation of BEMs	82	54	136
(4) Perception of BEMs as management fads	11	4	15

Table 11 The number of quotations linked to a single theme across participants grouped by case study

#### *4.1.2. The form and trigger for implementing a Business Excellence Model*

Because case study A had recently launched an organisation-wide quality initiative, participants had a range of opinions by the time of their interviews. By contrast, participants from case study B had very little to say about triggers for BEMs. Instead, they talked about triggers for change in general.

Data collected from the interviews shows that the BEMs discussed are top-down in design. In both case studies, senior managers expressed a certain “need” for change that caused them to be interested in applying a BEM. Senior managers also believed it was their responsibility to initiate change within their universities and departments and to inspire staff to get on board. As a senior manager at case study B put it, “*It’s our role to inspire change*”.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained</b>	13	4	17
<b>Management Levels involved in initiation of BEM</b>	4	0	4
<b>Organisation of initiative</b>	6	2	8
<b>Role of leadership in new BEM</b>	12	7	19
<b>Trigger of interest in BEMs</b>	15	1	16
<b>Who should be on board in new BEM</b>	1	1	2

Table 12 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Quality Management Systems across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.1.2.1. Trigger for interest in BEMs (answers from case study A)

Participants from case study A mentioned what had triggered the institution’s interest in BEMs a total of 15 times. Four main drivers were identified, as follows: 1) pressure to score highly in the Research Excellence Framework (REF); 2) pressure from academics overburdened with administration; 3) pressure from students complaining about inefficiency and 4) leaders, themselves, noticing the existence of cumbersome processes. These four drivers are not mutually exclusive.

With regard to REF, A01 said, “*I think the run up to REF is essentially one massive [trigger] ... you’ve got a problem and how do you get the best REF and so what we did was to take a very engineering approach*”. Other senior managers mentioned how academic colleagues had complained (both formally and informally) about not having enough time for their teaching and research because their administrative duties had increased so much. Staff had also complained about having to fill in too many “futile” forms that were never going to be picked up again or followed through. A08, for example, said:

*One driver is that our academics tell us that they are having to spend more and more time on administration and less on teaching and research. So, they would say the administrative side of their job has grown. That what they are being asked to do is not efficient ... It's not completely broken; nothing is completely broken. But some of our processes have evolved into a rather cumbersome and therefore inefficient state.*

Students had also criticised the previous student information system because it was very time-consuming to update their records. As A05 put it, “*The trigger for all of this was the fact that we have a student information management system database which needs replacing*”. A10 concurred, saying:

*I can say this for certain - we are looking at the registration process of students when they first apply to the university through to when they are actually offered a place and when they arrive. And that has not been a smooth process. There are a lot of glitches there are a lot of bumps there are a lot of difficulties and that's something that's been recognized now. [...] That we need to make this a rewarding, a pleasant and an interesting experience for new students. So, it's under review here at the moment.*

Thus, a new student information system was being introduced with the aim of improving the student experience. The final trigger came from managers, themselves, noticing ways university processes could be massively improved. A08 said, “*we could see with our eyes almost where there are inefficiencies in the processes*”.

#### *4.1.2.2. Trigger for interest in BEMs (answers from case study B)*

Only one participant at case study B discussed what had triggered their interest in BEMs and still the discussion was very general in nature. They had received a quite critical internal report on the employability of their graduates. He explained, “*The fundamental problem was our employment outcomes for our students were not good, so ‘How do we fix this?’ Quite a low number of students were doing extra things to improve their CVs.*”



### 4.1.3. The applicability of TQM-based Models in HEIs

Generally speaking, participants agreed on the appropriateness of an organisation-wide initiative for improved results but there were reservations. The main criticism was that these models are meant to be applied at a department level, leaving the departmental leadership with some freedom to pick and choose the most appropriate model to fit the particularity of each department.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
Quality approaches current in the university	18	13	31
Quality approaches favoured in UK's HEIs	7	2	9
Quality approaches favoured in university	1	1	2
Whether BEMs are helpful (in general)	7	0	7
Whether BEMs are helpful (specific examples)	1	0	1

Table 13 The number of quotations linked to the theme of TQM-Based Models in HEIs across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.1.3.1. Applicability of BEMs and TQM in HE

Participants were asked for their perceptions of BEMs, in general, and TQM, in particular. They were invited to discuss the applicability of BEMs and TQM in HE, in general, and at their university, specifically.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>Applicability of BEMs in HE</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Thought on the origins of BEMs</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(Extra) thoughts on BEMs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>(Extra) thoughts on BEMs in HE</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Thoughts on EFQM</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

Table 14 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Applicability of BEMs in HE across participants grouped by case study

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>Applicability of TQM in HE</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Thought on the origins of TQM</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(Extra) thoughts on TQM</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(Extra) Thoughts on TQM in HE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 15 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Applicability of TQM in HE across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.1.3.2. *Applicability of BEMs in HE (answers from case study A)*

Participants from case study A agreed on the applicability and appropriateness of using BEMs in HE. Participants said that BEMs are indeed appropriate in HE because of the new reality of HE and that they benefit all universities that apply them. Advocates of BEMs highlight several benefits. Some believe in the intrinsic value of BEMs. Others point to the alleged consequences such as: (1) improved efficiency, (2) the reduction of waste and (3) standardisation through benchmarking.

Participants from case study A had a consensus on the applicability and appropriateness of using BEMs in HE. The mentioned benefits are plentiful whereas concerns are non-existent. A05 said, “[BEMs] are entirely relevant and appropriate in a quality system for a university because – because when the quality systems fail is when you over-engineer and there’s duplication, wasted effort, wasted time”. This homogeneity of opinion within participants from case study A could reflect deep understanding and unity of goals and vision, but also it might indicate a culture of Yes-sayers and an echo chamber-like effect between senior management and members of staff. Regardless, the reasons provided to support those claims could indicate something about the nature of the consensus.

First and foremost, a few participants said that BEMs are very appropriate in HE because of the nature of the HE in a modern university. According to participant A08 “There are, I think, more similarities between how we operate and how a manufacturer operates than we might have first thought”; this similarity makes BEMs beneficial to all universities, “I cannot imagine there isn't another university that would benefit from it” A08 added.

But how are BEMs beneficial within the context of this university? The answer is manifold. First, there is the added efficiency, A07 said, “On the principle of being as efficient and as effective as you can be, then I think [BEMs] definitely have a place”. A05 echoed the same opinion by sharing how this actually took place within their department. A05 said, “by streamlining our process, by automating our process, by ensuring that we don’t all have to do everything”.

Second, BEMs help reduce waste through process engineering. A07 explained, “*exactly what we’re doing in the business process engineering and the like... that essentially is a BEM*”. Process engineering includes better information management. A07 said,

*It doesn’t really matter where it comes from. But it’s the process of why do we have [certain things]. So, we have handoffs in terms of information processes. We have duplicate sets of information, you know, from a BEM point of view; you wouldn’t have any of that. You’d ask the fundamental questions about what do we need to do and when do we need to do it. And that’s exactly what we’re doing in the business process engineering and like that essentially is Lean.*

A06 further explained “*Universities are continually looking at all sorts of data to try and ensure that the quality of what they're doing and, let's face it, the efficiency of how they're doing it is as good as possible.*”

In reality, process engineering is all about the reduction of waste. This had happened through simplification of processes and automation. As stated by A05 on more than one occasion, “*when the quality systems fail is when you over-engineer and there’s duplication, wasted effort, wasted time*”. This reduction of waste could not have been timelier according to A05, who explained how the financial pressures are making waste reduction more essential than ever. A05 said:

*I think [other universities in the UK are] facing the same problems, and they have the same sort of philosophical objections. There are similar finances — I think now there are increasing financial pressures and it depends on the university. I mean [this university] has a lot more income than other institutions, but we have to do the same thing. And having said that, there are some institutions, some of what we referred to as the post-92 institutions which you know and who have paid much more attention to this earlier than some of the more traditional universities out of necessity.*

In fact, the reduction of waste and specifically the reduction of unnecessary financial spending were mentioned again to refer to this case study university and make the point that it is basically essential for such a university (a Russell Group university) to respond to increased financial pressures with the help of a properly employed BEM. Arguably, this is an

integral part of what makes case study A university world-class. A06 said, “*here we're certainly pretty good at that, so very good financial controls avoid uncontrollable spending*”.

Third, an operational benefit is the ability to standardise through benchmarking. A05 said,

*We have made a conscious choice to benchmark outside the sector and we are looking at areas of industry and business where – who are known for fantastic levels of customer service or user satisfaction [...] for example, (we have) been thinking about the quality of the admissions and arrival process. We've been thinking about checking in with one of the best airlines in the world where you turn up and you have your passport and then you're on the plane.*

In this way, a university that is world-leading for teaching and research is also at the forefront of customer service and benchmarking itself against the best in the business.

In summary, the arguments for using BEMs in HE are both intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic argument claims that BEMs are coherent and appropriate for use in any university - within the UK at least - while the extrinsic argument claims three operational benefits, namely (1) improved efficiency, (2) the reduction of waste through (a) simplification of processes and (b) automation and (3) standardisation through benchmarking. A05 said, “[*This university*] is this good with this complicated picture, with this over-engineered picture. Just think of what we might be able to do if we free out that much time and that much resource.”

#### *4.1.3.3. Applicability of BEMs in HE (answers from case study B)*

By contrast, at case study B, all participants who discussed BEMs in HE had reservations. While they all agreed that BEMs have noteworthy benefits, in theory, they expressed caution about any widespread application of BEMs in their universities.

The main issues that were raised concerning this are (1) the use of BEMs as guidelines, (2) the complexity of some BEMs, and (3) the nature of what universities do, in other words, academic freedom and its incompatibility with any BEM.

As for the first issue, the use of BEMs as guidelines was discussed twice in the context of the university. B05 who studied BEMs closely said they “are useful as guides”. Moreover, B08 said they were interested in BEMs but would not use them. In their words, “[*These models are*]

*things that I would study, that I would look at as, you know, how did human beings come to construct these things for themselves and talk to themselves in this way? Not as things that I would practice.”* Both participants who shared this point of view had similar experience and worked in similar roles within their respective (different) departments. It is surprising that the very people one might have expected to champion BEMs were doing the exact opposite.

The second issue was mentioned once by B05 who claimed that BEMs can be too advanced to be applied in HE. B05 said, *“it’s very hard to apply [them] into the HE ... [especially with the] more advanced models. How we built the systems, they are pretty much based on fairly standard simple quality models”*. By that, they meant some BEMs were too complicated for their own good. They require too much time and commitment to apply.

The third issue is the recurring theme of academic freedom. B05 said,

*I think it’s very hard to apply many of the more advanced models into the HE world because of the nature of what we do. Because it’s very individualistic. And there’s that thing called academic freedom that rears its head. And you cannot make people conform in some ways whereas you can in others.*

B02 said,

*I don’t see academic freedom in setting your own agenda. In a department, that has a strategy that falls within the faculty that falls within the university. So without being negative about what we do I think, we allow freedom for people to write their own courses and add their content as long as it meets the learning outcomes, and we give them the freedom to do the research in the topic area they prefer, collaborate with anyone they want, whether they belong to an established research group or they establish their own emerging group, or whether they’re lone operators which occasionally we do have in academia. And you can have excellence within lone operators as well; I’m not doubting that.*

#### 4.1.3.4. *Applicability of TQM in HE (answers from case study A)*

It was clear that the respondents did not agree on the applicability of TQM in HE. Some expressed further concerns about the suitability of TQM in education generally. What

surprised me is how different the answers were about this topic, from complete compatibility to utter incompatibility. At points it looked as though participants were talking about two different topics. Which might as well have been correct, since the definition of TQM is impossible to pin down as discussed in the literature review. It is clear the applicability of TQM in HE is contested among the respondents, with some showing concerns about the suitability of TQM in heterogeneous systems (such as education). For example A03 said,

*And the whole idea of Total Quality Management or on-going process improvement is pretty well entrenched, people use terms like best practices, there are professional organisations like CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education), also other fund raising professional, fund raising operations where professionals will get together and share ideas about what is working and what hasn't worked so well and why. ... And so I think wherein a lot of business practices in the past, I think the thing that differentiates this is because it really helps everyone, total quality management that is.*

In contrast, A09 said,

*I've never seen an example of formal TQM applied anywhere in any of the universities I've been in. so that's my answer, there is no formal application of any version of what's on TQM.*

One participant gave an example of a context where they thought TQM flourished, namely the automotive industry. Here, all the motorcars are exactly the same and are required to perform as best as possible. That is quite different from the case of the university which is more heterogeneous than the motorcar factory. In A01's words:

*"It just doesn't quite work and so you have to adjust your sites to make it work within the context of a university. So, you cannot treat it as agglomerate. You have to look at the individual bits and you have to make sure that they are working as best as they possibly can and if you can identify each of those bits, which may be working autonomously within themselves, if they can work properly and effectively then the net result will be that everything works O.K. But what I am saying is that the top down approach of a TQM won't work".*

In other words, this point of view is opposing the top-down approach of TQM and hence regards it as unfit-for-purpose in this context. *“TQM in its original guise is not fit for purpose so you have to modify it and make it fit for purpose”* said A01. A10 was convinced that it would be possible to modify the original TQM to make it fit the HE context

*I think it [TQM] should [suits a university setting]. I don't think there is any doubt about that. What we should be thinking about if you would like our clients and our customers and that we are making sure that everything that we are doing for them is as good as it can be and is as carefully managed as it can be.*

But many participants were skeptical, primarily because of concerns about academic freedom. For example, A10 while referring to academic freedom and its incompatibility with TQM said, *“So that seems almost like there is a disconnect between the principles of Total Quality Management and the principles of how universities work”*. Others spoke in terms of openness and discussion and the intellectual pursuit to refer (more-or-less) to the same subject.

#### *4.1.3.5. Applicability of TQM in HE (answers from case study B)*

Participants from case study B were more homogenous in their opinions about the applicability of TQM in HE. Those who discussed TQM did so with a positive light.

According to the overwhelming point of view, TQM is not only applicable but even essential within modern HEIs. B01 said, *“I think this is actually the absolute cornerstone of quality assurance and quality managements in HE”*. In their view, TQM is vital in modern HEIs because of its focus on market perception of value-for-money. B01 explained, *“one of the big changes in higher education is that we are much more within the market these days [...] that's driven by what students perceive as high fees.”* This point of view was shared by others and it demonstrates a commitment on the part of staff to ensure current students and funders receive a high-quality service from the university and that prospect students and funders notice this.

Another, more ambivalent, point of view was expressed by B02. Initially, they said, *“[I] don't particularly link [TQM] to academic quality or, indeed, the quality of the student experience”*. However, they went on to asset that, *“I think the principles can still be transferable”*.



#### 4.1.4. The uniqueness of HE as a service

My question about the appropriateness of TQM and TQM-based BEMs within HE prompted a discussion about the uniqueness (or lack thereof) of HE, and how HE is dissimilar to any other service industry.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
HE uniqueness (in general)	4	10	14
HE uniqueness (as service)	0	5	5

Table 16 The number of quotations linked to the theme of HE Uniqueness across participants grouped by case study

##### 4.1.4.1. Uniqueness of HE as a service (answers from case study A)

According to participants from case study A, the uniqueness of HE stems from two sources; (1) the nature of academia, A02 explained that the structure is quite flat which makes it unique and hard to grow, *“It’s quite hard to grow larger if you have a flat structure”*; and (2) the structure of the academic institution. A01 said in reference to how academic freedom clashes with any traditional organisational structure, *“The anarchy is really quite important and you would expect anarchy”*.

##### 4.1.4.2. Uniqueness of HE as a service (answers from case study B)

According to participants from case study B, HE is unique because its outcomes are sometimes incomparable with any other service industry’s outcomes. By that participants meant that HE outcomes (1) lack any physical aspects, (2) lack rigidity, and (3) lack control over the process because of ‘the human aspect’.

The first issue is the lack of a physical outcome. This was voiced in various ways. B03 said, *“What makes education different is that you’re always learning and there isn’t a physical product that you can put your hands to at the end of the day”*. B07 agreed, saying: *“Because there isn’t something tangible that you can hold on to, or you can see at the end of the day, I feel it makes it a little bit more difficult.”* B05 expressed the uniqueness of what universities offer by saying, *“We have customers in inverted*

*commas, who are buying something that is rather unusual. They're buying an opportunity rather than a product.”*

The second issue is the lack of rigidity of the outcome. B05 said, *“If you compare service delivery in virtually any other organization, it is quite rigidly controlled, academia cannot be to that extent. Because it is an individual delivery by an individual lecturer or professor”*. Similarly, B02 said:

*Education doesn't have those constraints and we don't want to impose those constraints. Education, quite often – if you move away from engineering and manufacturing or science, technology or even medicine and biology – becomes a lot of abstract concepts, concepts that cannot be pinned down.*

The third issue is the lack of control of the process or the “human aspect”. Which is again not particularly unique to education. Some participants went to great extents to empathise this point. B1 said,

*I think there's a difference between manufacturing a product or widget or something compared to education. [...] In higher education, there is a human dimension. Human beings go off trying to upscale and educate another series of human beings; universities tend to be complex and diverse organizations where you may have more than one campus. In a manufacturing plant, increasingly, a significant number of steps is done by a robot [...]. Whereas in university of course, there's a human dimension. So, the critical success factor is the buy-in of all staff.*

The discussion about what makes universities unique sparked a follow up about whether universities have customers or not. This proved to be a heated topic that is both polarising and opinionated. Participants were eager to share their opinions on whether students are to be considered customers or not. See Table 17.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
Opinion on customer service	15	11	26
Opinion on the term “customer” in education	1	1	2
Opinion on the term “customer” in HE	1	0	1
Identification of customers (in general)	13	11	24
Identification of customers (in specific)	6	2	8
Identification of products (in general)	9	6	15
Identification of products (in specific)	0	1	1

Table 17 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Students as Customers across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.1.5. *Lean as a TQM-based model*

According to the participants (from case study A only), lean is valid for application in HEIs. This was justified mainly on the basis of the potential for waste reduction that Lean promises. Henceforth, the benefits of a lean university are “reduced burden for academic staff and administration” and moving “non-academic time” to “teaching time or research time”. A09 shared their experience with Lean and how its application translated into demonstrable and measurable time-saving. A09 said,

*[We’re] trying to improve colleges proactive and reactive buildings maintenance processes. And it is straight out of one of the many books and papers you will have read. [...] They found that 7% of maintenance time consumed was spent dealing with jobs that had already been fixed.*

Participants from case study B had nothing to say about Lean, which is not surprising since the university had not engaged with the concept.

The investigation into the current practices of Lean application revealed the following steps; these are from a detailed discussion with A05 who is the senior manager in charge of the new BEM within case study A): (1) Establishing a team tasked with the project, A05 said, “We’ve trained a number of people from each department and people from my team to be a change agents”,

(2) Identifying the different parties that are involved in the process that is being improved (identifying beneficiaries), A05 said, *“We needed a system that focuses on the benefits to the end user but articulates very clearly ‘the who’ are all parties”*, (3) Developing suitable metrics to measure the value added by the processes, *“(it should be) a system that measures that or demonstrates that would be really helpful”* A05 also added *“I think that what we need to do - from a student services and an academic quality measures factor - is make it visible to the end users”* (4) Identifying the steps in each process that are required by both the beneficiary and the provider (the university), (5), Propose solution to eliminate waste and improve the flow of processes, i.e. adding value to the process, A05 thought that the quality system fails when there is *“duplication, wasted effort, wasted time”*; that’s why their university had already begun to *“reduce the burden for academic staff and administration [...] by streamlining our process, by automating our process, by ensuring that we don’t all have to do everything”* and (6) Repeating the previous two steps and adding more value to the process until management is satisfied with the most recent process metrics.

#### 4.2. Business Excellence Models as fads

BEMs are sometimes perceived as fads. Here is a detailed examination of the respondents’ points of view on BEMs being fads.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>BEMs as fads</b>	3	0	3
<b>Perception of fads</b>	5	1	6
<b>TQM as fads</b>	3	4	7

Table 18 The number of quotations linked to the theme of BEMs as Fads across participants grouped by case study

##### 4.2.1. The perception of BEMs as fads (answers from case study A)

Participants from case study A were unanimous in rejecting the notion of TQM or Lean being a fad. This is especially true of senior management in case study A. These participants exhibited a positive outlook on ‘business talk’ and were generally in favour of BEMs. A07 said, *“I don’t really care what it’s called. There’s always going to be some framework that we’ll need.”* A03 also said, *“It’s already been proven. The answers are ready to be settled, is that it’s a great thing for higher education”*. More to the point, A01 simply said, *“I think that TQM is here to stay.”* Actually, there

seemed to be an agreement among senior managers within case study A that BEMs have been tested and proven. As to the reason why this point of view is not unanimously shared outside their university, the reason expressed was simply false attribution. A09 said, *“It’s unkind to call many of these methods [fads], I know that popularity comes and goes. But the principle [this BEM] is here”* and then added, *“it’s actually about the principle and what it really does. not about the language or buzzwords.”*

A relevant point of view was expressed by A07, which appeared to be very pragmatic; commenting on using particular BEMs, A07 said, *“Well, if it works for the institution, so if EFQM worked here, that would be great; if Lean worked here, that would be great. It’s what fits the institution to help us on our journey of continually improving what we do.”*

#### ***4.2.2. The perception of BEMs as fads (answers from case study B)***

Participants from case study B (albeit scarce on this topic) were completely unified in saying BEMs were not fads. B01 said this would be “a ridiculous statement”. They explained their reasoning in this way:

*Anybody who thinks total quality management in the pharmaceutical industry is a fad is effectively playing roulette with their lives. It’s absolutely vital. [...] Otherwise your ability to treat and control a disease is completely lost. And the same thing applies in education. You set your stall out and you operate to a set of guidelines which may be self-declared or may be externally required. And therefore, you have to have checks and balances in place to make sure that you are delivering those back.*

### **4.3. The implementation of Business Excellence Models**

#### ***4.3.1. Criteria for evaluating BEM***

Participants from case study A had much more to say about the criteria used to evaluate and choose a BEM compared to those from case study B.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
Criteria for evaluating and choosing a BEM	7	3	10
Criteria for evaluating QMS	18	3	21

Table 19 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Criteria for Evaluating and Choosing a BEM across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.3.1.1. Criteria for evaluating BEM (answers from case study A)

Participants from case study A explained that the criteria for evaluating and choosing a BEM include three categories; (1) student experience, (2) engagement, and (3) feedback. Further details on each criterion were given. Student experience was further explained to include better student life services, improved personal tutoring and a more personalised experience. A06 said in this context, *“Ensuring that students have better resources and stuff than they did”*. They went on to argue that the best BEM would be the one that helped the university achieve the best possible personal tutoring system because it was fully implemented by all tutors. Engagement referred to the engagement with the community; A02 said, *“[Helping us] be part of the community”*. Feedback was explained to include more feedback to students from their personal tutors, more feedback from students about student experience, and in-depth feedback of data and meta-data concerning resource allocation. A05 said when asked about the criteria they have used, *“Being expected to justify, report, and monitor much more on how we spend the money that we get through student fees, through the student loans”*. A07 said replying to the same question, *“Information returns to regulators and integrated experience to students... So, information that we couldn’t access; data that we couldn’t analyse because we weren’t coordinating it”*. A07 also added as a summary *“Personalized informational environment, individual experience.”*

#### 4.3.1.2. Criteria for evaluating BEM (answers from case study B)

Participants from case study B talked about three main criteria for choosing and evaluating different BEMs. These criteria are (1) information and report generation; B07 said *“[The criteria is a] comprehensive set of information about our partnerships that would allow us to be able to monitor those relationships properly”*, (2) corresponding to the criteria used by league tables; B06 said *“I think it depends on the criteria the league table has set themselves”* and (3) offering enough

mentoring & training; A06 also said *“training. I think there is an issue that quality is not always seen as a criteria”*.

### 4.3.2. Critical success factors

Critical Success Factors (CSFs) are characteristics of an organization that impact on its effectiveness and efficiency the most<sup>15</sup>.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>Critical Success Factors for creating quality in HE/University</b>	37	39	76

Table 20 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Critical Success Factors across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.3.2.1. Critical success factors (answers from case study A)

Participants from case study A listed the following as critical success factors: (1) the team, (2) the process, (3) the location of the university, and (4) the brand.

The first and probably strongest of the CSFs is the team. This is first because those who mentioned it always mentioned it first. Moreover, it is the strongest because this is by far the most cited CSF. A01 said in this context, *“So, I and my colleagues were accountable for the delivery but working clearly with this new appointment, together as a team, we will make it happen”*. Likewise, A02 said, *“I think that certainly the academics here. [They] like working here. They are very proud. They like a very flat structure”*.

The second CSF is the process that the participants referred to using different terms and expressions such as “our way of doing things”, “the way things are done here”, “procedures” and “current practices”. It seemed the participants were hinting at the accumulated experience within the departments also known as organizational learning or wisdom. A01 said, *“And we really had to work very hard to make sure that all aspects of that process were completely understood by the protagonists, by the people getting involved. That makes a huge difference. [That was] the main factor in our success in REF.”*

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<sup>15</sup> The Business Dictionary

The third factor is the location of the university (based in the heart of London) and the departments, which are in very close proximity; this close proximity allows for more interaction between the staff and the students and certainly has its advantages. This was evident in both case studies, although more prominent in the first institution than the second. However, it does have some disadvantages as well, as reported by one participant (A01) who was worried about people *“getting on each other's nerves all the time”*.

The fourth and final factor that was consistently reported in case study A but not in case study B is the brand. The brand refers to the name and fame of the university. Participants sometimes struggled to come up with synonyms to refer to the same concept. Words such as “our brand” and “our image” kept being mentioned. A05 said, *“[Our university] is one of the best universities in the world. That's a fact”*. When asked what they thought distinguished the brand, they clearly struggled to answer. One said, *“it's hard to pin it down, but everyone knows what it is”* but it was clear that the brand is perceived as a strong factor for success. A06 said, *“I suppose as far as our students are concerned, when you think [university], there's a brand and image, a world-class status”*

#### *4.3.2.2. Critical success factors (answers from case study B)*

Participants from case study B listed the following as critical success factors: (1) the team or staff buy-in, (2) the location, (3) collaboration, and (4) transparency and honesty.

The first factor is the team. As with case study A, almost all participants from case study B asserted that they have “the right people”. B08 said when asked the most important CSF, *“I should say, human resources. Everybody really. All the key people involved, they had to be [a critical success factor].”* Furthermore, a couple of participants were keen to attribute this to both academic and professional staff. B01 said, *“I think we shouldn't forget that a university is a community and therefore the staff are an important part. The academic staff and the professional services are equally involved into the context of thinking about this”*. Likewise, B07 said, *“I think the key thing for me is the academic community and that consists of lecturers [and] the administrators.”*

Additionally, “staff buy-in” or attracting the best talent was declared “the most important” act for management by B01. B01 explained that there should always be back-ups so classes



and labs run smoothly all year round. This fail-safe feature of the system was not mentioned at all within case study A. However, one cannot assume by the fact that a fail-safe feature was not mentioned that there is no such fail-safe feature in practice. Still, it is telling that no participant from case study A mentioned the fail-safe feature as a CSF.

The second factor is the location of the university. The location was praised a couple of times by participants from case study B. B02 said, *“We have students that are coming from poor backgrounds either because they immigrated into this country or because of the location of our university. It is a beautiful area. We’re surrounded by an affluent area, which is then surrounded by less affluent areas. That’s how this area works. Our catchment area of British students comes mainly from our vicinity”*. This might be why B07 claimed the location gave a competitive advantage when attracting prospective students. B07 said, *“I find that the location has also got something to do with why some students come here”*.

The third CSF is basically the ability of all parties of the academic community to work together through committees. These committees offer relevant feedback that is very valuable as a CSF. Also, these committees offer an effective tool to engage with the students and make them participants in their learning. It further allows them to contribute to the formation of policies around the institution.

Collaboration also refers to the betterment of the already existing personal tutoring programme. A08 explained while referring to the commitment of personal tutors, *“Probably the most important one is actually [the] personal tutoring system”*. B05 further explained why having the right personal tutoring system is vital, *“If personal tutors are not on board with senior leadership, then all the strategies, all the plans, and all the rhetoric could be said and nothing will happen”*. This is why B05 referred to personal tutors as having the ability to make or break new initiatives and programmes.

Collaboration also refers to the community of staff and students. B07 said, *“I think the key thing for me is that the academic community - and that consists of lecturers, the administrators, the students, the Student Union - that there’s an opportunity to work together. And working together means that if an institution has set up committees, that there is representation from that community on the committees.”*

The fourth and final CSF is transparency as B08 said, “*It has to be very transparent with itself. It has to be very honest with itself and that’s very difficult*”. They then added, “*So you have to have that level of trust and transparency*”.

#### *4.3.2.3. A reflection on critical success factors*

When talking about critical success factors, participants were very self-praising. This is not unexpected given (a) the senior nature of the participants’ jobs and (b) their attitudes towards interviews.

##### *4.3.2.3.a. The nature of senior executives’ jobs*

As for the first reason, senior managers focus on the big picture and have little (if any) familiarity with the ins and outs of everyday challenges faced by line managers. To reduce this bias, I interviewed middle managers and members of staff whose job titles and/or job descriptions are associated with quality assurance. This group of people is referred to as “Member of improvement groups” and their interviews revealed a different reality in case study B.

An example of that in the university in case study B where the team of heads of schools/faculty has changed under the current leadership to become more centralized. In the interview with a senior executive, they failed to mention this change and its consequences on staff. In contrast, two members of improvement groups who were interviewed raised this issue and were very clear about their attitudes towards the recent change. B08 said,

*It’s more centralised than it used to be, much more centralised than it used to be. It used to be a decentralised school system very much with autonomy for the schools and it’s been pulled into the centre much more recently. [...] Well, there were some things, for example, that caused me and my team a lot of problems, particularly me because I was involved with – very closely, with the production of the materials for that project. The difficulty with that is that, when that was enacted, it was enacted far too late. It meant that we kept going back to the drawing board, I was having to write things and produce things very regularly.*

In similar vein, B07 said,

*“The approach that we have here is not centralised. It’s not a centralised approach. It seems to me, at times, that we can almost say we’ve got four different institutions all working under one umbrella. But each faculty has its own set of – well, not approach as opposed to policies – there are institutional policies, there are regulations, but the interpretation can sometimes differ. But at the end of the day, what I have experienced, is that there is a drive to ensure quality is at the focus of everybody’s thinking, regardless of what service we offer, whether we’re teaching, whether we’re an administrator ...etc. but, I think the interpretation differs.”*

What these two quotes are demonstrating is (a) low staff morale, (b) negative attitude as a result of less autonomy and (c) frustration about additional responsibilities.

This got me thinking about autonomy in the other case study university (case study A) where it was abundantly clear that some participants enjoyed their autonomy while others were conflicted; while autonomy is regarded as empowering, it does increase accountability. One department head who thought that autonomy and responsibility go hand in hand and are parts of the job echoed this fact.

On the topic of how the participants came to enjoy their respective autonomy, they were either appointed to perform certain tasks or asked to have more “breathing space”. In the former case, two out of three times, it was a new manager or supervisor who adhered to the Laissez-faire strand of leadership, while the latter was a newly-appointed employee who felt the need for more autonomy.

Autonomy was referred to using differing vocabulary; “I like being sort of my own boss” said one member of the strategic management team; *“the heads of departments have an enormous amount power [...] which is arguably the main factor in our success”* said another department head, who then added *“I have a dean, so if something looks problematic, he might say to me ‘you’ll have to be able to solve this’”*.

When asked about it, the majority of the participants thought that autonomy was a good thing and a positive aspect of their jobs; some even sought to be more autonomous.

#### 4.3.2.3.b. Senior executives and the public image

As for the second reason, senior managers and very senior managers (also known as senior executives) tend to have public profiles and give interviews to the media. During these interviews and other public appearances, senior executives are trained to portray their institution in a positive light. It was clear to me during some interviews that the participants were purposefully emphasizing the positives and avoiding the negatives. Furthermore, one senior executive employed the political tactic of appearing to criticise their institution where they were actually praising it. This happened in the context of talking about what triggered a recent initiative to transform student records and the way the interviewee phrased the reason was quite impressive; the answer in short is that the university is a textbook example in commitment to excellence through self-reflection; that's why the university had to engage in such a program and prove its position as market leader. A05 said,

*One of the things that's been a challenge here is that [this university] is one of the best universities in the country, one of the best universities in the world. No question. And so, we have fantastic, amazing academics, amazing students, amazing research, very successful all across the board so - and that's known, that's a fact. So yes, absolutely, the challenge in that is that there is no — and again, in business sense, there is no burning platform, there's no crisis. There's no motive. So, we don't have to do this. You could argue that we don't have to do this to be [this university].*

In order to reduce the effects of this bias, I cross checked the claims made in the interview and tried to separate the facts from the opinions to the best of my knowledge. So, for example, the claim that the university is one of the best universities in the world could be verified to be true for this particular university on certain criteria such as university ranking - the university is constantly ranked amongst the top 50 in the world.

### 4.3.3. The role of leadership in new BEM

The role of leadership is considered critical when introducing a new BEM. Here is what the participants thought about this vital theme. Their points of view have been categorised by case study.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>Role of leadership in new BEM</b>	12	7	19

Table 21 The number of quotations linked to the theme of Role of Leadership in new BEM across participants grouped by case study

#### 4.3.3.1. The role of leadership in new BEM (answers from case study A)

Participants from case study A were clear on the importance of leadership in bringing about change. For A05, “*change is ultimately the responsibility of leaders*”. A09, a leader in their own right, agreed but highlighted the importance of securing buy-in from staff, saying, “*What we have to do is try to show them why doing it this way is an improvement. Nobody is going to dictate to them, you must do that.*”. However, this does not mean that leaders can carry on the change on their own. As A08 put it,

*So [the new BEM] only works if everyone buys into it... Senior leadership has a responsibility of managing and overseeing the prospects. But without the buying from the college community, it doesn't ... it will never work. You can't do it top-down.”*

It was also suggested that leaders need appropriate structures in order to do their job effectively. A02 said, “*In order to grow, you should not have a flat structure*”. Finally, it was contented that leaders should not be afraid to change themselves sometimes. This insight into the mechanics of senior leadership was highlighted by participant A10 who claimed that, “*senior leaders are sometimes very reluctant to change themselves*”. A10 then added,

*Well, the people who are probably less inclined to make the change are very senior academic people themselves and then it becomes difficult because there isn't a line manager as such to say you've got to change. And what we have to do is try to show them why doing it this way is an improvement.*

4.3.3.2. *The role of leadership in new BEM (answers from case study B)*

The opinions expressed by participants from case study B are very similar to those expressed in case study A. There is no doubt in the minds of the participants that *“leadership is crucial”* (B06) to the success of the new BEM. I also think that it definitely helps that leaders see themselves as responsible for quality as voiced by participant B02 who said (commenting on being a department head), *“I consider I have the overall responsibility for quality.”* B05 said in relation to their role in change management, *“I think having senior management involved is absolutely vital. Because they inspire, for lack of a better word, the staff to do it. Inspire, encourage, ... force whatever.”*

**4.4. How to sustain a Business Excellence Model**

Participants were asked to share their opinions on how to best sustain a recently initiated BEM. For the most part, participants from case study A were more vocal than from case study B.

Code	Case Study A	Case Study B	Quotations
<b>How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained</b>	13	4	17

Table 22 The number of quotations linked to the theme of The Sustainability of a BEM initiative across participants grouped by case study

4.4.1. *How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained (answers from case study A)*

Participants from case study A said that the sustainability of a new BEM is reliant on (1) resource allocation, which translates mainly into having the same level of resources throughout the project, (2) human resource management, and (3) leadership.

The first factor discussed is resources. A03 said, *“Things will start to degrade overtime, you don’t have the same level of resources.”* The second, and by far the most frequently mentioned factor, is human resources and human resource management. A07 said,

*You have to find, engage people in the process, in the whole redesign the process, so they have an ownership about it. And then there’s a point at which you switch over and then that’s the only way we do now. So, you harmonize and implement.*

A similar opinion was expressed by A08:

*“So, [this BEM] looks at a particular process and delivers a better process and then it's sort of continual improvement. And you move on to another process. So, it's not quite that it's everyone's doing it all the time forever, you know what I mean. I mean, we will bring in different parts of the community for different processes. So, we will hope to maintain the interest and enthusiasm because we have a new group of people, or largely new group of people looking at these processes”.*

and again by A05:

*get people across, certain people from different departments; from the support services with the academic departments in a room together to map it, and to work on it [...]. Another risk for us was if we didn't actively get the negatives and the no-no's into the mix.*

On the topic of human resource management, participants expressed that there needs to be each of the following: staff engagement, team rotation and delegation, including people from different departments as well as naysayers.

The third and final factor is leadership. A05 explained how change *“must really be demonstrated”* and that leaders should be *“very thick-skinned people”* who *“choose [their] moment very carefully”*. A05 elaborated further, saying *“all the ducks need to be in a row [...] it has to come with the right people and the right time”*. Also, unity of leadership was mentioned by A05 as a key factor, *“the executive sponsors have to go out and show a united face”*. It was also important to demonstrate confidence. According to A05, this meant saying *“we still have some challenges”*, rather than *“we're still struggling”*. These opinions about how to implement and sustain a BEM are valuable as they have been tried, tested and proven within the university from case study A. A05 explained,

*this is not the first time this project's been attempted. This is the first time it's got this far. So, we have to spend some time you know convincing people that it was going to continue because you have got the history to deal with.*

#### *4.4.2. How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained (answers from case study B)*

Participants from case study B said that the main elements for sustaining an initiative are: (1) monitoring and interaction between students and the university, (2) feedback and (3) institutionalisation of new practices. With regard to the first element, B01 said in relation to sustaining the newly initiated BEM, *“This is where the tutoring residence comes in because we actually have somebody in country who can act as a local mentor and a local champion.”* B01 then added *“So if we didn’t have tutoring residence, I think it would a much more difficult process. But because of teacher residence ... well hopefully it’ll work better”*. With regard to feedback, B02 claimed that *“The critical factor in the sustainability is the monitoring and the feedback loops”*. They went on to add:

*So, when you identify that something isn’t working or isn’t as effective or as efficient as you’d like it to be, then you have a very clear mechanism for addressing that and then seeing what in fact the intervention is hard and thereby maintaining the momentum around it. So, it’s this implementation measure: implement, iterate, implement, measure and so on and so forth.,*

Finally, with regard to institutionalisation of new practices, B04 said,

*We’ve pushed it down into departments. After the first three-year cycle, it’s moved out of the design phase, ‘This is normal’, ‘this is what we do’, ‘you’re a head of department, This is one of the things you do. Find someone to do it.’ We’ve turned it from a project into business as usual ... ‘this is your job’. Then we have a central function retained to review it, to come up with modifications, things like that, but ‘It’s your job.’ ”*

#### **4.5. Summary**

The chapter has presented and discussed the findings from the two case studies categorised into four themes. The first was concerned with Quality Management Systems, where the trigger for interest in BEM was presented. For case study A, these triggers consisted of pressures from the academics, pressures the students and outside pressures (such as REF) and the university leadership. For case study B, these triggers consisted of internal reports relating to Graduate Employability. The first theme also examined participants’ perception of the applicability of TQM-based Models in HEIs. Opinions were contested; whereas



participants from case study A were unanimous in praising those models, participants from case study B had some reservations relating mainly to the nature of university core values.

The second theme discussed to what extent BEMs are perceived to be fads. Participant from both case studies were united in rejecting this notion. The third theme looked the practical implementation of BEMs at the two universities. This theme included an examination of the evaluation criteria which were revealed to be (1) student experience, (2) engagement, and (3) feedback for case study A and (1) report generation, (2) corresponding to league tables; and (3) offering training. This theme also examined critical success factor across the two case studies. The identified CSF are the team and the location for both case studies. Extra CSF included the process and the brand for case study A, and collaboration and transparency for case study B. According to all participants, leadership plays a vital role in the application a BEM.

The final theme discussed the participants' views on how to sustain a BEM. Participants from case study A believed that the new BEM was sustained because of appropriate resource allocation, efficient human resource management, and leadership commitment. Whilst participants from case study B believed that sustaining an initiative relies on the right interaction between students and the university, relevant feedback and the act of institutionalisation new practices. Table 23 illustrates how the four themes correspond to the research questions.

<b>Main Research questions and sub-questions</b>	<b>Findings theme</b>
<b>Why might one UK university embrace a Business Excellence Model while another resists them?</b>	Quality Management Systems (TQM-based Models, The applicability, The uniqueness of HE, Lean as a TQM-based model)
<b>What motivates a university to implement or not implement a Business Excellent Model?</b>	Quality Management Systems (Criteria for evaluating BEM, CSF, The role of leadership, The form and trigger)
<b>How is the decision to implement a Business Excellent Model enacted and with what consequences?</b>	The implementation of Business Excellence Models
<b>To what extent do university staff</b>	Business Excellence Models as fads

<b>view Business Excellence Models as business fads?</b>	
<b>How might BEMs be better initiated, implemented and sustained?</b>	The implementation of Business Excellence Models & The sustainability of Business Excellence Model

Table 23 Linking the four themes of research findings to the research questions

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into four sections that correspond to the four sections of chapter 3. The first section will discuss the findings about quality management systems. It will highlight the different responses from the two case studies and compare them to the existing literature on four themes, namely: the trigger for implementing a BEM; the applicability of BEMs in HE; the uniqueness of HE as a service; and lean in higher education. The second section will discuss and collaborate the findings on the perception of BEMs as fads. The third section will be concerned with the practical implementation of BEMs. The final section will discuss the participants' views on BEM sustainability.

### 5.1. Quality Management Systems

This section will discuss the findings related to the TQM-based Models in both case studies. The findings include the form and trigger for implementing a Business Excellence Model and the applicability of these models in the context of HEIs. The goal of this section is to provide a better understanding of the context and critical assessment of the results of the two cases studies.

#### 5.1.1. *TQM-based models*

As mentioned earlier, case study A is at the forefront of the movement to implement an organization-wide quality initiative based on Lean Enterprise and is deliberately incorporating elements from TQM. Case study B, on the other hand, is not using Lean Enterprise or adopting a Business Excellence Model per se. The interviewees at Case study B generally agreed that elements of TQM had become standard practice of the university and would continue to be in the future. According to the literature previously reviewed, universities can benefit a great deal from a well-implemented BEM (Balzer, 2010, p.11), particularly if they achieve continuous improvement (Emiliani, 2015, p.29) through saving money and making the students' voice heard. While the former is a continual source of pressure and competition (especially under funding cuts), the latter is becoming more and

more vital; tuition fees raise students' expectations and mean their increasingly vocal demands need to be heard (G. Dick & Tari, 2013; Foskett, 2010; Tambi et al., 2008)

### *5.1.2. The form and trigger for implementing a Business Excellence Model*

All the initiatives discussed in the interviews were top-down in design. In every instance, it seemed that senior management sensed a certain “need” for change and acted accordingly. Their response was usually about introducing change in the form of a new project, then inspiring staff to get on board. The notion that change originates from and is supported by leaders is well represented within the literature (Ahn, Adamson, & Dornbusch, 2004; Aladwani, 2001; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Bruhn, 2004; By, Burnes, & Oswick, 2012). In academia also, it is theorised that natural leaders excel by transforming departmental cultures through effective change management (Balzer, 2010). The strength of leaders' role as change champions is the promotion of a culture of change as well as some sort of commitment. However, change that is supported only by leaders will not be as effective because the rest of the department will not have a sense of ownership over the change. Furthermore, the notion that senior management is the driving force for change is intuitive since senior management is the party that traditionally has checks and balances (such as staff report and student complaints) to pick up on any need to change, coupled with a strategic overview that is simply lacking in lower managerial levels of the institutions. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that senior management is almost always the party that initiates the change and invests in a Business Excellence Model.

When asked about the trigger for the change, the participants expressed a plethora of reasons that could be categorized into the following four groups: 1) pressure to score highly in the Research Excellence Framework (REF); 2) pressure from academics overburdened with administration; 3) pressure from students complaining about inefficiency and 4) leaders, themselves, noticing the existence of cumbersome processes.

Triggers are defined as historically unique conjunctions of forces that might originate from inside or outside the organisation. Internal and external triggers are referred to as endogenous and exogenous triggers respectively (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999). The first

trigger, the Research Excellence Framework, is clearly an external trigger. The second trigger is the academic staff reporting their concerns about not having enough time for their academic work. This was done through both formal and informal communication lines. This alerted senior management to a problem in the institution's processes. In other words, the administrative part of these academics' jobs had grown to excess. Excess here is defined as having to fill in too many forms that are almost never going to be picked up again or followed through. As one participant put it, these forms were "futile". So, academics voice their concern about being able to perform their teaching and research jobs properly due to the disproportionate increase in the amount of administrative work they are being asked to do.

The third trigger is student complaints; in the first case study, the university was in the process of updating its student records because it had become clear that the old system was acting as a bottleneck for many student-related activities; thus, a new system was advised. The new student information system acted as a quality initiative aimed at improving the student experience. Finally, the fourth trigger was managerial staff themselves noticing that the processes they were performing could be massively improved.

Based on the information provided by the participants, the role of a successful senior management in terms of feedback flow needs to fulfil the following: (1) there are feedback channels from every critical stakeholder, (2) communication channels are short and quick because it is vital that feedback is immediate, and (3) senior management is equipped with the necessary strategic tools to make the decision to invest in a Business Excellence Model.

#### *5.1.2.1. Trigger for interest in BEMs*

Understanding the decision behind choosing one BEM or another is heavily influenced by what triggered the university to have an interest in BEMs in the first place. The trigger for change, the reason why the university got interested in investing in a new BEM, could be a single, discrete factor or a variety of factors, in combination.

#### *5.1.2.2. Trigger for interest in BEMs (answers from case study A)*

Two of the four participants attributed the trigger to one specific factor. For one of them, it was an external factor, namely the REF, to which the university was reacting. For the other, it was an internal factor, namely the need to replace the old student information system, which the university was proactively tackling. Of course, the two factors are not mutually exclusive. The other two participants attributed the need for change to more than one factor, namely (1) the academics and (2) the financial audits in one case; and the many glitches with the student experience in the other. However, all of the participants mentioned, at one point or another, that the underlying reason behind the interest in BEMs was improving the student experience. So, benefitting the students was an implied trigger, which, in turn, benefits the academic staff and other agencies that the university works with.

Clearly, case study A university was facing some uncertainty, especially with respect to commercial pressures. These included the increased student fees, the higher expectations of the students and funding bodies, and the need to justify what and how the university was spending the money. This is not completely surprising as “modern” universities are facing increasing levels of uncertainty (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). In this context, modern refers to universities that aspire to reach global markets while facing an ever-more complex and competitive marketplace. However, no university is immune from the aforementioned pressures. In fact, universities are facing ever-increasing pressures from a variety of stakeholders for a broader and improved range of services (Hides, Davies, & Jackson, 2004).

Still, case study A (exhibiting the behaviour of a market leader) elected to turn these pressures into an opportunity to evolve. Participant A05 said that they had “no burning platform” which is a term used in organisational development to refer to negative motivation to change (Mekelburg, 2005). In other words, there was no crisis. However, the overall picture of the university was a complicated one, which did not help with the new pressures. There was a perceived need to innovate. Higher student fees and the HE sector shaping up to be more like a market generated interest on the part of senior management in a BEM centred around customer satisfaction.

### *5.1.2.3. Trigger for interest in BEMs (answers from case study B)*

The only participant who discussed the trigger for interest in BEMs spoke in very general terms. The trigger in this case was related to the employability of fresh graduates and it came from an internal report recommendation. The fresh graduates were not doing any extra curricular activities to boost their CVs and improve their employment prospective. This, of course, is a perfectly valid trigger for change (i.e. internal reports) and it works for the most part. However, internal reports are retrospective in nature as well as being inward-looking. A university that aspires to lead the market should be (a) proactive and (b) go beyond benchmarking.

It could be said that there was “a burning platform” for this initiative to have taken place. After all, a low level of graduate employability is a serious issue for any self-respecting university. As such, the above-mentioned trigger indicates a negative motivation to change. Mekelburg (2005) argues that organisations being led by negative motivations are on “the clear path to safety” whilst those being led by positive motivations are on “the clear path to success”. Some attitudes within case study B definitely reflected this dichotomy. In general, the institution appeared to be reacting to internal problems and watching the behaviour of others in the sector, rather than being at the forefront of change. One department head from case study B argued that if everyone started adopting BEMs in general and Lean Manufacturing in particular, then they would have to do it as well. However, at the time of the data collection, it had not yet happened.

### *5.1.3. The applicability of TQM-based Models in HEIs*

According to one faculty dean in case study A, TQM-based models as well as TQM apply directly to higher education; however, this sentence is not without bias as the person who said it used to work very closely with TQM models in a previous career. More specifically, this person used to work in the automotive industry, which has seen numerous empirical pieces of research (Fragassa, Pavlovic, & Massimo, 2014; Punnakitikashem, Laosirihongthong, Adebajo, & McLean, 2010; Sinha, Garg, & Dhall, 2016) pointing at the applicability and even necessity of applying TQM in production and quality control both in

the UK (Yusof & Aspinwall, 2001) and internationally (Azlina Mohd. Salleh, Kasolang, & Ahmed Jaafar, 2012; Bhamu, Kumar, & Sangwan, 2012; Lockström, Schadel, Harrison, Moser, & Malhotra, 2010; Raimona Zadry & Mohd Yusof, 2006).

The TQM-consultant-turned-operational-manager claimed that his current university had the most advanced quality-based approach applied in higher education. Although I was able to verify that their current approach to quality does, in fact, employ operational excellence<sup>16</sup> (which is based on Six Sigma<sup>17</sup>) and TQM-based practices; I cannot verify such a strong claim. The person in question had no experience working with other universities. Which forces me to wonder how someone who has only worked in one institution can claim that their institution is the best at what they do.

Participants generally agreed that an organisation-wide initiative was appropriate, although some were more enthusiastic than others. Those who were more cautious stipulated that if a model was meant to apply in every department, it should serve only as a guide. In other words, the university leadership should leave room for individual departments to tweak the model as the department saw fit. The ramifications of these points of views are twofold; (1) there is an assumption that consistency is favoured, which is an assertion that is not fully substantiated (at least not in the interview transcripts); and (2) a TQM-based model that is being used as a guide is a powerful tool. This is because it allows different parties the flexibility needed to cater for different daily tasks and procedures (e.g. lab-based course vs. classroom-based courses) while still providing a level of consistent outcome in terms of performance measurements. In fact, research has shown that tailoring TQM to the specific needs of an organisation or subunit, and using it as guide is not only possible but also critical (Mann & Kehoe, 1995; Nadim & Al-Hinai, 2016; Salleh et al., 2018).

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<sup>16</sup> The term operational excellence refers to a blend of process re-engineering and business process outsourcing. Historically, operational excellence was born when Six Sigma was taken out of Toyota and was tailored to fit higher education.

<sup>17</sup> According to The Business Dictionary, Six Sigma is an effort to improve the quality of products or services produced by the business through the removal of defects and errors. Six Sigma is also referred to as Lean Six Sigma, Lean manufacturing or simply Lean. Correspondingly, Operational Excellence (which is Lean manufacturing in Higher Education) is sometimes referred to as Lean Higher Education.



An added benefit of applying a TQM-based model is serving the interest of external parties and having customer focus (Bystydzienski, Thomas, Howe, & Desai, 2017) by providing assurances of sustainability (Mark, 2013), consistency of service and transparency (Talib, 2013). This is more and more relevant in light of the on-going trend of regarding students as customers as a result of the higher tuition fees. A more detailed examination of the respondents' points of view categorised by case study is provided below.

#### *5.1.3.1. Applicability of BEMs in HE (answers from case study A)*

Participants from case study A had a consensus on the applicability and appropriateness of using BEMs in HE. They mentioned many benefits and raised no concerns, which is rather surprising given that the topic is highly contested in the literature (Harvey & Williams, 2010a). The potential ramifications of this finding are conflictory; on the one hand, homogeneity of opinion could reflect deep understanding and unity of goals and vision; however, at the same time, it could also indicate a culture of Yes-sayers. This could create an echo chamber<sup>18</sup> effect that would be detrimental to management.

Within case study A, however, the reasons provided to support those claims could indicate something about the nature of the consensus. We know that during changes, it is desirable for organisations to have unity of vision, agreement and consensus (Hayes, 2014, p.229). But the unity of vision and agreement would typically include the reasoning behind the change and understanding of the current and desired organisational environment. What is not typically part of the agreement is people's opinions on general topics and ideas such as BEM applicability in HEIs. Nevertheless, when it comes to the seemingly identical opinions expressed by participants from case study A, there is no reason to believe these were directly influenced by management at any time before the interviews took place. Whether these opinions pre-existed or were altered after the recent BEM application in case study A is not clear.

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<sup>18</sup> An environment in which only beliefs or opinions that coincide with one's own are encountered, causing the existing ideas to be reinforced while new ones are ignored. (Source: oxforddictionaries.com)

First and foremost, the participants who said that BEMs are very appropriate in HE (all from case study A) attributed this to the nature of the HE in a modern university. This is in line with those authors who identify similarities between how modern universities operate and how a manufacturer operates (Meredith & Burkle, 2008). This opinion was exclusively echoed by participants from case study A. By contrast, participants from case study B opposed this notion and hence they all had reservations about the applicability of BEMs in HEIs.

All of the benefits of applying TQM-based Models in HEIs that Case Study A participants identified were believed to have the same effect, namely, improved operations. From effectiveness in resource allocation to the way information is stored and used, all the participants expressed high praise for the operational benefits of TQM-based models.

The operational benefits of these models were not limited inwardly, since participants praised the benchmarking capabilities of said-models. In fact, benchmarking was so important to management in setting up the new BEM that they were looking into best practices from universities within different educational systems (such as the United States) as well as other service sectors organisations (such as airlines). As a matter of fact, the implementation of TQM and the adoption of best practices is believed to bring many operational benefits to the organisation (Tang & Zairi, 1998). I found it to be admirable that a university is leading the field in terms of customer service and benchmarking against the best in the business.

Among the numerous proposed benefits within the literature (Tang & Zairi, 1998) which were echoed by participants are (1) innovative strategies identified, (2) enhanced efficiency and coherence, (3) involvement of stakeholders as a matter of course, and (4) better understanding of students and their needs. Other benefits that were not in the literature but were identified by the participants are (1) inspiring improvement even when there is no crisis, (2) motivating academic staff towards change, and (3) standardisation.

The first benefit that was not mentioned in the literature but identified by participants relates to the concept of normal operation with no burning platform (i.e. obvious major problem

needing immediate remedy). The condition wherein there is no crisis might appear desirable to some but not to the management staff in case study A. These people were making changes without any obvious need to do so, perhaps being inspired by the values of their world-class university. This proactive approach to improvement was seen as an integral part of the university's identity and an important reason for its success. Managers thought they needed to inspire change and convince everyone to get on board despite the fact that there was no burning platform. This is where benchmarking helped management not only inspire change (within professional staff) but also get academic staff motivated as well.

Another benefit of benchmarking mentioned in the literature is using benchmarking as a response to complaints (Tang & Zairi, 1998), which relates to the point made earlier about staff motivation.

Standardisation was referred to in the context of reducing waste through streamlining processes within academic departments. In practical terms, this happened through simplification of processes, automation and documentation. As a result, the financial performance of these departments was improved (as recognised by one participant). In fact, the reduction of waste and specifically the reduction of unnecessary financial spending were regularly mentioned with participants claiming it was essential for a Russell Group university like case study A to respond to increased financial pressures with the help of a properly employed BEM. In the literature, standardisation within education is generally regarded as laborious (Saunders & Walker, 1991). However, participants at case study A were more positive about the process, perhaps because individual subunits or departments were allowed to tailor it to their specific needs. This is in line with those authors who argue against external standardisation of TQM-based models by regulatory bodies (such as ISO) and in favour of internal standardisation with a degree of customisation (Garud, Gehman, & Kumaraswamy, 2011; Steiber & Alänge, 2013).

In summary, the arguments for using BEMs in HE are both intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic argument claims that BEMs are coherent and suitable to be applied in any university - within the UK at least. The extrinsic argument relies on the promise of three desirable

outcomes, namely (1) improved efficiency, (2) standardisation through benchmarking and (3) the reduction of waste through (a) simplification of processes and (b) automation.

#### *5.1.3.2. Applicability of BEMs in HE (answers from case study B)*

The three participants who discussed BEMs in HE were all critical of their practical benefit. Although they all agreed that BEMs have significant theoretical benefit, they were reluctant to endorse any comprehensive application of BEMs in their universities. The main issues they raised were (1) the use of BEMs as guidelines, (2) the complexity of some BEMs, and (3) the nature of what universities do, in other words, academic freedom and its potential conflict with any BEM.

As for the first issue, the use of BEMs as guidelines was discussed twice in the context of the university. B05 who studied BEMs closely said they “are useful as guides”. Moreover, B08 said they would study BEMs but never use them. Both participants who shared this point of view had similar experience and worked in similar roles within their respective (different) departments. It is surprising that the very people one might have expected to champion BEMs were doing the exact opposite.

The second issue was mentioned once by B05 who claimed that BEMs can be too advanced to be applied in HE. By that, they meant some BEMs were too complicated for their own good. They require too much time and commitment to apply. And I have to say, that might be true, but I think that the alleged complexity of BEMs has to be weighted against the promised improvements of said BEMs. In other words, it will cost a lot to invest in a BEM (as a result of its complexity) but it could cost considerably more to not invest in a BEM. In business terms, the missed opportunity cost of BEMs could be higher than the cost of BEM investment.

The third issue is the recurring theme of academic freedom. In line with Owlia & Aspinwall (1997), some participants felt academic freedom was at odds with the conformity associated with BEMs. Much depends on how academic freedom is defined. It can be interpreted very broadly to mean teachers and researchers are entirely free to set their own agendas. In this scenario, people can choose their own research topics and can collaborate with anyone they

want. They can belong to a pre-existing research group or they can establish their own emerging group, or they can act as lone operators. Alternatively, academic freedom can be interpreted more narrowly to mean lecturers can write their own courses and content just so long as it conforms to the departmental/faculty/university strategy and achieves the pre-determined learning outcomes.

This argument over the scope of academic freedom is grounded in the conviction that modern universities are divided between two worlds; one that prizes freedom of thought and expression (i.e. academic freedom), and another that aims to regulate and control (Jarvis, 2014). The latter is seen as both intrusive and expanding (M.J. Rosa, Stensaker, & Westerheijden, 2007). The participants from case study B who voiced concerns about the clash between BEMs and academic freedom were clearly in the former camp.

Not surprisingly, defendants of BEMs dispute the claim that these models infringe academic freedom per se. Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2007), for example, argue that, historically speaking, when quality control models have been applied to HEIs, they have been less intrusive than when the same models have been applied to industry. Within industry, governmental and organisational controllers are part of the established process. Within the HE sector, by contrast, there is much less government control and universities are allowed to establish their own control units. This enables universities to tailor their assessment policies around their respective strategies.

And as long as these strategies assert academic freedom then the assessment policies are not allowed to be intrusive (Tierney, 1999, p.145). In other words, the assessment policies are more controllable as a result of being internally developed. A balanced internally developed assessment policy is seen as a key element of a successful strategy that asserts academic freedom (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2007) because it has the potential of change the relationship between administration and academics from antipathy to synergy. As a result of this point of view, there could actually be excellence within all of the aforementioned facets of research. Even lone operators can work within excellent conditions and adhere to research outcomes set by the faculty or the university. In other words, there is less chance of

academic freedom being infringed if assessment policies and evaluation measures are internally developed, by academics. As opposed to these measures being imposed by administrators or central government.

#### *5.1.3.3. Collaboration of responses*

While participants from case study A were homogenous in their opinions and generally praised BEMs as appropriate and suitable to be applied in HE, participants from case study B were a little bit more heterogeneous and presented varying degrees of scepticism.

As discussed in the literature review, there is a debate about how appropriate BEM are for the HE context (Harvey & Williams, 2010a). Overall, participants demonstrated similar attitudes towards this topic as in the literature (albeit only within case study B). While the arguments in favour of using BEMs in HE included a myriad of operational benefits (such as improved efficiency, standardisation and the reduction of waste) on top of an intrinsic aptness for BEMs within HE, the arguments against using BEMs in HE mainly focused on academic freedom and perceived complexity.

As discussed earlier, participants from case study A all agreed on the applicability of TQM in HE. Since there was no evidence of senior management directly influencing their opinions, it is safe to assume that all participants did genuinely share the same opinion and that they had reached this on their own. The ramifications of this observation relate to how those participants came to form their shared opinion. It is quite possible that the shared environment within case study A created a shared culture of 'TQM appreciation' where participants (among other employees) felt positively about the role of TQM and TQM-based models with HEIs. But this hypothesis is not without criticism since the same could be said about participants from case study B, which was not the case. Ultimately, I cannot indisputably claim that the organisational culture had no influence on forming those opinions solely based on the fact that two groups of participants within two different organisational cultures had different levels of homogeneity in perceptions. This is because the realistic scope of this research could not have allowed an examination of each organisational culture and its influence on participant perception. What I think is more of an

influence within case study A is the attraction and employing paradigm. In other words, organisational culture of case study A exerts a stronger influence because it is world-leading and is therefore able to recruit people who have already embraced its values. Case study B is less prestigious and so its recruitment may be less efficient. After all, case study A – having been consistently ranked among the top universities in the world - is undoubtedly a market leader in management practices and people aspiring to work for this university may well be motivated to change and adapt more than their counterparts at other institutions who do not have the same job aspirations. Furthermore, what supports the claim that the shared opinions were pre-existing as opposed to culturally-inspired is the job history of interview participants. Some participants had been working at the university much longer than others and some had much greater professional experience in their previous careers than others.

#### *5.1.3.4. Applicability of TQM in HE (answers from case study A)*

The literature is almost unanimous in claiming that TQM is the right response to changes in higher education both internationally and in the UK (Dahlgard, Kristensen and Kanji, 1995; Kells, 1995; Sakthivel & Raju, 2006; Venkatraman, 2007). In this study, however, some participants had reservations about the applicability of TQM in HE chiefly because they saw education as a heterogeneous system. One participant suggested that TQM might flourish in the automotive industry, since all the motorcars are exactly the same and are required to perform as best as possible. To them, a university is much more heterogeneous than a motorcar factory. Moreover, for this participant, TQM was inappropriate because it was top-down. In other words, senior management has to initiate it, then concentrate on quality (of students, staff, research and teaching). This means staff focus on adhering to criteria and regulations, instead of taking ownership of the process.

No other participant directly criticised the top-down nature of TQM, although different concerns were expressed. A09 noted that universities are “very slow to adapt” and are “generally inefficient”. This accords with the work of Kanji, Malek, & Tambi (2010) who found that very few UK universities were actually utilising TQM to its full potential. If these claims are true, (i.e. if universities really are very slow to adapt and generally inefficient), this

provides an even stronger incentive for university leaders to invest in TQM and other models precisely because they promise to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Perhaps the most cited reason for scepticism is a possible clash with academic freedom. A09 highlighted what they saw as a “disconnect between the principles of Total Quality Management and the principles of how universities work”. Others used terms such as “openness”, “discussion” and “intellectual pursuit” to refer (more or less) to the same subject. However, A09 went on to point out that education is a service and could benefit from the proper application of TQM in those areas of the university where academic freedom is not an issue. In other words, TQM is applicable to the administrative functions of the university, but not the core business of teaching, learning and research.

Finally, A10 who chairs an improvement group designed to improve the quality of student experience said very clearly that they firmly believe in the applicability of TQM in HE.

In summary, the topic is highly-contested and participants’ perceptions ranged from total incompatibility to undoubted compatibility. Perhaps what that points towards is the fact that TQM is definitely applicable to certain aspects of HE.

#### *5.1.3.5. Applicability of TQM in HE (answers from case study B)*

The participants from case study B were less polarised in their opinions on the applicability of TQM in HE. All those who mentioned TQM did so in a positive manner. One participant in particular referred to it as “the absolute cornerstone of quality assurance and quality management”. For them, TQM enables the organisation to demonstrate to both internal and external stakeholders its commitment to providing a high-quality service. This point of view is becoming more and more prevalent as each increase in student fees make the higher education sector more market-driven. In this scenario, TQM gives agency to all parties. In other words, TQM provides prospect students (i.e. potential customers) with assurance of the service(s) they are taking loans and committing years of their lives to be a part of.

Another point of view stated that the principles of TQM are transferrable, meaning they are not a perfect fit within HE but still useful. According to this less-enthusiastic stance, TQM is



helpful because it provides a series of guidelines and checks and balances, which allow university management to have confidence in what they are doing. The key word here is “guidelines”. Several participants from case study B noted that different department and faculties are run differently. Not only are social sciences, humanities and engineering different subjects, but some disciplines are laboratory-based and others are classroom-based or library-based. Still, management wisdom suggests that the same standards should be applied across different departments. It is for this very reason that producing a set of guidelines that all parties can apply in a consistent manner and that can be verified in a consistent manner is helpful. However, the application of TQM to every aspect of HE is still contested. Fifteen years ago, Sahney, Banwet, & Karunes (2004, p.3) stated that there was “substantial interest in TQM in education” but a few years later, this early promise seemed to have dissipated with Kanji et al. (2010) claiming “higher education has hardly been involved in TQM ... [and] ... lacks interest in adopting it in the future” (Kanji et al., 2010, p.19).

#### *5.1.3.6. Collaboration of responses*

When talking about the applicability of TQM, participants had different ideas about what TQM actually entails. This is not surprising given the lack of any agreed definition in the literature (Sahney et al., 2004). Many reasons were identified for the differences in opinions. On the one hand, those who agree that TQM is a good fit in HE cited (1) empirical evidence from other service sectors, (2) circumstantial evidence that HE is becoming more market-like and driven by the customers (i.e. students) and (3) anecdotal evidence that TQM provides much needed guidelines for university departments that are too dissimilar. On the other hand, those who disagree with this point of view presented numerous causes for concern, some more severe than others. Some believed TQM was totally opposed to the nature of HE since TQM thrives in homogenous environments which universities most certainly are not. More sympathetic voices nonetheless highlighted the effort and time required to transfer TQM into existing models of quality assurance in universities. Almost all critics of TQM viewed academic freedom as a cornerstone of higher education that would suffer under the influence of TQM. The literature lists one more major criticism of TQM in

HE, namely the lack of practical guidance and the focus on philosophy and theory instead (Sallis, 1993, p.91). This criticism was not identified by any of the participants.

UK universities are now subject to externally imposed reviews and quality assessments with respect to both research and teaching. Research assessment looks backwards at previously-completed rather than current research, and the outcome of such assessment comes in the shape of suggestions. By contrast, in teaching the feedback comes with recommendations. This is a huge difference. The suggestions that come from the research assessment are dealt with internally and probably never revisited by the external assessors. Teaching recommendations, however, are meant to be taken on board in order for the university to improve. Which leads me to point out how TQM cannot fit within this model. The ability for science to proliferate and to do research does not fit perfectly in TQM mode. One participant noted this, saying “in research, I have to have my freedom to go and follow my nose and do something interesting”. The dilemma can be illustrated with this simple scenario: a researcher is working within a large grant programme, and they find something rather interesting, what are they to do? Quality assurance models recommend they ignore their exploratory sense and stick to the agenda. But that would be a betrayal of their true researcher-self.

#### *5.1.4. The uniqueness of HE as a service*

This section will explore the perceptions of participants about whether the HE sector is unique in relation to the application of BEMs and, if so, why.

##### *5.1.4.1. Uniqueness of HE as a service (answers from case study A)*

The opinions from case study A are rather nuanced when compared to those from case study B. Case study A participants gave two main reasons why HE might be unique, namely the nature of academia and the structure of academic institution. Both these reasons are also present in the literature, as will be demonstrated.

One participant from case study A spoke about “anarchy” but, in truth, this does not apply to every aspect of HE. In fact, it could be argued that anarchy only applies to one very

specific function of HE, namely research. Granted, it is a huge function and anarchy within that is immensely important but that is also not unique to HE. Many industries have R&D departments where the so-called “anarchy” could be present, albeit not to the same extent as a research-oriented university tends to exhibit it. The literature repeatedly refers to this aspect of HE as its defining characteristic (Hill, 1995; Salem Khalifa, 2009; Tight, 2004). At any rate, the amalgamation of these expressions can be summed up in one word: outcome. So, according to the literature, it is the unique outcome that universities provide that constitutes one major reason why the university sector is unique. Universities do not merely provide academic services and hence cannot be grouped with other service-sector organisations (Hill, 1995).

The above-mentioned characteristic is not the only one found in the literature that is alleged to make HE a unique sector. A second characteristic is the structure of HEI, which is exactly what participants identified as well. HEIs are said to have a flat structure i.e. few management levels between top management and staff, and to eschew hierarchies in the way they are run and governed (Birnbaum, 2000). However, this characteristic is not at all unique to universities, nor is it completely true. Yes, the core “academic” departments of universities that deal with teaching and research are relatively flat in their organisational structure, but other subunits are not.

#### *5.1.4.2. Uniqueness of HE as a service (answers from case study B)*

When asked why BEMs could not be a perfect fit in HE, participants at case study B suggested the sector is unique because its outcomes are different to those in any other service sector. However, their responses left much to be desired in terms of providing concrete examples of how HE outcomes are different. Three main features were identified.

The first claim to uniqueness was the lack of a physical outcome. However, this is not unique to HE by any means. Every service industry provides non-physical outcomes.

The second claim related to the lack of rigidity of the outcome. In other words, service delivery in general is very rigidly controlled while academic delivery cannot be since it is usually an individual delivery by an individual lecturer or professor. This means that

academia cannot be easily compared with other services. Again, the argument is flawed. Whilst it is rare to see services that lack rigidity, these are not confined to the education sector. Such examples might include personal training, psychiatric health and wellbeing support, among others. Both of the (flawed) arguments put forth by case study B participants can be found in the literature. Hill (1995), Stone (2012) and Tight (2004) all argue that universities are unique because they produce knowledge.

The third issue is the lack of control of the process or the “human aspect”. Some participants went to great lengths to empathise this point, by highlighting the difference between manufacturing a product or widget and educating a person. Within manufacturing, there are certain fine tolerances that are part of a well-controlled, well-designed and easily measurable quality process. The same cannot be said about education. The reason suggested was the “human dimension” which renders universities into complex and diverse organizations. This characteristic was not mentioned in the literature even though I find it the most convincing.

#### *5.1.4.3. Collaboration of responses*

Granted, universities’ “customers” are buying something that is rather unusual. They are buying an opportunity rather than a product. Education is one of the few things you can pay for and ultimately not get. Consequently, typical/standard quality models may be a poor fit. Quality in this environment may need redefining to mean the experience students have while studying. This means some, but not all, quality models will be very hard to apply in HE.

The literature lists three main reasons why universities are unique: (1) unique structure, (2), unique outcome and (3) unique stakeholders’ dynamic. The first two were discussed earlier in this section, with participants from case study A highlighting ‘structure’ and participants from both case studies highlighting ‘outcome’. However, the third reason noted in the literature was not mentioned by any of the participants. Unique stakeholders’ dynamic refers to the notion that universities are in a unique position because several demands of multiple stakeholders are integrated together (Benneworth & Arbo, 2006). In other words, universities while providing education and research have to accommodate and interact with a

multitude of areas such as health, industry, culture, policy, the labour market and economy (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008).

#### *5.1.5. Lean as a TQM-based model*

Lean was created and championed by Toyota as a philosophy and a framework more than 50 years ago. It has been empirically proven to improve performance and deliver immediate, substantial and long-lasting improvements (Stensaker, 2003). In recent years, Lean has grown to incorporate the main elements of TQM promising the best long-term and short-term benefits (Alsmadi & Khan, 2010; Biscontri & Kungjoo Park, 2000; Dahlgaard & Mi Dahlgaard-Park, 2006). The interview data from this study seems to support the claim that Lean provides immediate benefits to the organisation. Participants said that Lean is valid to apply within HEIs and that it has been shown to reduce waste, thereby allowing more time to be allocated to key functions (i.e. non-academic time being converted into teaching and research time).

The short term-benefits of Lean have been proven and the data from this study aligns with the literature. However, it could be argued that any business process reengineering (BPR)<sup>19</sup> effort is bound to reduce waste and therefore deliver improvements through reallocating the saved resources into key functions (academic functions instead of non-academic functions). It could be said that BPR is a concept whereas Lean is an approach to BPR. So why was Lean considered exceptionally valid within HEIs by participants from case study A? In other words, what set Lean aside from other BPR approaches? Participants said that university leadership looked at the approaches being used by the best companies outside the education sector, including, for example, quality approaches being used by world-class airlines. But that is not the full picture, as indicated by one participant who praised Lean for having accessible processes and user-friendly manuals as well as for being flexible in terms of tweaking it to best suit the university. This shows that Lean is suitable within HEIs not because it is

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<sup>19</sup> Business Process Reengineering (BPR) is the radical (not incremental) redesign of processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical areas (such as cost, quality, service, and response time). This is done thorough rethinking of all business processes. (Source: [businessdictionary.com](http://businessdictionary.com))

‘flavour of the month’, but because it is so user-friendly for non-experts. Participants casually mentioned the five-step cycle (establish teams, identify beneficiaries, developing metrics, set up steps and propose solution), which indicates that the cycle is both memorable and spontaneous. That said, the successful implementation of Lean relies on many other factors, including the commitment of both leadership and staff. This commitment was clearly evident in case study A. There was a unity of vision and dedication to the newly initiated BEM (based on Lean). This was evident in many parts of the data, such as the point of view on the applicability of BEM in general, the applicability of TQM within HEIs, the trigger for change within case study A, and the critical success factors within case study A and organisational commitment to continual improvement. In this manner, Lean was viewed as a philosophy or shared vision within case study A instead of it being limited to be a set of tactics. The literature suggests that ‘Total involvement concept’ is essential for successful implementation of quality strategies (Olexa, 2002). Conversely, scant regard to improvement strategies is a major contributor to failed implementation. This is very true in the case of Lean, wherein the goal is for Lean to be part of the company’s way of doing things. After all, the Toyota production system was a total management system allowing Lean to be part of every aspect of the company (Ohno, 1988). It is clear to me that case study A have embodied Lean in all the elements and departments that I researched. This suggests the institution has completely adopted Lean as a philosophy. This would have been a major contributor to the success of Lean implementation.

As for long-term benefits of Lean, I think it is beyond the scope of this study to provide evidence for their existence in either of the two case studies.

#### *5.1.5.1. From Lean to Lean Higher Education (LHE)*

Lean Production, which was first developed for manufacturing plants, has been extended to other settings such as the service industry. It has also been applied in both the private and the public sectors (Biscontri & Kungjoo Park, 2000; Dahlgaard & Mi Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Khan, 2010). Lean application in higher education (called Lean Higher Education or LHE) is fairly recent (Antony et al., 2016; Fryer, Antony, & Douglas, 2007).

#### *5.1.5.2. Advantages of applying Lean Higher Education*

Lean has some distinct advantages when applied in higher education in comparison to other higher education change initiatives. Balzer (2010, p.15) lists the advantages as follows:

1. The validity of LHE is supported by substantial evidence
2. LHE is a comprehensive approach
3. LHE balances the long-term needs of the university with the needs of its staff
4. LHE offers practical tools for implementing and sustaining change

These claims have to be verified and that is why case study A participants tried to measure the validity and suitability of Lean in the context of the British educational system.

According to the interviewees, lean is valid for universities. When asked to elaborate on the reasoning behind this claim, participants noted the fact that waste reduction (a vital principle of Lean) is helpful in universities. Such waste in universities includes, for example, quality system failures as a result of over-engineering the processes and duplications, wasted efforts, wasted time.

It is no secret that waste reduction in this sense is not only a Lean principle but also a basic business principle. What is special about Lean is the fact that it provides management with the tools to identify and reduce those inefficiencies. This is exactly what makes Lean a comprehensive approach for waste reduction.

Having said that, the claim that LHE balances the long-term needs of the university with the needs of its staff was missing from the interview data and from the supporting documentation outlining the university's approach to Lean implementation. I think this omission could generate staff resistance and have detrimental consequences for the implementation process. Staff morale is more likely to suffer if the model's implementation does not explicitly cater for the needs of the staff as well as the needs of the university. Hence, I suggest ensuring such a balance is both explicitly mentioned and demonstrably practised.

### 5.1.5.3. Steps of applying Lean Higher Education

LHE follows a set of guiding principles aimed at improving a university’s processes. It starts with a definition of the value of the process, followed by a detailed description of the how the process flows and how to eliminate the waste hence “adding value to the process”. This, in turn, makes the process flow more smoothly. The previous steps are seen as a cycle, so in essence, the improvement is never ending. That is why, at its core, Lean pursues optimisation in every process to which it is applied (A. Vermeulen, Jan-Harm, 2014; Rossi, Taisch, & Terzi, 2012). Table 24 describes the five steps of LHE (A. Vermeulen, Jan-Harm, 2014; Rossi, Taisch, & Terzi, 2012).

Step 1	<b>Define</b>	Define the process value from the point of view of its beneficiaries
Step 2	<b>Identify</b>	Identify the flow of the process, from the points of view of both the beneficiary and the provider
Step 3	<b>Eliminate</b>	Eliminate as much waste as possible adding value to the process
Step 4	<b>Push to Pull</b>	Fine tune the process so it flows smoothly, this means instead of the processes being “pushed” by the provider they should be “pulled” by the beneficiary
Step 5	<b>Perfect</b>	Repeat until perfect which entails continuous improvement (CI) and business process reengineering (BPR)

Table 24 Principles of Lean Higher Education (LHE)

Participants at Case study A identified six steps in the university’s pursuit of LHE. Typical interview quotes are provided and the steps are summarised in Figure 1, below:

1. Establishing a team tasked with the project

*“We’ve trained a number of people from each department and people from my team to be a change agents”  
(participant from interview A05)*

2. Identifying the different parties that are involved in the process that is being improved (identifying beneficiaries)



*“(We needed a) system that focuses on the benefits to the end user but articulates very clearly that “the who” are all parties”*

3. Developing suitable metrics to measure the value added by the processes

*“a system that measures that or demonstrates that would be really helpful”*

*“I think that what we need to do - from a student services and an academic quality measures factor - is make it visible to the end users”*

4. Identifying the steps in each process that are required by both the beneficiary and the provider (the university)
5. Proposing ways to eliminate waste and improve the flow of processes, i.e. adding value to the process

One interviewee noted that quality systems fail when there is “duplication, wasted effort, wasted time”. They believed their institution had already begun to “reduce the burden for academic staff and administration [...] by streamlining our process, by automating our process, by ensuring that we don’t all have to do everything.”

6. Repeating the previous two steps and adding more value to the process until management is satisfied with the most recent process metrics.

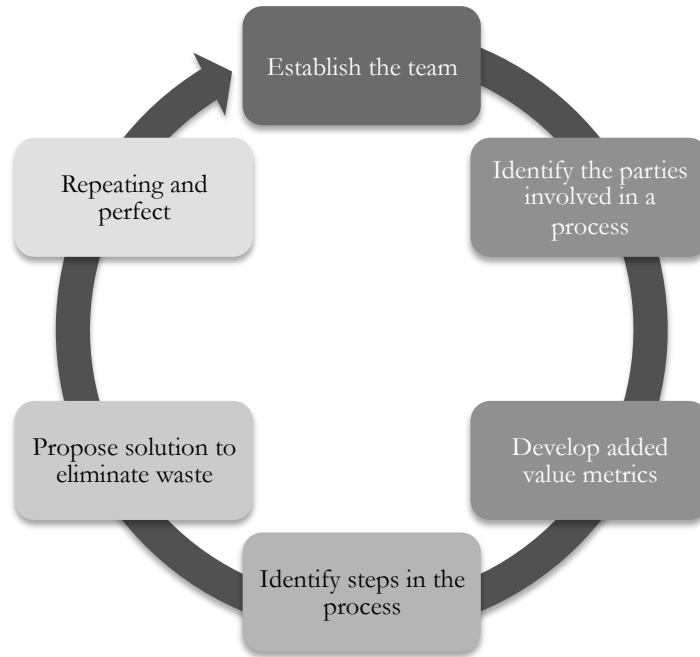


Figure 24 Creating value in Case study A

These recognized steps are aimed at helping the university cater for the needs of its beneficiaries efficiently. Since the steps entail developing a good understanding of the needs of the beneficiaries, the voices of the beneficiaries should be the principal guide for any change in the process. One ramification of this is the following: although the improvement of a certain process may benefit the employees or the administrative staff involved in the process, the primary focus is meeting the needs of the beneficiaries (such as the students, their parents and local businesses). In more developed applications of LHE, the process not only meets the needs of the beneficiaries but also exceeds them<sup>20</sup>.

The discrepancy between the steps suggested by the literature and the actual steps realised within case study A could be a result of fine-tuning the cycle to suit the university. To discern if this is the case, I directly compared the steps from the literature (Table 1) and from Case study A participants (Figure 2). The results are shown in

Table 25:

Six steps used to create value (within case)	Five steps suggested to create value (in the
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<sup>20</sup> One definition of an Excellent customer service is that which exceeds the customer expectations

<b>study A) – see Figure 1</b>	<b>literature) – see Table 1</b>
<b>Step 1:</b> Establishing a team tasked with the project	
<b>Step 2:</b> Identifying beneficiaries	<b>Step 1:</b> Define the process value from the point of view of its beneficiaries
<b>Step 3:</b> Developing suitable metrics to measure the value added by the processes	
<b>Step 4:</b> Identifying the steps in each process	<b>Step 2:</b> Identify the flow of the process, from the points of view of both the beneficiary and the provider
<b>Step 5:</b> Propose solution to eliminate waste and improve the flow of processes	<b>Step 3:</b> Eliminate as much waste as possible adding value to the process
	<b>Step 4:</b> Fine tune the process so it flows smoothly
<b>Step 6:</b> Repeat the previous two steps and add more value until the process metrics are met	<b>Step 5:</b> Repeat until perfect which entails continuous improvement (CI) and business process reengineering (BPR)

Table 25 Comparison of Lean Higher Education steps in the literature and steps for creating value in case study A

Table 2 clearly demonstrates how the two sets of steps are very similar, being essentially cyclical, starting with a definition of beneficiaries and process, followed by suggested improvements. The main differences are as follows:

1. The first step within case study A was to establish a team tasked with the project. This is a contrast with the literature where it is assumed that commitment to improvement is everyone’s responsibility, rather than the preserve of a specified group. The scenario assumed by the literature was just not possible with the case study. So, leadership elected to clearly assign a team in charge of each BPR project.
2. Developing metrics to assess the alleged improvement. I think this step was added to make sure that those who are tasked with BPR projects are going in the right direction. After all, the staff members who are doing the BPR are not Lean experts.

So, having the metrics at hand before suggesting changes just makes sense. This is an example of Lean being flexible in terms of allowing for case-specific tweaks.

3. Step 4 from the literature (Fine tune the process so it flows smoothly) was not explicitly mentioned in the data. However, it is in reality combined with step 3 into one major step. So, step 5 from case study A, which is to propose solutions to eliminate waste and improve the flow of processes, includes the two steps mentioned in the literature; eliminate as much waste as possible adding value to the process; and fine tune the process so it flows smoothly.

In summary, the seemingly apparent discrepancy between the steps suggested by the literature and the actual steps realised within case study A are no more than a result of fine tuning the cycle to better suit the university. These fine tunings are inherent in Lean as it allows for such minor tweaks.

## **5.2. Business Excellence Models as fads**

As discussed in the literature chapter, BEMs could be perceived as fads that come and go. Here is a detailed examination of the respondents' points of view on BEMs being fads categorised by case study in comparison to the literature.

### *5.2.1. The perception of BEMs as fads (answers from case study A)*

The findings were conclusive from case study A; participants rejected the notion that BEMs (mainly TQM-based one and Lean) are fads. The participants were almost unanimous in asserting that TQM in general and TQM-based BEMs have been empirically proven to work and that they have demonstratively stood the test of time. In their interviews, senior managers were not at all prejudiced against business models and business talk, although some highlighted the importance of using different terminology with different audiences. For example, with respect to the word “stakeholder”, A05 said they would never use this word in the office or in front of other academics, even though they, themselves, chair a stakeholder group for the SLC (Students Loans Company). The experience from case study A was generally successful in training, application and achieving savings. This consensus contrasts with the literature where views are more mixed with some staff considering BEMs

to be fads and others strongly disputing this (Mehta et al., 2014). It also contrasts with those who claim that the use of “business talk” lies at the core of a business fad (Benders & Van Veen, 2001).

### *5.2.2. The perception of BEMs as fads (answers from case study B)*

Surprisingly, only one participant from case study B commented on the perception of TQM and other BEMs as fads that promise more than they can deliver. Their opinion was very strong. The literature offers some support for their viewpoint. Some management practices are said to be fad-like and do promise far more than they deliver (Ansari et al., 2010). Some practices are even presented as cure-all remedies (Christensen & Michael, 2003). These criticisms of BEMs need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. In case study A, it was clear that Lean had indeed delivered what was promised. In case study B, no BEM had been recently applied, so examining its success or failure is impossible. However, since BEMs require staff commitment in order to be as successful as possible, being convinced that BEMs are overrated and doomed to fail (as stated by the one participant from case study B) becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, according to Lean and other BEMs, it is highly desirable for staff members to have unity and commitment (Hayes, 2014, p.229). So, those who are sceptical about it would definitely not have the same commitment as others, causing the model to be less successful than initially claimed. This puts more onus on the role of leadership (see 5.3.3. The role of leadership in new BEM, page 188) who should strive to engage all staff members within the new model. Furthermore, the application of the new model is better viewed as a process of improvement instead of a remedy (Collins, 2001).

### *5.2.3. Collaboration of responses*

The great majority of participants had similar points of view on this matter. However, these opinions could be biased. In other words, there is the possibility that those who feel strongly about BEMs elected to answer the question and declare that BEMs are not fads and are actually here to stay. To be clear, all of the 18 the participants across the two case studies were asked for their opinion about the claim that “BEMs are fads or fashion” but not all of

them provided clear answers. That is why the above tables of responses are very concise. In other words, the data is not immune to self-selection bias.

Having said that, it is not necessarily the case that those who elected to not comment have opposing opinions. They may have felt it was redundant to state the obvious (whatever that might have been for them) or they may not have felt strongly enough one way or the other. Also, it is important to keep in mind that not all the participants have experience in using BEMs, which explains why some of them might have had nothing to say about those BEMs being fads.

There is a wealth of literature criticising business models and describing them as fads. The main arguments as previously presented in the literature review are; (1) a management fad set by fashion setters; and (2) a cure-all remedy. The first criticism was first made by Abrahamson (1996). Later, Ponzi & Koenig (2002) suggested that the main characteristic that defines a management fad is a failure to withstand the test of time, which they set as a five-year threshold.

The second criticism (that BEMs are presented as a cure-all remedy) is also flawed. BEMs help people develop operating guidelines and then allow the organisation to run freely within the limits of the said guidelines. Whether those guidelines are set internally or externally, they serve as the much-needed checks and balances. BEMs are intended to be flexible, something that can be used to facilitate a process of improvement, not something that solves all problems. They are not cure-all remedies. They should not be regarded as such nor criticised for being so.

### **5.3. The implementation of Business Excellence Models**

This section will discuss the findings related to critical success factors for creating and sustaining quality in higher education and the language used by senior management.

#### ***5.3.1. Criteria for evaluating BEM***

Participants from the two case studies discussed their points of view on the criteria for choosing the current BEM.

### 5.3.1.1. Criteria for evaluating BEM (answers from case study A)

Different organisations might use different criteria when choosing a BEM. The number of BEMs and quality initiatives is vast making it difficult for managers to choose the most suitable BEM to use within their organisation (Thawesaengkulthai & Tannock, 2008). Helpfully, each BEM usually embodies a small number of ‘core principles’ and focuses on one or more operational aspects. These principles and operational aspects should coincide with what the adopting organisation is looking for when choosing a new BEM.

The core principle of TQM is to completely focus on customer satisfaction as the ultimate goal of every unit within the organisation (Cartmell et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, this was reflected in the data with case study A participants clearly stating that student experience should be at the heart of the new BEM after having identified students as their primary (sometimes only) customer. Other criteria mentioned by the participants included engagement and feedback. The criteria are further categorised in Figure 25:

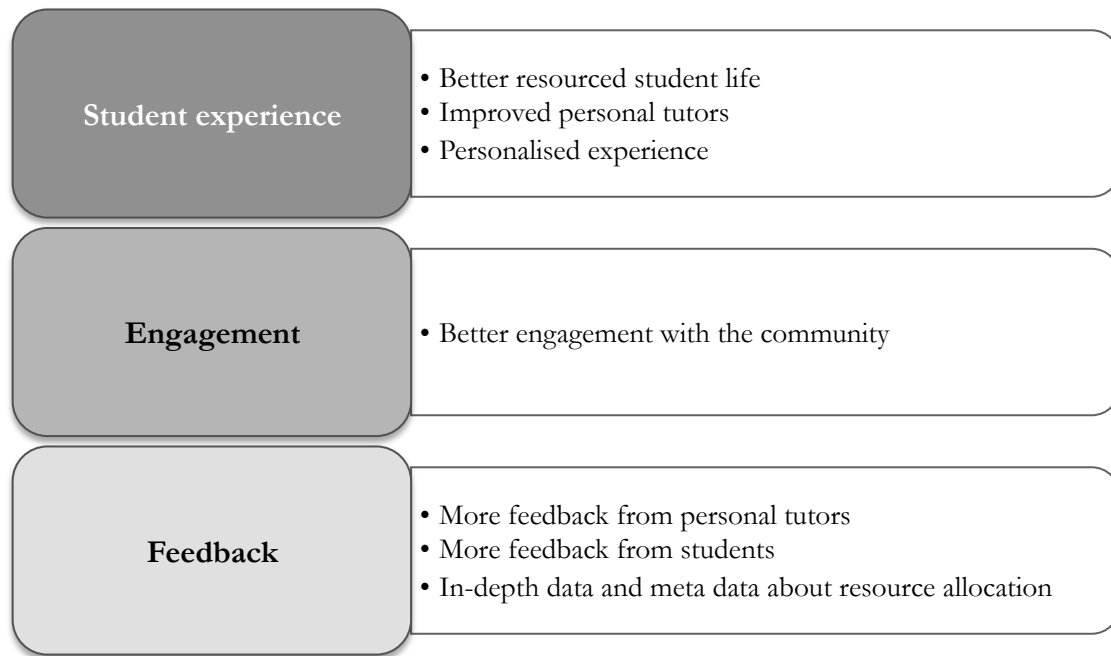


Figure 25 Criteria for evaluating BEM (answers from case study A)

### 5.3.1.2. Criteria for evaluating BEM (answers from case study B)

Participants from case study B expressed three main criteria for choosing and evaluating different BEMs. These criteria are presented in Figure 26

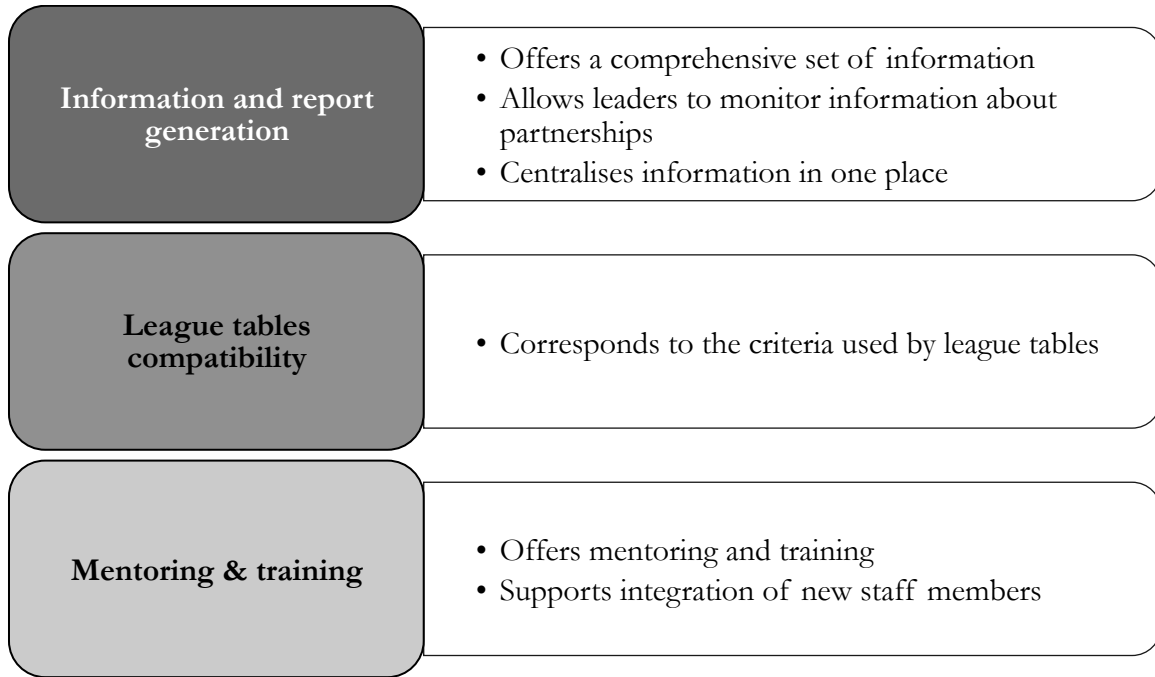


Figure 26 Criteria for evaluating BEM (answers from case study B)

The criteria presented in case study B relates to improved communication (arguably for better evaluation and awareness) and improved evaluation by league tables.

League table can be very helpful for standardising quality assessment through quantifying quality parameters (Balzer, 2010; Byrne & Womack, 2013). Although league table ranking systems seek to objectively assess the quality of universities and contribute to institutional quality and organizational effectiveness (Berbegal-Mirabent & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2015), they have been heavily criticised recently especially when applied to cross-border university comparisons (Shin, 2011). For this reason, deciding which BEM to adopt solely on the basis of how much it coincides with the criteria of league tables is counter-productive. Effectively, standardized testing (including league tables) can measure one thing precisely, namely the



ability to pass the test! The assessment itself is completely artificial (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011).

The concerns participants voiced about league tables largely agreed with the literature. League tables have been criticised for many reasons, including the validity of the concept itself; their ‘questionable or flawed methods’ (Altbach, 2006) and the absence of a benchmarking exercise (Proulx, 2007). Participants from case study B stated that league tables do not reflect excellence. Additionally, the statistical methods used by league tables have been criticised for their limited ability to interpret institutional outcomes or even discern the reasons for differences in institutional outcomes (Goldstein & Spiegelhalter, 1996). Participants voiced this exact criticism by stating that questionnaires do not and cannot provide the required level of detail. B08 gave an example of somebody who expresses dissatisfaction with a course. This might reflect the pain from their own difficulties in managing their time or the low quality of course content delivery. In the former case, the questionnaire is measuring something completely irrelevant to the actual classroom experience.

Finally, one pragmatic (or cynical) point of view, repeatedly mentioned in the literature, is that league tables as a necessary evil. This attitude seems to be growing given the rise of global university rankings. This rise puts pressure on universities but at the same time provides a powerful device for universities to position themselves globally. The result is that university leadership regards it better to enter into this race while at the same time engaging in the debate about its validity (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Only one participant, B08, expressed their opinion about the topic but they evidently agreed wholeheartedly with the literature. For them, league tables were one trend within a general movement towards greater political accountability. In their view, universities currently exist within a centralised system that relies on quantification and automated questionnaires, without an appropriate acknowledgement of their limitations.

One criticism mentioned in the literature is the fact that league table obscure certain differences among institutions. These differences include the purpose and type of the

institution (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). The participants did not voice this criticism at all.

### 5.3.1.3. Collaboration of responses

The participants identified many criteria that were used to choose a particular BEM. These were student experience, engagement and feedback from case study A and information, compatibility with league tables and training from case study B. These results depart from the literature. After conducting a literature survey, Thawesaengskulthai & Tannock (2008) identify seven desired outcomes that underpinning the selection process with respect to BEMs. These outcomes are: (1) shareholder benefits, (2) company performance, (3) market performance, (4) customer, (5) human resources, (6) process improvement and (7) organisational impact. Table 3 demonstrates the relationship between the seven outcomes specified in the literature and the two sets of criteria from case study A and B.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Case Study A</b>	<b>Case Study B</b>	<b>Literature survey</b>
<b>Student/customer experience</b>	✓		✓
<b>Engagement/impact</b>	✓		✓
<b>Feedback</b>	✓		
<b>Information</b>		✓	
<b>Market performance (league tables)</b>		✓	✓
<b>Human resources (includes training)</b>		✓	✓
<b>Shareholder benefits</b>			✓
<b>Company performance</b>			✓
<b>Process improvement</b>			✓

Table 26 Cross-comparison of criteria for *evaluating BEM* from the data and from the literature

Surprisingly, each case study identified a criterion used at the institution but not mentioned in the literature. These are *feedback* in case study A and *information generation* in case study B.

Having identified the criteria at each case study university, I now intend to aggregate them into one framework because, as I argue below, the similarities between the two institutions outweigh the differences. Although the two institutions have different levels of experiences in BEM application, they have both put a great deal of effort into strategy building around their respective CSFs (listed below) and linked their quality initiatives (in the form of BEM or smaller) around those strategies. In other words, the two universities have identified the CSFs that best support their quality programmes and have then evaluated the BEM with those in mind. In the case of university A, the identified CSFs were used to better the application of their new BEM, while in the case of university B, the identified CSFs were used in the application of department-wide quality initiatives. Moreover, the criteria can be combined because the two universities have many similarities. These include their geographical location, being public universities, size (same number of faculties and similar number of students), global outreach and the multi-campus they both manage.

An aggregation of the criteria discussed by participants from the two case studies produces the following list: (1) student experience, (2) engagement with the community, (3) mentoring & training of staff, (4) feedback, information & report generation, and (5) league table compatibility

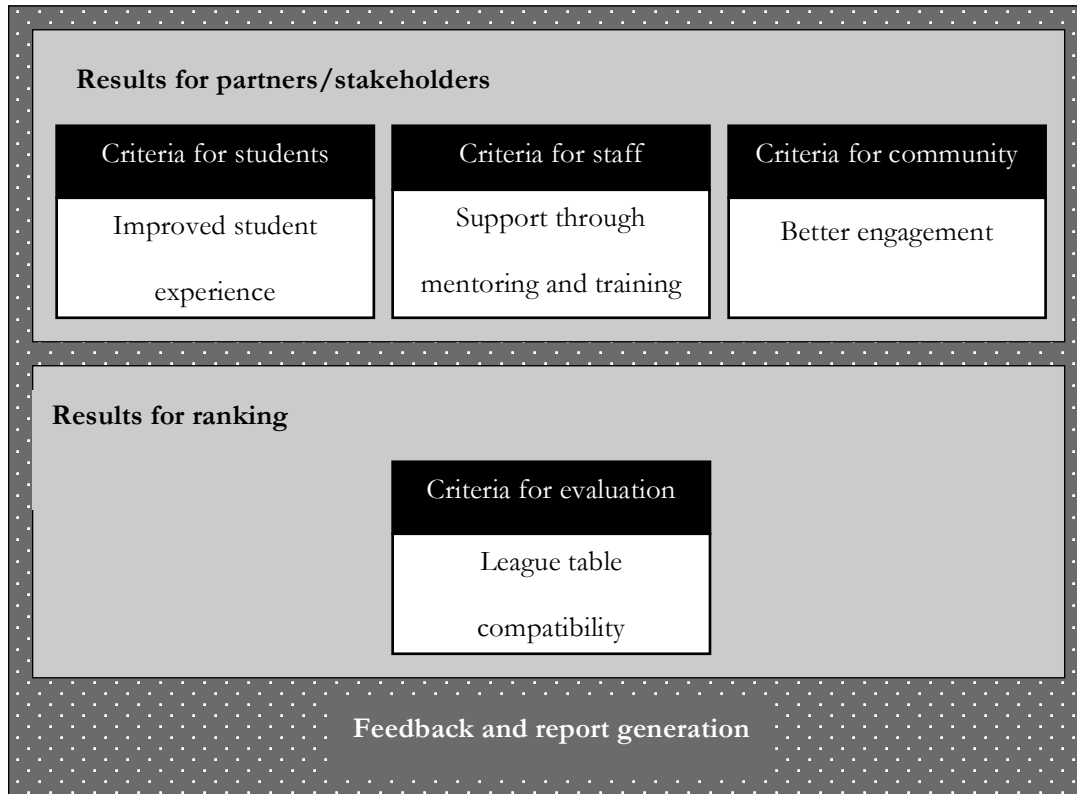


Figure 27 Conceptual framework of criteria for evaluating BEMs

### 5.3.2. Critical success factors

Critical Success Factors (CSFs) are the small number of characteristics of an organization that have the most impact on its effectiveness and efficiency<sup>21</sup>. Participants from both case studies were able to understand and identify CSFs within their institutions. Their understating was in line with the literature that suggests changes in the performance of the CSFs affect the institution's business excellence (Kanji et al., 2010).

#### 5.3.2.1. Critical success factors (answers from case study A)

My investigation into CSFs within the two case studies revealed quite similar responses. In case study A, the CSFs can be categorised into four main groups as show in Figure 28: (1) the team, (2) the process, (3) the location and (4) the brand.

<sup>21</sup> The Business Dictionary

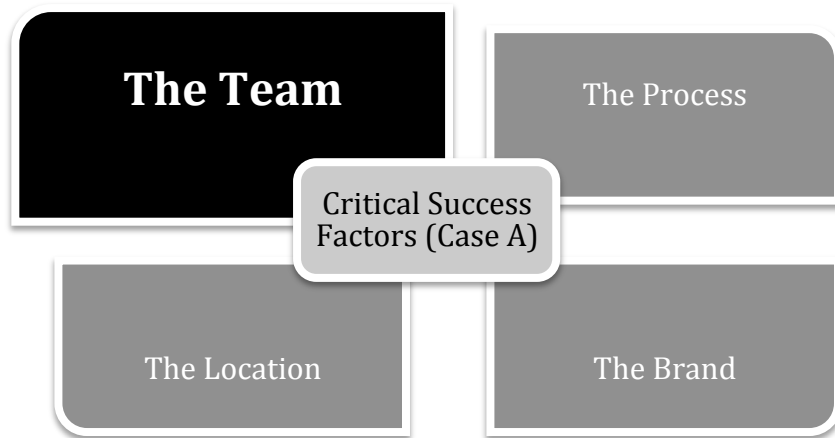


Figure 28 Critical Success Factors according to interview participants (Case study A)

#### 5.3.2.1.a. *The team*

The first and probably strongest of the CSFs is *the team*. This is first because those who mentioned it always mentioned it first. It is also the strongest because it is by far the most cited CSF. Participants understood *the team* to mean the exceptional blend of talent found in both the academic and professional services staff. Academics were world-class and very well renowned; professional staff were highly experienced, and to top it all there existed an “esprit de corps” that was described as “brilliant” and “amazing”. The team as a CSF is repeatedly cited in the literature (Al Qashami & Mohammad, 2015; Benson Soong, Chuan Chan, Chai Chua, & Fong Loh, 2001; Cheawjindakarn, Suwannathachote, & Theeraroungchaisri, 2012; In’airat & Kassem, 2014). So, the data from case study A is definitely in line with the literature.

#### 5.3.2.1.b. *The process*

The second CSF is the *process*. Participants referred to this using different terms such as “our way of doing things”, “the way things are done here”, “procedures” and “current practices”. They were hinting at the accumulated experience within departments also known as organizational learning or wisdom. Again, this is in line with the literature. Process is frequently identified as a CSF. It is usually described as participatory, which again highlights the need for teamworking and collaboration (Allen, Kern, & Havenhand, 2002).

#### 5.3.2.1.c. *The location*

The third factor is the location of the university (based at the heart of London) and the departments, which are in very close proximity. This close proximity allows for more interaction between the staff and the students. This was evident in both case studies, though more prominent in case study A than B. Generally, this was viewed positively although one participant was worried about people “getting on each other's nerves all the time” (A01). To the best of my knowledge, only one other study of HE investigates location as a CSF. This comes from Saudi Arabia rather than the west and concludes that location is not a major factor (see 0 5.3.2.4.e. *The Location*).

#### 5.3.2.1.d. *The brand*

The fourth and final factor that was consistently reported in case study A but not case study B was the *brand*. The brand refers to the name and fame of the university. Words such as “*our brand*” and “*our image*” kept being mentioned. When asked what they thought distinguished the brand, they clearly struggled to answer. One said, “*it's hard to pin it down, but everyone knows what it is*” and another added “*it's different to everybody because of its perceptive nature*”. Nevertheless, it was clear that the brand was perceived as a strong success factor. As with location, brand was not identified in the literature on HE.

#### 5.3.2.2. *Critical success factors (answers from case study B)*

Responses from case study B were definitely less detailed than those from case study A. They can be categorised into four main groups as shown in Figure 6: (1) staff buy-in, (2) collaboration through committees, (3) personal tutors and (4) transparency and honesty.

##### 5.3.2.2.a. *The team / staff buy-in*

What participants at case study A referred to as “the team” was labelled “staff buy-in” by participants at case study B. According to B01, “the most important” of the CSF is “staff buy-in” so there are always backups. So, if, for example, a member of staff is ill or on leave, there is a fall-back position. Somebody else can pick up that element of the work so that the quality chain remains continuous. This fail-safe feature of the system was not mentioned at all within case study A. It would be wrong to assume from the fact that a fail-safe feature

was not mentioned then there is not fail-safe feature in practice. Still, it is telling that no participant from case study A mentioned the fail-safe feature as a CSF.

#### *5.3.2.2.b. Collaboration through committees*

Committees were considered critical because of their ability to promote collaboration and provide feedback. Both of these benefits are mentioned in the literature as critical success factors for TQM application (Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2003).

#### *5.3.2.2.b. Personal tutors*

Personal tutoring programs were regarded as a major CSF within case study B. Personal tutors have the most contact with students, interacting with them on a daily basis. They were seen as the 'first line of defence' because they are the staff most capable of early diagnosis of any trouble along the way. The use of personal tutors is not mentioned as a CSF in the literature.

#### *5.3.2.2.d. Transparency and honesty*

The idea here is that strong organisations have transparency for early diagnosis and correction of mistakes. Of course, this is not an easy requirement since transparency could prove problematic especially in highly centralised and hierarchical institutions. It would also be hard in places where people feel they will be punished for highlighting weaknesses and where criticism is not welcomed by senior management. So, in order for transparency to have a chance, there needs to be a great deal of trust and support. Transparency is mentioned in the literature as a CSF within a manufacturing setting (Gowan & Mathieu, 1996) but not in the context of HEIs.

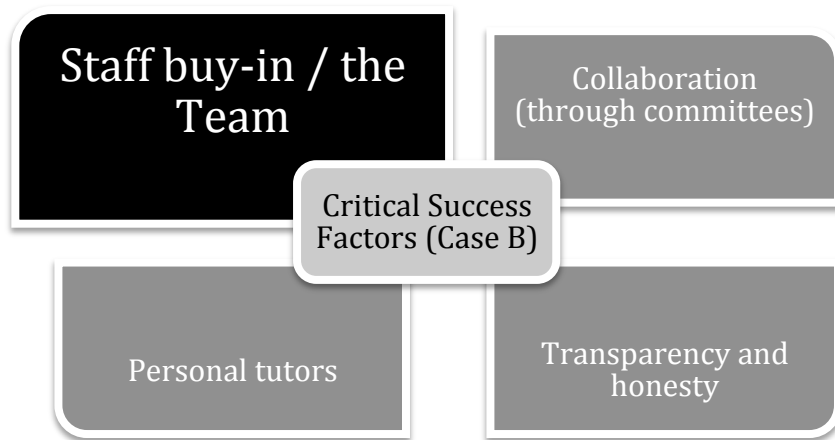


Figure 29 Critical Success Factors according to interview participants (Case study B)

### 5.3.2.3. Collaboration of responses

By chance, each university generated four CSFs, some of which they deemed more significant than others. The most important CSF was labelled “the team” by case study A participants and “staff buy-in” by case study B participants. Clearly, these two concepts are very similar. Moreover, what case study A participants identified as “the process” is very similar to what case study B participants identified as “collaboration” and “transparency and honesty”.

Some of these findings align with the literature. The majority of studies identify between 3 and 5 CSFs, although some identify many more. The most cited CSF in the literature is management commitment (Al-Balushi et al., 2014; Albliwi, Antony, Abdul Halim Lim, & van der Wiele, 2014; Laureani & Antony, 2012; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2003). This was not found so explicitly in my research. While the literature puts more weight on leadership and management, the data from this study is more inclusive of other staff members, emphasising the importance of teams and staff buy-in rather than individuals. This could very well be the result of respondent self-censorship. Self-censorship refers to participants feeling that it would reflect better on their universities if they appeared to have a culture of teamwork. Regardless, a separate discussion took place into the role of leadership where leadership was viewed as important by participants (see 5.3.3. The role of leadership in new BEM, page 188) but not as important as the literature had previously suggested.



#### 5.3.2.4. Further discussion of CSFs

A comparison between the identified CSFs from the two case studies with the CSFs from the literature can be seen in

Table 27

	CSF in the data		CSF in the literature			
	Case Study A	Case Study B	Al-Balushi et al., 2014	Albliwi, et al., 2014	Laureani & Antony, 2012	Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2003
Top Management Commitment And Leadership			✓	✓	✓	✓
Teams And Teamwork	✓	✓				✓
Communication (and Transparency)		✓	✓	✓		
Organizational Culture			✓		✓	
The Brand	✓					
The Location	✓					
The Use Of Personal Tutors		✓				
Process And Process Management	✓					✓
Collaboration & Employee Engagement	✓	✓				
Customer Focus						✓
Information And Analysis						✓
Training And Education				✓		✓
Supplier Management						✓
Strategic Planning					✓	✓
Measurement And			✓			✓

<b>Reward Systems</b>						
<b>Sufficient Resource Allocation</b>				✓		
<b>Human Resource Management</b>						✓
<b>Product And Service Design</b>						✓
<b>Process Control</b>						✓
<b>Benchmarking</b>						✓
<b>Continuous Improvement</b>						✓
<b>Employee Empowerment</b>						✓
<b>Quality Assurance</b>						✓
<b>Social Responsibility</b>						✓
<b>Employee Satisfaction</b>						✓

Table 27 Cross-comparison of CSFs from the data and from the literature

The list of CSFs from Sila & Ebrahimpour (2003) is particularly pertinent because it is so extensive. It is based on a survey of 76 previous studies into the critical success factors of total quality management (TQM) in many countries. The key feature of Table 4 will be explained in the following section. Four CSFs are present in this study but not the literature. These are: (1) the brand (of the university), (2) the location, (3) transparency and honesty, and (4) the use of personal tutors. As explained below, these CSFs should be incorporated into the literature.

*5.3.2.4.a. Top Management Commitment and Leadership*

The role of top management in initiating and supporting the BEM initiative is the only CSF where the literature suggests there is consensus (Al-Balushi et al., 2014; Albliwi et al., 2014; Laureani & Antony, 2012; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2003). For some authors, this is the most important CSF (Disterheft, Caeiro, Azeiteiro, & Filho, 2015). However, the data from this research does not mention this CSF explicitly. Instead, it is mentioned implicitly in two ways: (a) when talking about the initiation of the new BEM, participants from both case studies claimed the role of senior leadership was paramount, and (b) when discussing the ways to

sustain the BEM, participants from case study A mentioned the role of leadership, namely leadership commitment, as critical.

The literature that mentions leadership in the context of change usually describes this leadership as having a vision for change (Laureani & Antony, 2012). Conversely, the lack of visionary leadership is seen as a common reason for BEM applications to fail. This because leadership is ultimately responsible for setting the clear vision for establishing the new BEM; communicating said-vision to staff; and motivating staff to accept and adapt the BEM initiative (Laureani & Antony, 2012). The fact that case study A was going through a major change (by employing an institution-wide BEM) could be the reason participants from this case study mentioned leadership in this context. Case study B was not going through a similar phase, which may explain why participants from this case study did not talk about the role of leadership in the same way. Having said that, it is still odd that participants never mentioned the role of leadership as a CSF explicitly. Either (a) participants thought that leadership is not actually a CSF; or (b) leadership was implied in another CSF, most probably “teams”.

#### *5.3.2.4.b. Teams And Teamwork*

When people are brought together in highly functional teams, quality improvement becomes easier to communicate which promotes change (Kanji et al., 2010). This is the reason mentioned in the literature for regarding teams as a CSF for employing BEMs. Teams and teamwork is the only CSF identified by participants from both case studies. However, participants used this elusive title to refer to different concepts and practices; while participants from case study A were constantly citing the ability of their institution to attract world-class researchers and students, participants from case study B were citing the importance of having backups. In other words, the teams as a CSF could be understood to mean two different things; (1) the ability to attract and employ exceptional talent, and (2) managing people so there are fail-safe processes. While the first one is a characteristic of the institution, the second is an organisational activity. Furthermore, the first item is a concept while the second is a practice. This is why the term “teams and teamwork” was described as elusive. Having said that, the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. In fact, both

relate to the core activities of a university (teaching and research) and both are the responsibility of human resource management. It is important to notice that teams and teamwork is only one part of HRM. Attracting researchers and students is mentioned in the literature as playing an important part of the institutions performance (Kanji et al., 2010), but it is not mentioned as a CSF. Having backups like substitute teachers was not mentioned in the literature in the context of CSF at all.

#### *5.3.2.4.c. Communication*

There is no consensus on whether communication is a CSF. Some authors relate it to the success or failure of continuous improvement initiatives (Antony, Netasha, Cullen, & Kumar, 2012). Some view it as a 'very important' CSF together with strategy and vision (Disterheft et al., 2015). Others omit it. In this study, participants did not mention communication as a CSF directly. However, case study A took a very open attitude towards communications by purposefully including people who opposed the BEM initial project in the task committees. This allowed senior leadership to gauge the attitude and get first hand opinions thus reducing the possibility of misinformation and limiting the spread of half-truths and rumours about the project. As for case study B, participants identified transparency and honesty as a CSF. Transparency in the context of information management is mentioned in the literature as a CSF but only in a manufacturing setting (Gowan & Mathieu, 1996) not in the context of HEIs. Furthermore, enhancing transparency is encouraged as it is believed to enhance credibility and promote staff participation in the new BEM in universities (Disterheft et al., 2015) but is not recognised as a CSF.

#### *5.3.2.4.d. The Brand*

This CSF is not mentioned in the literature. However, participants from case study A said that the brand of their institution played a role in the success of the new BEM. The fact that participants mentioned it might be a result of recent changes to the HE sector. Specifically, with the growth in the number of higher education providers (both public, private, online and otherwise universities), universities are pressured to differentiate themselves by brand and by quality of teaching and supporting services (Latchem, 2011).

#### *5.3.2.4.e. The Location*

There is very little literature about the location as CSF. No research has been done on location as a CSF in the context of university quality management. The only study that has identified location as a possible CSF was a study by Alharthi, Alassafi, Walters, & Wills, (2017) within the Saudi higher education. The study concluded that Physical Location was not statistically significant as a CSF. This finding is completely at odds with my research. This may be because UK and Saudi HE are very different or because UK and Saudi geography are very different. Without more research, it is hard to say.

#### *5.3.2.4.f. The Use Of Personal Tutors*

Participants from case study B identified personal tutoring as a CSF. Since personal tutors are responsible for the day-to-day contact with students, they are regarded as a 'first line of defence'. Nevertheless, the use of personal tutors is not mentioned as a CSF in the literature. The reasoning behind this CSF could be attributed to the nature of the university in case study B, as it is a new university with an explicit focus on teaching and a student body. The student body also includes many people who are the first in their family to attend university and therefore seem to appreciate the role of the personal tutor immensely.

### *5.3.3. The role of leadership in new BEM*

It is widely claimed in the literature that the application of BEMs requires management commitment and leadership (Brah & Ying Lim, 2006; Das, Paul, & Swierczek, 2008; Perles, 2002; Sumukadas, 2006). Here is what the participants in each case study thought about this vital theme.

#### *5.3.3.1. The role of leadership in new BEM (answers from case study A)*

When asked about the role of leadership, participants were clear that change is ultimately the responsibility of leaders so, basically, there is no change without the commitment of leadership. This accord with the literature. Top management commitment and leadership is said to be a critical prerequisite to successful TQM implementation. (Das, Kumar, & Kumar, 2011). Furthermore, leadership commitment is overwhelmingly accepted as a core competency (Herold & Fedor, 2008; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Karp & Helgo, 2008;

Kotter, 1996; Perles, 2002; Raes, Glunk, Heijltjes, & Roe, 2007). However, in order for leaders to do their job efficiently, there needs to be an appropriate structure. Participants from case study A were adamant that they (as leaders) could not operate and grow their organisations within flat structures. This could be seen as self-critique of their institution as well as a piece of advice for other institutions. This claim was also found in the literature in the context of change within the UK (Hogan, 2005, 2012).

Finally, a true insight into the mechanics of senior leadership was offered by participant A10 who claimed that senior leaders are sometimes very reluctant to change themselves. This point of view seems to reflect a paradoxical trait of many systems of power, wherein the “ruling elite” will tend to not change the system that puts them in positions of power in the first place.

#### *5.3.3.2. The role of leadership in new BEM (answers from case study B)*

The opinions expressed by participants from case study B are very similar to those expressed in case study A. They were sure that leadership is crucial to the success of the new BEM and that leaders should hold themselves responsible for quality. The literature largely supports these points, especially the notion that leaders must taking responsibility for change in order to be able to building competencies and transform their institutions (Bass, 1990; Hollander, 1978; Rost, 1993).

#### *5.3.3.3. Collaboration of responses*

All participants agreed that leadership is crucial to the success of the new BEM application. It is worth mentioning, however, that the role of leadership in making sure the new BEM is successful does vary and it includes many facets of motivation, inspiration, and sometimes even coercion. Conventional wisdom dictates that BEMs work best when everyone buys into them. Imposing those new initiatives might work on the short-run but they will not last. The literature suggests that because change efforts challenge the existing culture, resistance it to be expected (Cowan-Sahadath, 2010). That is why the role of leadership is not only to commit but also to inspire. This means leaders are not only required to believe in the change,

but they should also make other believe in it. People have to understand and accept the rationale for the change.

Leaders rely on certain competences to be able to manage the desired change (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). The literature seems to agree on the existence of these competencies (Herold & Fedor, 2008; Karp & Helgo, 2008) but there is little consensus on what these leadership competencies actually are (González & Guillén, 2002). These competences are also cited within the context of applying a new BEM (Das et al., 2011). Among the other competencies mentioned in this context are (1) realising a systematic approach to change (Appelbaum, Berke, Taylor, & Vazquez, 2008; Griffith-Cooper & King, 2007), (2) promoting accountability (Cowan-Sahadath, 2010), (3) taking responsibility for change (Bass, 1990; Hollander, 1978; Rost, 1993), (4) creating open dialogue (Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995), and (5) inspiring creativity, (6) developing team, (7) communicating a shared vision and (8) creating compromise (Goetsch & Davis, 2006; González & Guillén, 2002).

These competencies were almost all mentioned within the course of the interviews, as summarised by

Table 28.

Competences	Case Study A	Case Study B	Literature survey
Adopting a systematic approach to change		✓	✓
Promoting accountability			✓
Taking responsibility for change	✓	✓	✓
Creating open dialogue	✓		✓
Inspiring creativity	✓	✓	✓
Developing teams	✓	✓	✓
Communicating a shared vision	✓	✓	✓
Creating compromise	✓		✓

Table 28 Critical leadership competences for applying a BEM from the data and from the literature

The first competency, i.e. adopting a systematic approach to change, was only mentioned within case study B. It was mentioned in the context of sustaining the new change. This competency could feasibly be delegated since it has a technical nature. I think this is why it was not mentioned within case study A.

The second competency, i.e. promoting accountability, was never mentioned explicitly in either two case studies. This might be because, at this early stage of promoting a BEM, leaders believe it is better not to discuss the added responsibilities for fear of discouraging staff members.

#### **5.4. How to sustain a Business Excellence Model**

Here is a detailed examination of the respondents' views on how to sustain a BEM from case study A.

##### ***5.4.1. How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained (answers from case study A)***

The responses are particularly important as they come from a recent, successful application of an extensive BEM (as discussed earlier). The responses can be categorised into three major groups (see Figure 30): (1) resource allocation, (2) human resource management, and (3) leadership.



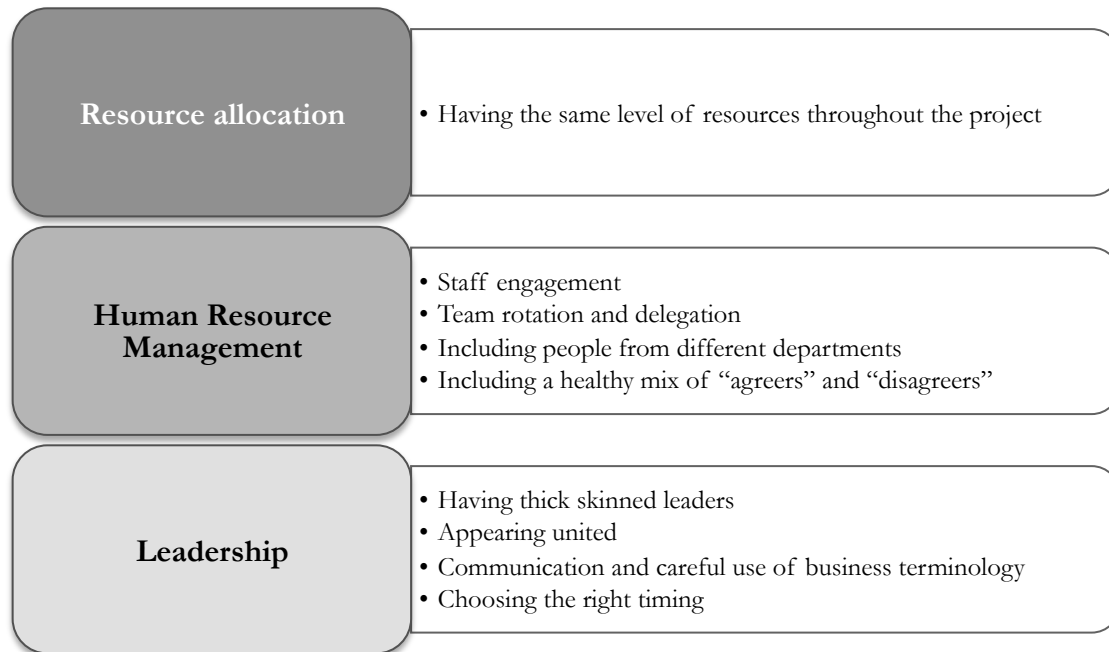


Figure 30 Ways to ensure BEM initiative is sustained (answers from case study A)

I will comment on two items. Firstly, it was deemed important to have a mixture of people who say yes (i.e. “the agreeers”) and those who say no (i.e. “the disagreeers” or the “no nos”). This may have been to spark a healthy discussion or to make sure opponents do not feel disregarded or in the hope that they might change. I could not make a definite answer from the data but the importance of having this mix was clear.

Secondly, the terminology used by leadership is vital, especially when discussing the BEM with academics [see 5.2.2. The perception of BEMs as fads (answers from case study B), page 172]. Words such as “strategise” and “operationalise” were thought to be counter-productive. Instead, leadership elected to just highlight the fact that there was going to a change.

#### ***5.4.2. How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained (answers from case study B)***

The responses can be broken down into four elements: (1) monitoring, (2) feedback, (3) interaction between students and the university through the student union, and (4) institutionalisation of new practices, in other words turning projects into everyday operation.

The above elements were drawn from locally successful initiatives that were applied at the departmental level. All of these elements are reflected in the literature including the role of feedback in effective change management (Chomsky, 2015).

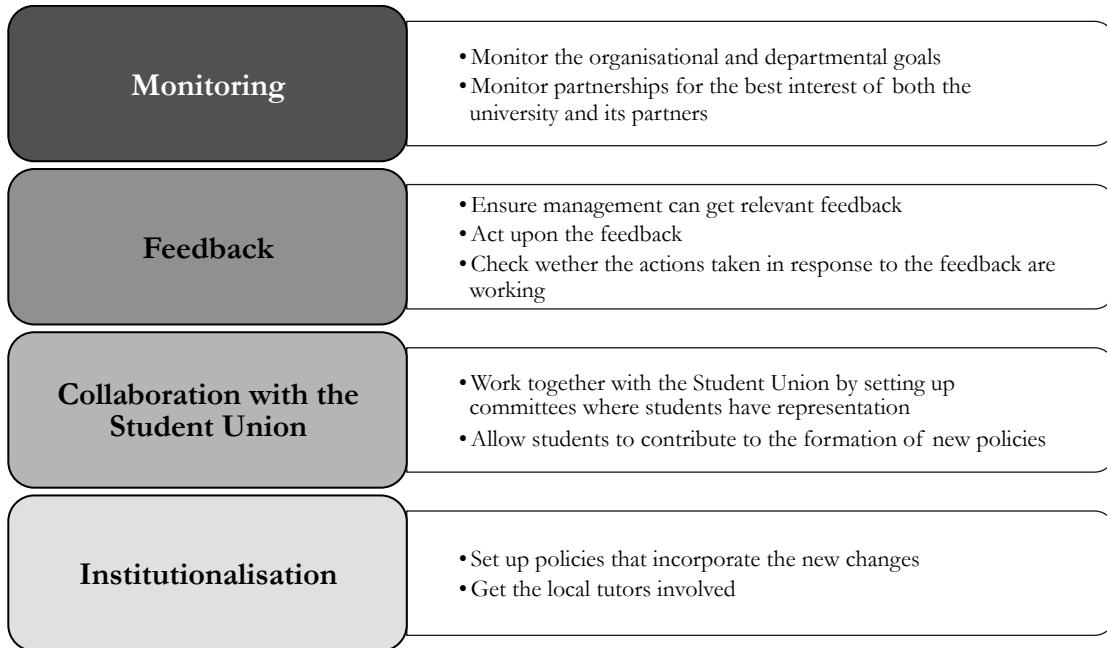


Figure 31 Ways to ensure BEM initiative is sustained (answers from case study B)

### *5.4.3. Collaboration of responses*

There is very little literature on how to sustain a BEM initiated within the context of HE (Osseo-Asare et al., 2005). The identified measures for sustaining a BEM initiative from the two case studies have been compared with the literature in

Table 29.

Measure	Case study A	Case study B	Literature (Osseo-Asare et al., 2005)
Daily tasks (Institutionalisation)		✓	✓
Institutional mission, vision and values			✓
Internal and external communications (Feedback)		✓	✓
Staff empowerment	✓		✓
Staff support	✓	✓	✓
Resource allocation	✓		
Leadership	✓		
Monitoring		✓	
Collaboration with the Student Union		✓	

Table 29 Measures for sustaining a BEM initiative from the data and from the literature

Different participants used some terms interchangeably and some participants used their own terminology. As a result, the literature and the data are not always an exact match. What the literature labels *daily tasks*, participants at case study B labelled as *institutionalisation* or making the new practices part of everyday operations. What the literature labels *internal and external communications*, participants at case study B labelled as *Feedback*. What the literature labels as *Staff empowerment* and *Staff support*, participants at case study A labelled as *Human Resource Management*. Table 6 demonstrates that the participants at the two institutions have differing views about how to sustain a BEM initiative (with the exception of “staff support”, which was mentioned by both groups). However, aggregating the two datasets provides a checklist

that other universities may find beneficial (regardless whether the university is research-focused or teaching-focused).

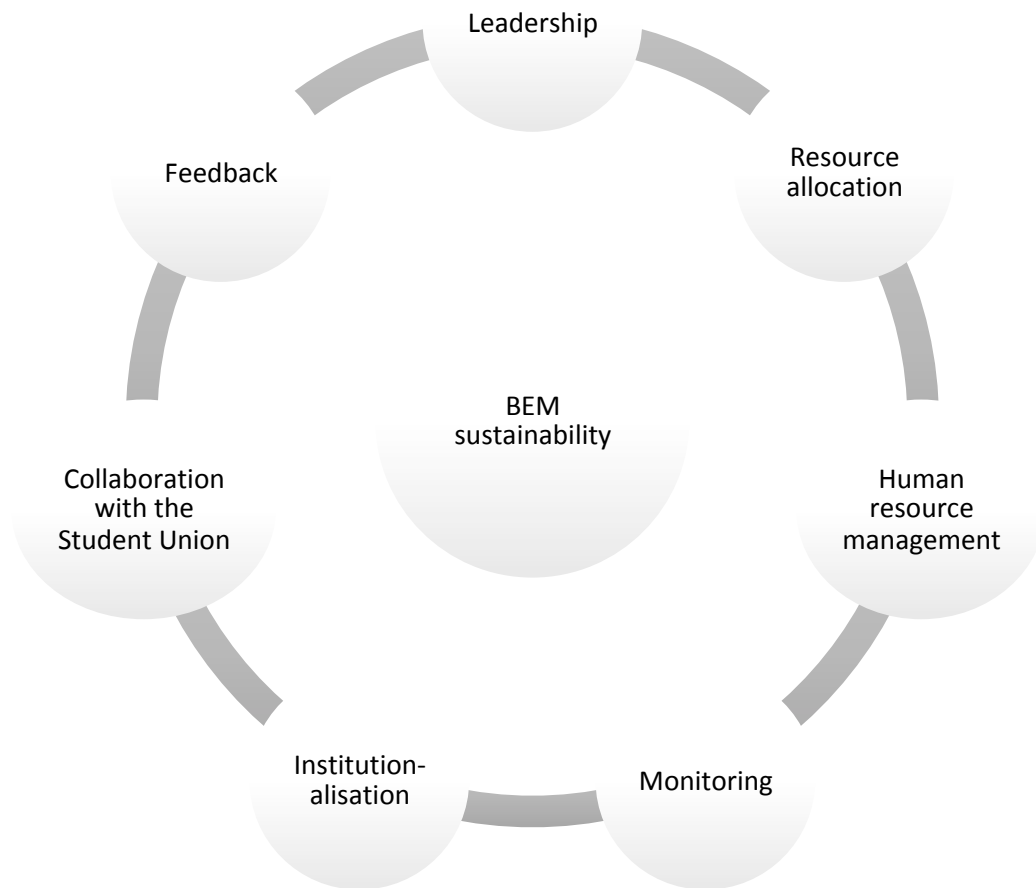


Figure 32 Conceptual framework for sustaining a new BEM

### 5.5. Summary

This chapter compared the findings with the literature within four sections. The first section discussed quality management systems. It started by discussing the trigger for implementing a BEM. It highlighted the fact that the trigger for both case studies was internal. Secondly, the section discussed the applicability of BEMs in HEIs. Participants contested the topic and had varying degrees of scepticism. Thirdly, the section discussed the notion that HE is a unique service which is a belief that all participants subscribed to. However, the justifications

for this belief were varied, including the nature of academic work and its reliance on anarchy; the lack of physical outcomes, and the flat structure of HE. An additional justification that was not mentioned in the literature is the lack of control as a result of the human aspect of education. Finally, this section discussed Lean (a specific type of BEM) and compared the advantages and steps of applying Lean at case study A to the literature.

The second section discussed whether BEMs are seen as fads. The participants were more unified in their rejection of this claim (i.e. that BEMs are fads) than the literature would suggest.

The third section discussed the practical implementation of BEMs at the two universities, paying particular attention to evaluation criteria, critical success factors and the role of leadership. Concerning criteria for choosing a BEM, the section highlighted two factors not found in the literature. These were the ability of the BEM to (1) generate relevant feedback (case study A) and (2) provide in-depth information and great reports (case study B). The criteria from the two case studies were aggregated into a framework for evaluating BEMs. Three CSFs not present in the literature were identified. These were the location and the brand of the university from case study A as well as the use of personal tutors from case study B. Concerning the role of leadership, participants had little to add which was not previously noted in the literature. Both case studies generated the following four competences for leaders; (1) taking responsibility for change, (2) inspiring creativity, (3) developing teams and (4) communicating a shared vision.

The final section discussed the participants' views on how to sustain a BEM. The comparison with the literature revealed some discrepancies in practical measures of sustainability. Again, three features not found in the literature were identified. These were resource allocation and leadership (from case study A) as well as monitoring and collaboration with the student union (from case study B). The aggregation of measures aimed at sustaining a BEM resulted in a conceptual framework comprising seven elements, as follows: leadership; resource allocation; human resource management; monitoring; institutionalisation; collaboration with the student union; feedback.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

### 6.1. Research overview

The overall aim of the research was to explore the reason(s) for the apparent lack of application of Business Excellence Models in UK universities and to provide ways that could help the quality assurance staff achieve successful application of said-models. The study was underpinned by two overarching research questions and four sub-questions, as follows:

*“Why might one UK university embrace Business Excellence Models while another resists them? How can quality assurance staff make the best use of these models?”*

- ✓ *What motivates a university to implement or not implement a Business Excellence Model (BEM)?*
- ✓ *How is the decision to implement a BEM enacted and with what consequences?*
- ✓ *To what extent do university staff view BEMs as business fads or fashions?*
- ✓ *How might BEMs be better initiated, implemented and sustained?*

This concluding chapter is divided into three sections. Section 6.2 addresses the research questions and sub-questions, in light of the findings discussed in chapters 4 and 5, section 6.3 exhibits the research contribution and the final section (6.4) considers the limitations of the research results coupled with recommendation for further research.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, case study research was employed to answer the research questions. This was suitable since the phenomenon is being studied within context (Yin, 2014). Two case studies were introduced and examined: case study A which is a Russell Group university and case study B which is a new (Post 92s) university. I have argued earlier that it is important to distinguish between the two types of universities because they have quite different histories and they face different challenges. Both case studies are based in London. Data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with participants from each of the two case studies. The participants were selected randomly within four

different role categories; (1) vice-chancellor or pro-chancellor, (2) strategic management teams, (3) department head, and (4) quality & improvement groups.

## **6.2. Summary of the thesis and main findings**

### ***6.2.1. Quality Management Systems in HEIs; perceptions and applicability***

In order to address the first main research question (“*Why might one UK university embrace Business Excellence Models while another resists them?*”), I explored perceptions around BEMs as well as the history of any recent quality initiative that could be seen as a replacement for a BEM. Exploration about the applicability of the BEMs in general and TQM and Lean in particular revealed the following results:

While participants from case study A were homogenous in their opinions and generally praised BEMs as appropriate and suitable to be applied in HE, participants from case study B were a little bit more heterogeneous and presented varying degrees of scepticism. While the arguments in favour of using BEMs in HE included a myriad of operational benefits (such as improved efficiency, standardisation and the reduction of waste) on top of an intrinsic aptness for BEMs within HE, the arguments against using BEMs in HE mainly focused on academic freedom and perceived complexity. I made the case that the intended use of any BEM does not have to be unyielding in an *all-or-nothing* fashion. Indeed, the alleged rigidity of BEMs (and TQMs, more generally) can be softened by using them as guidelines. Doing so offers a healthy compromise whereby the benefits of BEMs (such as metric measures, benchmarking and process improvement) could still be reaped without any (or with minimal) infringement on academic freedom.

As mentioned earlier, the university culture could be at odds with the introduction of any BEM for the following three reasons: (1) academics have a reputation for being non-conformists and make it a challenge to introduce any initiative; (2) academics are critical which causes a potential barrier to any BEM implementation; and (3) academic freedom which is arguably the most important element in academic culture could obstruct the introduction of BEMs. However, it is possible that academics invoke the argument about infringing academic freedom because they are opposed to the change

being proposed. In other words, academics might be using academic freedom to protest about unwanted change. This is one area where this research is not equipped to answer. It may help to emphasize the scientific approach of BEMs (especially TQM) when attempting to introduce them into a HEI. After all, the assumption that TQM stands at odds with academic culture is a hypothesis that is still to be proven or falsified.

BEMs could conflict with academic freedom on a technical day-to-day basis, for example, through (1) its emphasis on customer satisfaction, (2) its introduction of new policies that could negatively impact academic freedom, (3) its insistence on standardisation (if applied myopically). However, leadership could keep these things in mind and use the BEM merely as a guideline. Making sure they equip academics with enough information about the new BEM will also soften the blow of the new initiative.

All initiatives discussed in the interviews were top-down in design. In every instance, it seemed that senior management sensed a certain “need” for change and acted accordingly. Sometimes, participants identified a single trigger for change but mostly they offered a plethora of reasons. The triggers discussed were categorized into the following groups: (1) academic staff reports (internal employability report from case study B and staff complaints from case study A), (2) student complaints (from case study A) and (3) management itself (leaders noticing the existence of cumbersome processes and management responding to pressure to score highly in the Research Excellence Framework, both in case study A).

Opinions about the applicability of BEMs in case study A had a consensus that it is applicable and appropriate to use BEMs in HEIs. Participants mentioned plenty of benefits and no concerns. I cannot draw a conclusion from this one instance about the organisation’s culture. However, I have made the point that this could be interpreted either positively or negatively. On the one hand, homogeneity and harmony have their roots in common understanding; on the other hand, the fact that there was no criticism at all could indicate an echo chamber culture.

The main points related to the applicability of BEMs in HEIs from case study A could be summarised as follows:



- The nature of BEMs is part of the make-up of modern universities. This is an opinion that was echoed mainly by management professional or people with previous careers in industry, in other words, people who are well versed with TQM and the topics of Quality Management. A second characteristic of those who echoed this opinion is that they viewed the university to be similar to a manufacturing plant. The logical conclusion that these people drew from the two premises (i.e. professional background & perception of university as more similar to a manufacturing plant than thought otherwise) was that BEMs would surely benefit any university within which they are applied.
- I have discussed the particularity of HEIs and how higher education is unique to some extent but I will entertain the idea that universities are not that different than manufacturing plants when it comes to applying BEMs. Many of the reservations about BEMs in HEIs could also be said about BEMs in research and development departments of big corporations, where TQM and TQM-based models have proven beneficial for research functions and even a statistical relationship between TQM, innovation and performance was observed (Yin, 2014).
- In case study A, the driving force behind the initiative was benchmarking with market leaders in other service sectors where there needs to be some freedom (or ‘creative chaos’ as expressed by one participant) balanced with some control and standardisation. By standardisation, the participants were referring to the benefits of streamlining processes, cutting down costs and saving time. This argument was referred to as the intrinsic argument for BEMs

Participants from case study B were quite different in their opinions. All of them were critical of the practical benefits of BEMs in HEIs. Although they all agreed that BEMs have significant theoretical benefit, they were reluctant to admitting any practical benefits. The main issues that were raised concerning this are (1) the use of BEMs as guidelines, (2) the complexity of some BEMs, and (3) the nature of what universities do, in other words, academic freedom and its conflict with any BEM. I argued that all these arguments could be refuted with rigour except for academic freedom’s potential clash with the strict guidelines of

BEMs. Furthermore, I made the point that there could be excellence within all facets of research alongside adherence to research outcomes set by the faculty or the university. To me, that is no different from operating within a BEM, if the guidelines of BEMs are seen just as that, guidelines and not strict rules or regulations.

The topic of applying TQM in HE was highly contested across the two case studies, although participants from case study A were more polarised in their opinions. Participants' perceptions ranged from total incompatibility to undoubted compatibility. Perhaps what that points towards is the fact that TQM is applicable only to certain aspects of HE.

Critics of TQM application in HE offered various reasons for their opposition, some stronger than others. Those who deemed TQM to be totally opposed to the nature of HE cited TQM's homogeneity and the HE sector's heterogeneity. Those less critical still voiced their concerns about the effort and time required to transfer TQM into existing models of quality assurance in universities.

I made the point that current quality assurance practices do not sit well with TQM because of the nature of scientific research. This is the most convincing criticism of TQM's applicability in HE. As we know, current quality assurance practices can be divided into two major categories based on (1) focus and (2) outcome. Teaching/learning assessments (such as the TEF) provide recommendations for future practice. In contrast, research assessments (such as the REF) look at previous research output and provide outcomes in the form of suggestions. As mentioned earlier, BEMs do not provide recommendations but guidelines. These guidelines are similar to the suggestions that universities receive from research assessments. For this, I think it is safe to say that academic freedom would not necessarily be undermined by BEMs as long as these are used as guidelines.

The discussion about the appropriateness of TQM and BEMs in HE prompted a dialogue about the uniqueness (or lack thereof) of HE, and how HE is dissimilar to any other service industry. With responses from case study A being more nuanced than those from case study B, participants offered two reasons for viewing HE as unique: (1) the nature of academia and (2) the structure of the academic institution. However, both of these reasons are open to

challenge, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter. Moreover, universities have a responsibility toward their students (i.e. their main customer) that claims to uniqueness cannot circumvent.

Participants from case study B suggested that universities are unique because the “human aspect” of education makes the process harder to control. The main university “customers” (i.e. students) are buying an unusual opportunity rather than a product (i.e. the chance to be transformed). As a result, any discussion about customer satisfaction in a university has to be quite nuanced. On the one hand, there is an argument about making the students’ voices heard and providing them with services that exceed their expectations, albeit within very carefully defined limits (i.e. registration process, programme feedback, student support services etc.). On the other hand, there is an argument that students are meant to be challenged and transformed, rather than satisfied. This ultimately makes HE unique in terms of its main customers.

Whether BEMs really do clash with the nature of HEIs by infringing academic freedom and narrowing scientific enquiry is linked to a wider question about the role and objectives of universities (and how these have changed through history). At the heart of universities is the role of education, which begs the question what is good education? The person usually credited with founding the modern higher education system (Wilhelm von Humboldt) was a renowned figure of the Enlightenment who wrote extensively on education. Humboldt argued that the core principle of education is to create the ability to enquire and create constructively and independently without external control. This goal does not contradict with any principle of TQM or any of the criticisms that the participants expressed as part of this research. This is because, essentially, TQM within the university sector is subject only to internal/institutional control.

A final criticism in the data relates to the use of terminology. Leaders highlighted the need to select their words very carefully, especially when communicating with academics.

“Stakeholder” might be appropriate in one context but not in another.

### ***6.2.2. Business Excellence Models as fads***

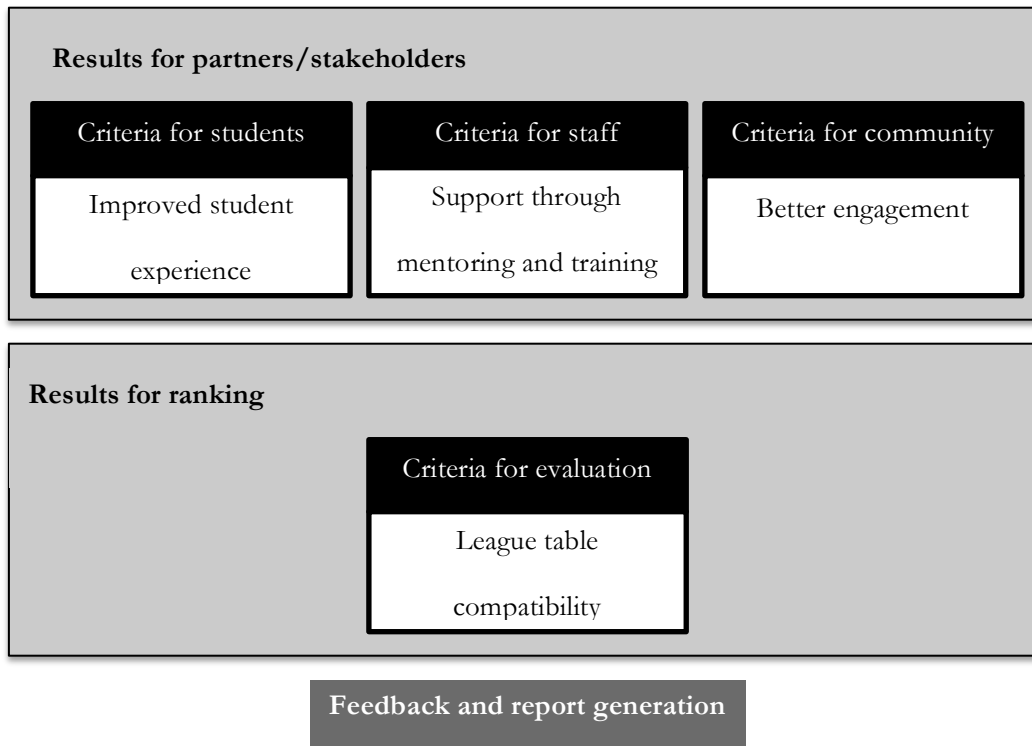
This section aims to address the third subquestion (“*To what extent do university staff view BEMs as business fads or fashions?*”). One participant from case study B believed very strongly that businesses sell out-dated models to the HE sector, all the time, and that these models do come and go, like true fads. All the other participants disagreed. The strength of this consensus could indicate a possible bias. However, the fact that some of the BEMs under discussion have been around for decades and stood the test of time is a strong indicator that those participants’ opinions are well-grounded. A major theme that is prevalent in the literature and in the data, itself, is the critical role of leadership when introducing a new BEM. Participants all agreed that effective leadership was vital to the successful implementation of a new BEM. However, they disagreed on the precise form this leadership should take, with some highlighting motivation and inspiration and others highlighting the need to occasionally force the change. Lastly, one insightful participant noted the fact that it is sometimes the leaders, themselves, who need to be convinced that the change is important.

### ***6.2.3. The implementation of Business Excellence Models***

This section aims to address the first and second subquestion (“*What motivates a university to implement or not implement a Business Excellence Model (BEM)?*” and “*How is the decision to implement a BEM enacted and with what consequences?*”). Participants at both case studies were able to identify some desired outcomes that became the criteria by which a particular BEM or TQM model was chosen. Participants at case study A prioritised (1) student experience, (2) engagement with the community and (3) feedback. Figure 2 in section 5.3.1.1 contains further details. The last criterion (“feedback”) was not mentioned in the literature. Participants at case study B prioritised (1) information and report generation, (2) league table compatibility, and (3) mentoring and training. Figure 3 in section 5.3.1.2 contains further details. The first criterion (“information and report generation”) was not mentioned in the literature but the concerns that participants voiced about the second criterion (“league table compatibility”) were. Participants questioned the validity of the concept itself, the validity of

statistical methods the tabled employ, and their tendency to not go into enough detail. Notwithstanding these criticisms, they viewed leagues tables as a necessary evil.

The responses from the two case studies were compared with the literature and combined to generate a framework of criteria for evaluating BEMs. This was first presented as Figure 4 in Section 5.3.1.3 and is replicated below.



### 6.2.3.1. Critical Success Factors

Critical success factors (CSFs) played a major role in the process of choosing and applying a BEM. This is not surprising, since, by definition, CSFs have the most impact on organisational performance. All the participants within case study A offered similar responses which were grouped into four main themes: (1) team, (2) process, (3) location and (4) brand. The first two (team and process) are found in the literature on HEIs but the second two (location and brand) are not. By location, participants meant being in the capital of the country and having all university sites in close proximity to each other. By brand, they meant the university's world-leading reputation that helped it to be recognised globally.

Participants within case study B generated four similar but not identical themes: (1) staff buy-in, (2) collaboration through committees, (3) personal tutoring and (4) transparency and honesty. The first two themes are mentioned as CSFs within the literature on HEIs but the second two are not.

Team was the most important CSF for case study A participants. They did not advocate limiting the role of BEM change champion to those with a professional background in industry. Instead, they spoke about involving a healthy mix of staff from a wide selection of departments (so that the critical voices of the naysayers could be properly heard) as well as rotating team members and delegating tasks to different groups. Similarly, staff-buy-in was the most important CSF for case study B participants. When interviewees elaborated on their answers, it became clear that “staff buy-in” is subtly different to “team”. It means having a fail-safe mechanism that allows the university to operate flawlessly, even when people are absent from work.

It bears repeating that I interviewed some very senior managers (VC or PVC level). Big-picture overviews and public image considerations may well have affected their worldviews and freedom to express their own opinions, with the result that they painted an overly-positive picture. I tried to limit this possibility in three ways: (1) I also interviewed middle managers and quality assurance professionals; (2) I cross-checked the claims made in the interviews and tried to separate fact from opinion to the best of my knowledge, and (3) I ensured the interviews were anonymised and made participants aware of this fact at least twice: once before they agreed to participate in the research and once just before the interview took place. I believe these strategies worked since the answers from the very senior managers were similar to those from the quality assurance professionals. Moreover, participants highlighted ‘areas for improvements’ which suggests they were being fair and balanced in their responses.

As well as looking at CSFs, the study investigated the role of leadership in the choice and implementation of BEMs. Both case studies produced similar results and both findings align with the literature. Firstly, participants agreed that having senior management support was a

vital prerequisite for choosing and implementing BEMs successfully. Secondly, they contended that the current flat structure of their university was less than ideal.

The leadership competencies identified in the data were compared with the literature to generate Table 5 of Section 5.3.3.3. Four competencies identified in the literature were found in both case studies (“taking responsibility for change”; “inspiring creativity”; “developing teams” and “communicating a shared vision”). Three competencies identified in the literature were found in one of the case studies but not both (“adopting a systematic approach to change”; “creating open dialogue” and “creating compromise”). One competency identified in the literature was not found in either HEI (“promoting accountability”).

#### ***6.2.5. How to sustain a Business Excellence Model***

This section aims to answer the final research subquestion (“*How might BEMs be better initiated, implemented and sustained?*”). Participants from case study A noted three elements that help to ensure BEM initiatives are sustained. These were (1) resource allocation through the project; (2) human resource management, and (3) leadership. Figure 7 in Section 5.4.1 gives further details. Participants from case study B noted four elements that partly overlap. There were (1) monitoring of departmental and organisational goals and university partnerships; (2) feedback; (3) collaboration with the Student Union, and (4) institutionalisation. Figure 8 in Section 5.4.2 gives further details.

The elements noted by participants were compared with the literature (which is very scarce on this topic) to generate Table 6 of Section 5.4.3. “Staff support” was mentioned in both case studies and in the literature. “Institutionalisation”; “feedback” and “staff empowerment” were all mentioned in the literature and highlighted in one but not both of the HEIs. Rather surprisingly, a key element in the literature (“Institutional mission, vision and values”) was not mentioned in either HEI. Finally, the case study data generated four elements not found in the literature (“resource allocation”; “leadership”; “monitoring” and “collaboration with the Student Union”).

It was noted earlier that some participants avoided using the word “stakeholder” when talking to academics. Similarly, they avoided using the phrases “Business Excellence Model”, “strategise” and “operationalise” and, instead just highlighted the fact that there would be change.

### **6.3. Research contribution**

The research although limited in time and scope has achieved its goals. The main focus of the study is under-explored in the literature and lacks empirical data. Consequently, the thesis makes an important contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

#### ***6.3.1. Theoretical contribution***

Although there has been a great deal of research about TQM in industry, there has been much less about TQM in Higher Education. This study has attempted to fill this gap by investigating what academics and managers responsible for quality assurance at different levels of seniority think about the applicability of TQM and TQM-based models at their institutions. It has explored (1) whether BEMs are seen as fads; (2) how particular BEMs are chosen and implemented (including the role of critical success factors and of leadership) and (3) what factors help the BEM be sustained.

At the time of the research, case study A was in the middle of employing an organisation-wide BEM based on Lean Higher Education. Figure 1 (in section 5.1.5.3) extends our understanding of LHE by developing a cycle of continuous improvement and value creation derived from actual practice rather than theory.

The study has also extended our theoretical knowledge by identifying two new criteria by which BEMs might be evaluated. Four of the criteria identified by the study are already mentioned in the literature (student experience; engagement with the community; league table compatibility, and mentoring and training) but two are new (feedback from personal tutors and students being used to inform resource allocation, and report generation). It has also identified four new critical success factors (location, brand, personal tutoring and transparency).



As noted already, the literature on how to sustain BEMs within HE is very limited so the findings in relation to this research question are particularly important. The case study data highlighted four elements not found in the previous literature (“resource allocation”; “leadership”; “monitoring” and “collaboration with the Student Union”). All four are worthy of further investigation.

### ***6.3.2 Practical contribution***

This study draws on data from the most senior university executives (VCs and PVCs). It is inherently difficult to interview elites and not many studies manage this. It has also collected data from professional services staff and quality group members. The two case studies represent the two most common types of UK HEIs (i.e. Russell Group universities and former polytechnic /post-92 universities). This stems from the belief that different types of university are under different pressures and face different challenges with respect to funding, outreach, public engagement and industry collaboration. The findings were deliberately presented in a manner that preserves this distinction where appropriate. This means that leaders at both research-focused and teaching-focused institutions can benefit from the research.

### **6.4. Limitations and need for further research**

When answering the research question (Why might one UK university embrace Business Excellence Models while another resists them?) this research was conducted with focus on London-based universities. Given this limitation, it is possible that senior staff outside the capital perceive BEMs differently. Furthermore, universities can be grouped according to different criteria, not just research intensive and teaching-focused. For example, HEIs could be categorised according to (1) location (rural versus urban or English versus Scottish and so on) and (2) age (ancient, civic and new), which could be broken into sub groups (1<sup>st</sup> wave civic or red brick, 2<sup>nd</sup> wave or plate glass, 1<sup>st</sup> wave new or post 92, 2<sup>nd</sup> wave new or since 92).

Another limitation is that the study only elicited data from senior and mid-level managers. This was because I had limited time and resources. Further research could include interviews

with Heads of Department, “regular” academics and professional staff and even students. This would enable the research questions to be examined from multiple perspectives.

The interviews, themselves, were relatively short due to the busy schedules of the interviewees, especially the senior managers. Longer, more in-depth interviews would almost certainly reveal deeper insights into the intricacies of applying BEMs in HEIs.

Finally, the research presents a snap-shot rather than a longitudinal perspective. A follow-up study would be able to examine whether staff perceptions or practices changed from one year to the next.

Higher education is ever-changing and the UK sector is no exception. There have been recent changes in tuition fees, funding and business links, not to mention regulatory reform as result of the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act. Universities play an important role in the economy and are part of the government’s industrial strategy. Market forces are driving HEIs to become more corporate and managerialism is spreading. This is creating heated debate amongst academics who regularly complain about a democratic deficit. It is therefore vital for policy makers to understand with greater clarity and certainty what university staff really think of marketisation, in general, and Business Excellence Models, in particular.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Ethical approval**

#### **MPhil, PhD, EdD Research Students and Masters by Research: Ethical Approval**

All research undertaken by the students and staff within CES must conform to the University's ethical guidelines. There are separate procedures for staff and students. This guidance addresses the latter.

All students receive training in research ethics and are required to complete the appropriate form before undertaking research, including small projects, dissertations and theses as appropriate. The completion of the form is an opportunity to discuss ethical issues with your supervisor/tutor and is intended as a learning exercise as much as an administrative process to ensure compliance with CES policy.

The amount and type of training in research ethics is proportionate to both the qualification and the research project; the content of the forms varies accordingly. In general, undergraduates will be expected to undertake research projects which give relatively common and straightforward ethical issues while doctoral studies may raise complex, challenging ethical issues. As most studies involve children and young people, research ethics pertaining to vulnerable participants is a common issue.

You should complete the ethical approval form for the research project appropriate to your programme. These may be obtained from the CES website.

For *EdD* students, separate forms are required for each specialist study (8000 words) and the thesis.

You should complete the form, which should then be signed by yourself and countersigned by your tutor/supervisor. Completion of the form will be guided by your tutor/supervisor and is intended to help you consider the ethical issues concerned, so you must provide full details. The form should then be returned to the Research Office



(WE1.33) for processing. **Please note:** as the form requires signatures you should **not** email it – the paper original is required.

The form will then be reviewed by the relevant member of staff. The proposal may be approved, approved subject to minor amendments, or declined. The form will then be returned to the Research Office for recording and then returned to your course secretary who will report the outcome to yourself and your tutor/supervisor. If any changes are required you should undertake these **in consultation** with your tutor/supervisor. The form should then be resubmitted to the Research Office, when it will be reviewed.

## Further Guidance

Further guidance and support is available from the University's website:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/guidance/>

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/governance/codeofconduct/>

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/guidance/#>

and from the ethical codes of appropriate organisations including the British Educational Research Association, British Psychological Society and the British Sociological Association:

[www.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss)

[www.bera.org.uk](http://www.bera.org.uk)

[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

**NB: doctoral Students**

Doctoral students are initially registered for an MPhil/PhD and transfer to the PhD subject on the completion of a successful Upgrade. Ethical approval should first be sought early in the MPhil and certainly before any fieldwork. The Upgrade provides a second opportunity to review the ethical issues of your research. A completed ethical approval form should therefore accompany your Upgrade paper.

**Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees  
(MA by research, MPhil/PhD, EdD)**

Student number: 1150546

Student name: Mohammad Waseem Sandouk

PhD       EdD       MA by research

Project title:

How can the quality assurance staff in Higher Education Institutions ensure an EFQM model is sustained, after it has been initialized, implemented and integrated?

Supervisor: Dr. Justine Mercer

Funding body (if relevant): Chancellor's Scholarships (The University of Warwick)

Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.
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**Methodology**

Please outline the methodology, e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing etc.

- The Research Methodology is case study *of UK universities*.
- The Research will use qualitative methods, through individual interviews (face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews)
- Analysis will include documents analysis and discourse analysis of the interviews.

## Participants

Please specify all participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. children; as a result of learning disability.

*Participants in the study are members of the universities' academic and professional staff. Such as:*

- Vice-chancellors and pro-chancellor
- Members of the Strategic Management Team
- Heads of departments

*The participants cover a wide range of roles in order to ensure that all aspects of the study are addressed.*

### Respect for participants' rights and dignity

How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?

All *respondents* are volunteers and informed beforehand, when I will be setting up the interview I will also be sending an overview of the research, data protection, anonymity and how the results of the interview will only be used for the support of the research. Also respondents are free to withdraw from the study at any time before the submission of the final thesis, this is mentioned in the "participant information sheet" and will be mentioned at the beginning of the interview.

So in essence:

- Data will be used in confidentiality (only my supervisor and I will have access to it)
- Participants' identity will be protected and the information anonymised by default
- I will treat all participants with respect to their cultural and social beliefs, political opinions and lifestyle. I will also ensure all that is kept private.
- Participants have the right to withdraw from the research any time prior to the submission of the thesis.

I am personally responsible to make sure all the above is met

## **Privacy and confidentiality**

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

All data will be stored confidentially; after conducting and transcribing the interviews, the data will be coded for analysis. During the analysis and the later stages of the project only coded data will be used.

Also, data (including all backups) will be stored on a password-protected laptop.

## **Consent**

How will prior informed consent be obtained from the following?

From participants:

I will get a written consent from the respondents before the interviews.

From others:

All participants are educated adults who will have given consent.

If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

Will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?

Yes.

## **Competence**

How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?

I will demonstrate competence in research ethics by:

- Exhibiting professionalism when contacting the participant and setting up the interview, then throughout the interview and in following up

- Being well-informed in research ethics (which I studied as part of the ARM module)
- Having an experience in doing field research and administering interviews will boost my competence

### **Protection of participants**

How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?

I do not think that any of the participants will be subject to increased risk or harm as a result of their participation in this study, for example, interviews will be held in their offices and workplaces, during working hours. Psychological risks are also at a minimum since the respondents are discussing non-sensitive matters of their job, no personal information will be discussed, so potentially there are no intruding or disturbing questions. The only potential negative effect of the study is a possible frustration in case the respondent has a negative perception of the discussed topic (quality of higher education). I will be aware of my respondent's body language and visual queues as they might be getting anxious, aggravated or angry, at which time I will: (a) remind them that they don't have to answer any question; (b) ask if they prefer to pause for rest; and (c) terminate the interview if necessary.

### **Child protection**

Will a CRB check be needed? Yes  No  (If yes, please attach a copy.)

### **Addressing dilemmas**

Even well planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?

To address any potential ethical dilemma, I will follow the next steps<sup>22</sup>:

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<sup>22</sup> UK Centre for Legal Education (UKCLE). (2010). How can we respond to ethical problems? Retrieved July 14, 2014, from <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/ethical-dilemmas/>

1. Identify the nature of the dilemma, its context and its parties.
2. Identify available options before taking a premature action
3. Consider consequences
  - a. This includes both physical and non-physical aspects
  - b. This covers all stakeholders of the research (the respondents, the researcher, the supervisor, the university... etc.)
  - c. This exceeds to long term consequences, not just immediate or short term ones
  - d. I will also keep in mind the effects of my decision on my reputation as a researcher
4. Analyse the moral standpoint of each option (here I will be using my personal moral compass)
5. Make the diction and commit to it
6. Evaluate and reflect on the decision

It is worth mentioning here that personally I consider myself a deontologist or Kantian (as opposed to utilitarian). I believe in moral absolutes. I do not believe the end justifies the means, instead I believe actions are intrinsically moral and are by nature either good or bad.

### **Misuse of research**

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

The possible misuses of the outcome of this research are limited because the research topic is not controversial.

For my part of the responsibility, I can immensely limit the misuse of my findings by practicing:

- Improve the quality of the findings by designing and carrying out a professional and ethical research
  - Clearly set out the research aims and methodology
-

- Ensure that the data used is up to date, the sampling and selecting of case studies is done properly
- Giving rational justification to every step of the research
- Avoiding out of context use
- Avoiding oversimplifications, generalizations and stretching findings

### **Support for research participants**

What action is proposed if sensitive issues are raised or a participant becomes upset?

1. Apologize for causing the respondent to be upset
2. Reminding the participant that he/she doesn't have to answer the question;
3. Asking if the participant prefers to pause for rest; and
4. Terminate the interview if necessary
5. Follow up in case the interview was terminated to set up another interview
6. Discuss the incident with my supervisor

### **Integrity**

How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?

- I use proper referencing so it is easy to ensure I am being honest and fair in my research
- The interviews will be conducted in English, which limits any translation distortion whether Intentional or accidental
- I am also relying on my supervisor's comments for the same goal
- I adhere to the University of Warwick Research Code of Practice
- I find guidance in the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct and the Code of Practice for Research of The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)



What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

My supervisor and I have discussed this thoroughly. She agreed for me to publish as a sole author if the paper is written completely by me and as a second-name author if she provided extensive feedback and/or reworked section(s).

**Other issues**

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.

None

**Signed:**

Student: Mohammad Waseem Sandouk

Date: 13 Aug 2014

Supervisor: 

Date: 16/10/14

Please submit this form to the Research Office (Andy Brierley, room WE133)

Office use only

**Action taken:**

- Approved
- Approved with modification or conditions – see below
- Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

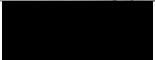
Name: 

Signature: 

Date: 

Stamped: 

**Notes of Action:**

- ① Please add approximate numbers
- ② Ensure your coding frame (i.e. Name - Code) is kept  separate from the data

## Appendix B: List of all potential participants from case study A

Case study	random pick (selection)	contact serial number (in stratum)	Department	Stratum (category by mgt. level)	Contact Position	Contact Name	potential participant' title (how to address them)	Their email (not for contact)	Their assistant's name	Their assistant's title / position	Their assistant's email
A		1	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	_____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to the _____	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	2	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	_____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Executive Assistant to the X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		3	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Vice- _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to the Vice- _____	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		4	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Vice- _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to the Vice- _____	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		5	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Associate _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to the Associate X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		6	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Associate _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Professor X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		7	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Vice- _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice- _____ (E)	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		8	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Vice- _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice- _____ (R)	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		9	Senior Officers	President/Chancellor	Deputy Director of _____	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to X Director of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	1	Senior Officers	Registry	Academic Registrar	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		2	Senior Officers	Registry	Secretary & Registrar	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Executive Assistant to Registrar	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		1	Faculty of Engineering	Dean/Vice-Dean	Dean, Faculty of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Dean	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	2	Faculty of Engineering	Dean/Vice-Dean	_____Dean Faculty of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice-Dean, Faculty of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		3	Faculty of Engineering	Dean/Vice-Dean	_____Dean Faculty of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice-Dean, Faculty of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		4	Faculty of Medicine	Dean/Vice-Dean	Dean, Faculty of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice-Dean, Faculty of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		5	Faculty of Medicine	Dean/Vice-Dean	_____Dean Faculty of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice-Dean, Faculty of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	6	Faculty of Medicine	Dean/Vice-Dean	_____Dean Faculty of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to Vice-Dean, Faculty of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>

A		7	Faculty of Medicine	Dean/Vice-Dean	____Dean Faculty of ____	xx	Lord	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		8	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Dean/Vice-Dean	Dean, Faculty of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Executive Assistant to Dean, Faculty of X	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		9	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Dean/Vice-Dean	____Dean Faculty of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		10	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Dean/Vice-Dean	Head of Development (Faculty of ____)	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		11	Business School	Dean/Vice-Dean	____Dean Faculty of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	PA to the Dean	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		12	Business School	Dean/Vice-Dean	____Dean Faculty of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		13	Business School	Dean/Vice-Dean	Dean, Faculty of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		1	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Miss	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		2	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		3	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Miss	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		4	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Faculty ____ Officer	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		5	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	6	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		7	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the School of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		8	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		9	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head Department & ____ Dean, Faculty ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	10	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head Department & ____ Dean, Faculty ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		11	Faculty of Engineering	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		12	Faculty of Medicine	Department Head	Head of the Department of ____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		13	Faculty of Medicine	Department Head	Director, School of	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>

A		14	Faculty of Medicine	Department Head	Head of NHLI and Professor of Clinical Cardiology	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		15	Faculty of Medicine	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		16	Faculty of Medicine	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		17	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		18	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		19	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		20	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		21	Faculty of Natural Sciences	Department Head	Acting Director of _____	xx	Dr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	22	Business School	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		23	Business School	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		24	Business School	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Miss	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		1	Business School	Quality team member	Faculty _____ Officer	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		2	Business School	Quality team member	_____ Quality Team Manager	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	3	Business School	Quality team member	_____ Quality Team Manager	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		4	Business School	Quality team member	_____ Quality Team Manager	xx	Miss	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	5	Business School	Quality team member	_____ Quality Team Manager	xx	Mrs	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		6	Faculty of Medicine	Quality team member	Team Manager _____	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		7	Faculty of Medicine	Quality team member	Quality Assurance and _____	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		8	Faculty of Medicine	Quality team member	Quality Assurance and _____	xx	Miss	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		9	Faculty of Medicine	Quality team member	Collaboration Officer	xx	Dr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		10	Senior Officers	Quality team member	Collaboration Officer	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Senior Assistant Registrar	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		11	Senior Officers	Quality team member	_____ Quality Committee	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>

					Chair						
A		12	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Mr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		13	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		14	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		15	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Dr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	16	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		17	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Dr	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A		18	Senior Officers	Quality team member	____ Quality Committee	xx	Ms	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>
A	x	25	Business School	Department Head	Head of the Department of _____	xx	Professor	<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>	xx		<a href="mailto:X@X.ac.uk">X@X.ac.uk</a>

## **Appendix C: Interview schedule**

### **Theme 1: Quality Management and Quality Management Systems**

- I've been reading about the use of so-called "Excellence Models" in higher education and I wondered what you thought about them?
- If not sure I would further explain, ... "Well, the ones I've been reading about include EFQM, the Deming Prize and so on".
- To what extent do you think Business Excellence Models are helpful or not helpful in your own work?
- *And a follow-up question* What makes you say that?"
- As I understand it, Excellence Models were originally developed in the Business Sector. To what extent do you feel they are or are not applicable to the HE sector?
- What quality approaches does your university favour? Why do you think is that?
- What quality approaches do UK HEIs favour? Why do you think is that?

### **Theme 2: Decision to implement a Business Excellence Model**

- In your organization, how is the quality management approach decided? And (if applicable) how is a particular excellence model chosen?
- What quality management approaches were considered [time frame and/or organizational scope]?
- How many alternatives were generated? And how?
- What criteria were used to evaluate different alternatives? What was the intended use of the approach (e.g. strategic management, continuous improvement, benchmarking, self-assessment, gaining a quality award etc.)?
- Who was involved in the decision-making process and what information they had
- For how long did the decision-making process last?
- In case a group took the decision, to what extent was there consensus? How was the final decision reached?
- What is the expected timescale of the quality approach?
- Is the quality approach reviewed? How often?

### **Theme 3: The implementation of Business Excellence Models**

- "How did your institution become interested in applying a BEM?" if they have a BEM or "What do you think would trigger interest in BEM?" if they don't
- Who do you think needs to be on board in applying a new BEM?
- What do you see at the role of the senior leadership team in this process?
- How can the university ensure the initiative is sustained after the initial excitement surrounding its development and implementation? (How can the university ensure the initiative is sustained after the initial excitement surrounding its development and implementation?)
- How many organizational levels of the university should apply the BEM at the initiation phase? What level(s) are those?
- In your opinion, what are some critical success factors creating quality in higher education?

#### **Theme 4: Management fads and fashions**

- I've been reading about management fads (ideas that emerge quickly and get adopted widely but then disappear just as fast). Some argue that BEMs are management fads whilst others disagree. What's your own opinion?

#### **Theme 5: General issued distantly related**

- How do you see the relationship between academic quality and administrative quality?
- In recent years, universities have started to employ more and more professional managers in addition to the more traditional academic managers. What do you think of that?
- In the business sector, there is a strong focus on customer service. Does this concept have any relevance in the HE sector, do you think?
- You're obviously very skilled at quality management. To what extent is this true of other people in the organisation?
- Is there anything else you feel relevant and want to discuss?



## Appendix D: Participant consent form & information sheet

### Participant Consent Form

#### Research question:

*“How can the quality assurance staff in Higher Education Institutions ensure an EFQM Excellence model is sustained, after it has been implemented and integrated?”*

---

*Please tick the box if you agree with the statement to the right*

- I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet explaining the above research project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time (prior to the thesis submission date – September 2017) without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission to the PhD student and his supervisor to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
- If in the future, I change my mind, I may contact the researcher at [m.w.sandouk@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:m.w.sandouk@warwick.ac.uk) or his PhD supervisor at [justine.mercer@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:justine.mercer@warwick.ac.uk), before September 2017, and have my data removed from the study.
- I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant Information Sheet

### 1. Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study. The title of the research is:

*How can the quality assurance staff in Higher Education Institutions ensure an EFQM Excellence model is sustained, after it has been implemented and integrated?*

### 2. The researcher

I am a scholarship student doing a PhD at the Centre for Education Studies, The University of Warwick. I have a BSc in Management Science and an MSc in Quality Management. During my master's degree I researched creating excellence in three UK universities.

### 3. The Interview

- The interview is intended to be semi-structured with open-ended questions.
- The personal interview will last for approximately 90 minutes.
- The interview will take place in the time and place of your choosing.
- I will collect audio recordings during the interview.

### 4. Ethical considerations

**4.1 Informed consent:** The research is conducted according to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association.

**4.2 Confidentiality:** Interview recordings and any transcripts will be used only for research purposes. No third parties will be allowed access them during or after the project. Data will be stored securely on a password-protected laptop.

**4.3 Anonymity:** Individual interviewees and any institutions will be anonymised. Transcripts will be encoded to ensure the anonymity of the all participants. Individuals and individual institutions cannot be identified.

**4.4 Feedback:** At the end of the project, a complimentary summary report with key research findings will be emailed to all participants.

#### 4. Contact

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact me:

**Mohammad Waseem Sandouk**

Email: M.W.Sandouk@warwick.ac.uk

Tel: +44(0) 74292 21804

If you feel that you are being mistreated or have a complaint, you may contact my supervisor:

**Dr. Justine Mercer** (*Associate Professor*)

Centre for Education Studies, The University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 7AL

Email: Justine.Mercer@warwick.ac.uk

#### 5. Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint about this research, please follow the University of Warwick's Complaints Procedure found on this webpage

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance/complaints\\_procedure/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance/complaints_procedure/)

## Appendix E: List of code groups and their members

### ATLAS.ti Report: Excellence Models in HEIs

Code	Comment	Code Group 1
Applicability of BEMs in HE	Applicability of Business Excellence Models in Higher Education	1 QMSs
Applicability of TQM in HE	Applicability of Total Quality Management in Higher Education	1 QMSs
Quality approaches current in the university	Quality approaches currently being used in the university	1 QMSs
Quality approaches favoured in UK's HEIs	Quality approaches favoured in UK's Higher Education Institutions	1 QMSs
Quality approaches favoured in university	Quality approaches favoured in participant's university	1 QMSs
The origins of BEMs	The origins of Business Excellence Models	1 QMSs
The origins of TQM	The origins of Total Quality Management	1 QMSs
Thoughts on BEMs	Participant's thoughts on Business Excellence Models	1 QMSs
Thoughts on BEMs in HE	Participant's thoughts on Business Excellence Models in Higher Education	1 QMSs
Thoughts on EFQM	Participant's thoughts on EFQM	1 QMSs
Thoughts on TQM	Participant's thoughts on Total Quality Management	1 QMSs
Thoughts on TQM in HE	Participant's thoughts on Total Quality Management in Higher Education	1 QMSs
Use of external examining	Thoughts on the use of external examiners	1 QMSs
Use of internal examining	Thoughts on the use of internal examiners	1 QMSs
Whether BEMs are helpful (in general)	Whether Business Excellence Models are helpful or not	1 QMSs
Whether BEMs are helpful (in specific)	Whether Business Excellence Models are helpful or not in participant's line of work	1 QMSs
Criteria for DMP	Criteria for making the final decision	2 Decision to implement BEM
Criteria for evaluating QMS	Criteria for evaluating a quality management approach	2 Decision to implement BEM
DMP Team	The team involved in the decision making process	2 Decision to implement BEM
Format of the DMP	Format of the decision-making process (Group decision, consensus, etc... )	2 Decision to implement BEM

How BEM is chosen	How is a particular excellence model chosen in participant's university	2 Decision to implement BEM
How QMS is decided	How quality management approach is decided in participant's university	2 Decision to implement BEM
Information presented in DMP	Information presented in the decision-making process	2 Decision to implement BEM
Intended use of QMS	The intended use of the quality management approach	2 Decision to implement BEM
Length on the DMP	Length on the decision-making process	2 Decision to implement BEM
People involved in DMP	People involved in the decision-making process	2 Decision to implement BEM
QMS review	Whether the quality approach is reviewed	2 Decision to implement BEM
QMS review frequency	Frequency of reviewing the quality approach	2 Decision to implement BEM
QMSs that are considered	Quality management approaches that are considered in participant's university	2 Decision to implement BEM
Recent initiative	Description of a recent quality initiative	2 Decision to implement BEM
Resources allocated for DMP	Resources allocated for the decision-making process	2 Decision to implement BEM
Timescale of DMP	Timescale of the decision-making process	2 Decision to implement BEM
CSFs for creating quality in HE	Participant's view on critical success factors for creating quality in higher education	3 Implementation of BEMs
CSFs for creating quality in university	Participant's view on critical success factors for creating quality in their university	3 Implementation of BEMs
How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained	Participant's view on how to ensure the new Business Excellence Model initiative is sustained	3 Implementation of BEMs
Management Levels involved in initiation of BEM	Participant's view on Management Levels that should be involved in the initiation phase of applying a new Business Excellence Model	3 Implementation of BEMs
Organisation of initiative	How the recent quality initiative was/is organised	3 Implementation of BEMs
Role of leadership in new BEM	Participant's view on the role of senior leadership in applying a new Business Excellence Model	3 Implementation of BEMs
Trigger of interest in BEMs	Trigger of interest in a Business Excellence Model	3 Implementation of BEMs
Who should be on board in new	Participant's view on who should be on board in applying a	3 Implementation

BEM	new Business Excellence Model	of BEMs
BEMs & fads	Whether the participant thinks that Business Excellence Models are examples of management fads	4 Mgt fads
Perception of fads	Participant's perception of management fads	4 Mgt fads
TQM & fads	Whether the participant thinks that Total Quality Management is an examples of a management fad	4 Mgt fads
HE uniqueness (as education)	How HE as education is different than other services	5 General issues
HE uniqueness (as service)	How HE as a service is different than manufacturing	5 General issues
Identify customers (in general)	Identification of university customers in general	5 General issues
Identify customers (in specific)	Identification of Participant's university customers	5 General issues
Identify products (in general)	Identification of university products in general	5 General issues
Identify products (in specific)	Identification of Participant's university products	5 General issues
Opinion on customer service	Participant's opinion on the focus on customer service in Total Quality Management (and subsequently the Business Excellence Models)	5 General issues
Opinion on the term "customer" in education	Participant's opinion on the term "customer" in the context of education in general	5 General issues
Opinion on the term "customer" in HE	Participant's opinion on the term "customer" in the context of higher education	5 General issues
Perception of atmosphere towards quality	Participant's perception of the university's atmosphere towards quality	5 General issues
Perception of colleagues	Participant's perception of their colleagues ability and commitment towards creating and sustaining quality	5 General issues
Relationship between academic & administrative quality	Participant's view on the relationship between academic quality and administrative quality	5 General issues
Remarks relevant & not raised	Remarks that the participant though are relevant and were not raised during the interview	5 General issues
View on employing more professional managers	Participant's view the recent trend of employing more professional managers in universities	5 General issues
Bio		6 misc
Compliment		6 misc
Insight		6 misc

## Appendix F: Codebook

### ATLAS.ti Report: Excellence Models in HEIs

#### Codes

Report created by Waseem on 17 Sep 2017

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##### ● Applicability of BEMs in HE

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 4 B08 8 A08 11 B05 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Applicability of Business Excellence Models in Higher Education

##### ● Applicability of TQM in HE

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 3 B07 5 A01 9 A10 16 A09

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Applicability of Total Quality Management in Higher Education

##### ● BEMs & fads

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

4 Mgt fads

**Comment:**

Whether the participant thinks that Business Excellence Models are examples of management fads

##### ○ Bio

**Created:** 14/10/2017 by Waseem, **Modified:** 14/10/2017 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

3 B07 4 B08 7 A03 10 B04

**Groups:**

6 misc

##### ○ Compliment

**Created:** 21/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 21/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 9 A10 18 A05

**Groups:**

6 misc

### ● Criteria for DMP

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

17 A06 19 A07

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Criteria for making the final decision

### ● Criteria for evaluating QMS

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

3 B07 6 A02 8 A08 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Criteria for evaluating a quality management approach

### ● CSFs for creating quality in HE

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 3 B07 4 B08 10 B04 12 B06

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Participant's view on critical success factors for creating quality in higher education

### ● CSFs for creating quality in university

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 3 B07 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 7 A03 8 A08 9 A10 11 B05 12 B06 16 A09 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Participant's view on critical success factors for creating quality in their university

### ● DMP Team

**Created:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 4 B08 5 A01 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

The team involved in the decision making process



## ● Format of the DMP

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 11 B05

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Format of the decision-making process (Group decision, consensus, etc... )

## ● HE uniqueness (as education)

**Created:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 3 B07 5 A01 6 A02 11 B05

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

How HE as education is different than other services

## ● HE uniqueness (as service)

**Created:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

How HE as a service is different than manufacturing

## ● How BEM is chosen

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

How is a particular excellence model chosen in participant's university

## ● How QMS is decided

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

8 A08

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

How quality management approach is decided in participant's university

## ● How to ensure BEM initiative is sustained

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 7 A03 8 A08 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Participant's view on how to ensure the new Business Excellence Model initiative is sustained

● **Identify customers (in general)**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 3 B07 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 10 B04 11 B05 16 A09 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Identification of university customers in general

● **Identify customers (in specific)**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 5 A01 17 A06

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Identification of Participant's university customers

● **Identify products (in general)**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 7 A03 8 A08 11 B05 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Identification of university products in general

● **Identify products (in specific)**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Identification of Participant's university products

● **Information presented in DMP**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Information presented in the decision-making process

**● Insight**

**Created:** 21/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 21/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 8 A08 9 A10 10 B04 11 B05 16 A09 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

6 misc

**● Intended use of QMS**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

The intended use of the quality management approach

**● Length on the DMP**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Length on the decision-making process

**● Management Levels involved in initiation of BEM**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

19 A07

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Participant's view on Management Levels that should be involved in the initiation phase of applying a new Business Excellence Model

**● Opinion on customer service**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 9 A10 10 B04 11 B05 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's opinion on the focus on customer service in Total Quality Management (and subsequently the Business Excellence Models)

**● Opinion on the term "customer" in education**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 17 A06

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's opinion on the term "customer" in the context of education in general

● **Opinion on the term "customer" in HE**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

5 A01

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's opinion on the term "customer" in the context of higher education

● **Organisation of initiative**

**Created:** 21/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 21/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 5 A01 8 A08 11 B05 18 A05

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

How the recent quality initiative was/is organised

● **People involved in DMP**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

People involved in the decision-making process

● **Perception of atmosphere towards quality**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 4 B08 5 A01 7 A03 9 A10 11 B05 17 A06 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's perception of the university's atmosphere towards quality

● **Perception of colleagues**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 3 B07 4 B08 7 A03 8 A08 10 B04 17 A06 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's perception of their colleagues ability and commitment towards creating and sustaining quality

● **Perception of fads**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 16 A09 18 A05

**Groups:**

4 Mgt fads

**Comment:**

Participant's perception of management fads

● **QMS review**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

5 A01 11 B05 17 A06

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Wether the quality approach is reviewed

● **QMS review frequency**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

5 A01

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Frequency of reviewing the quality approach

● **QMSs that are considered**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Quality management approaches that are considered in participant's university

● **Quality approaches current in the university**

**Created:** 22/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 13/10/2017 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 3 B07 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 8 A08 11 B05 12 B06 16 A09 19 A07

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Quality approaches currently being used in the university

### ● Quality approaches favoured in UK's HEIs

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 11 B05 17 A06 18 A05

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Quality approaches favoured in UK's Higher Education Institutions

### ● Quality approaches favoured in university

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 5 A01

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Quality approaches favoured in participant's university

### ● Recent initiative

**Created:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 5 A01 6 A02 12 B06 16 A09

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Description of a recent quality initiative

### ● Relationship between academic & administrative quality

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 3 B07 4 B08 6 A02 9 A10 10 B04 12 B06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's view on the relationship between academic quality and administrative quality

### ● Remarks relevant & not raised

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Remarks that the participant though are relevant and were not raised during the interview

## ● Resources allocated for DMP

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Resources allocated for the decision-making process

## ● Role of leadership in new BEM

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 5 A01 6 A02 8 A08 9 A10 11 B05 12 B06 18 A05

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Participant's view on the role of senior leadership in applying a new Business Excellence Model

## ● The origins of BEMs

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

17 A06

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

The origins of Business Excellence Models

## ● The origins of TQM

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 5 A01

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

The origins of Total Quality Management

## ● Thoughts on BEMs

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

19 A07

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Participant's thoughts on Business Excellence Models

## ● Thoughts on BEMs in HE

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

3 B07 19 A07

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Participant's thoughts on Business Excellence Models in Higher Education

● **Thoughts on EFQM**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

5 A01 19 A07

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Participant's thoughts on EFQM

● **Thoughts on TQM**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 5 A01 6 A02

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Participant's thoughts on Total Quality Management

● **Thoughts on TQM in HE**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 3 B07 5 A01

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Participant's thoughts on Total Quality Management in Higher Education

● **Timescale of DMP**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

5 A01

**Groups:**

2 Decision to implement BEM

**Comment:**

Timescale of the decision-making process

● **TQM & fads**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**



1 B01 5 A01 7 A03 16 A09

**Groups:**

4 Mgt fads

**Comment:**

Whether the participant thinks that Total Quality Management is an examples of a management fad

● **Trigger of interest in BEMs**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

5 A01 8 A08 9 A10 10 B04 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Trigger of interest in a Business Excellence Model

● **Use of external examining**

**Created:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem, **Modified:** 20/08/2016 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 9 A10 10 B04 17 A06

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Thoughts on the use of external examiners

● **Use of internal examining**

**Created:** 13/10/2017 by Waseem, **Modified:** 13/10/2017 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

2 B02 4 B08 6 A02 9 A10 10 B04 11 B05 12 B06 17 A06

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Thoughts on the use of internal examiners

● **View on employing more professional managers**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

1 B01 2 B02 3 B07 4 B08 5 A01 6 A02 9 A10 10 B04 12 B06 17 A06 18 A05 19 A07

**Groups:**

5 General issues

**Comment:**

Participant's view the recent trend of employing more professional managers in universities

● **Whether BEMs are helpful (in general)**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 17/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

17 A06 18 A05

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Wether Business Excellence Models are helpful or not

● **Whether BEMs are helpful (in specific)**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 17/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

18 A05

**Groups:**

1 QMSs

**Comment:**

Wether Business Excellence Models are helpful or not in participant's line of work

● **Who should be on board in new BEM**

**Created:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem, **Modified:** 15/11/2015 by Waseem

**Used In Documents:**

11 B05 18 A05

**Groups:**

3 Implementation of BEMs

**Comment:**

Participant's view on who should be on board in applying a new Business Excellence Model.

## Appendix G: Sample interview transcript

### Key:

I = Interviewer

**R = Respondent**

[s.l.] = Sounds like; spelled like it sounded

[u.c.] = Unclear

### **R: As easy as that?**

I: Yeah. [REDACTED], thank you very much for your time. Let's talk a little about quality management. I've been reading about these so-called excellence models and these are total quality management models aimed at creating and advertising an atmosphere or an environment of quality. Based on customer satisfaction and they hope to create a competitive advantage based on quality. They are advertised among organization across the board, be it manufacturing, services, health, and education included. So I was wondering what you think about that?

**R: Yeah, sure. I think it's increasingly sensible to take that approach in HE in universities. I think it's also increasingly necessary as -despite the views of the academic community- HE becomes more commercialized and commodified and as students are increasingly identified as consumers. So we've got a lot of stuff happening in the moment with the CMA<sup>23</sup> and the consumer rights act and consumer protection for students, and how we work to ensure our commitments to students in the services that we deliver them. My experience is that quality systems over the part in universities, quality has become QA, has become form filling, has become quite restrictive. So it was over simplified.**

**And what we have here, I've been at this institution for 18 months now and we've been spending some time simplifying and clarifying, because what has been lost in the mix is the benefit of the students, so the benefits of the end-user to the students, to the academic staff, to other agencies that we worked with. So the benefit to the customer is the idea. So I think increasing that model makes sense because we're in a bit of a fog and we're faced with commercial pressures. We have students paying fees, higher expectations, we need to justify why we are spending rightly, why we are doing what we're doing with that money, we have to engage with students in a rather more objective manner. We talked a little bit about partnership and generally that's fine but students don't believe their partners when things go wrong, they believe their customers. So I think we need to be very clear about that balance. I think it's inevitable and I'd like to just think**

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<sup>23</sup> For more: Letter from the CMA to higher education providers on consumer law  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-the-cma-to-higher-education-providers-on-consumer-law>

and here we're trying to be—not be ahead of the curve but we at the front if we can.

I: Right. Now, I am probably jumping the trigger here but...

**R: It's okay.**

I: Why do you think that—why do you think there is (s.l. other aren't at the front)? Like is it a big leap?

**R: I think—I think the primary hesitation is one: ignorance of a fear that you know something we're going to be selling pizzas that we're not. We don't have a product. We don't have a product to sell. We are not a factory. We don't manufacture anything. We don't. We provide services in—it's a very specific set of services because we provide expertise and guidance at a framework to enable you as the student to pursue a course of study and be successful.**

**But we don't have a contract to give you a degree. And I think the hesitance is that people understand pure consumer and consumption and customer protection and customer service as shops, restaurants, bars and—and that's the immediate reaction. The other thing is there is a fear in the academic community and it's a rightful fear. And I think there's evidence from countries around the world to—that we need pay attention to is—is—is how increased regulation of the sector and increased consumerist approach of the sector and boxing it out can lead to infringement of—of academic freedom. And as you know academic freedom is a very, very strongly held principle in this country and is at the heart of what makes this a quality education system. It's important that we maintain that.**

**And there's a gap between the reality and the fears and we need to help people bridge that gap. And I think that a holistic quality system that focuses on the benefits to the end user but articulates very clearly the responsibilities of all parties in that- because we as an academic institution can only make you successful if you come to the lectures, if you write the essays, if you take the exams, you have to participate. So it's about understanding that better. And I think a system that measures that and demonstrates that would be really helpful in bridging that gap because we don't want this to be shops. We want to maintain that distance that's not importance.**

**So it's a fear—I think it's primarily a fear thing. It's also a bit of a political thing; academia and the world of academics is there to challenge. That's where academia is. And the government should stay away from us. So that's—there's a tension there and it is important to retain both of those things, I think.**

I: Right. That's good. Now, you know these models come from the business sector?

**R: Yeah.**

I: Can you elaborate more about how applicable they are and what makes say higher education as a service different? And now we know it's different in services in general but what makes higher education specific different or maybe it's not?

**R: Well, it's interesting because I think basically and simplistically it's not different. If you look around...**

I: Fair enough.

**R: If you look on the wall here, we're doing some work around the academic life cycle. Yeah? And so we've been—we've been doing some business process reviews. So—so the application process so you start with you use the word customer and then what happens pre-admission, application offer, acceptance, studying exams, graduate. So that's your life cycle. That's the production line.**

I: Yeah.

**R: If you want—I mean I would—I would not use those words at academic or at the summit. So it's the choice of words but it is the same thing. We provide services and input. The student provides inputs. Together we create a graduate. And there is a defined process. And we have defined process that we go through. What's been really useful here is that we've applied lots of the—the principles of lean management. And they—they are entirely relevant and appropriate in a quality system for a university because the—because when the quality systems fail is when you overengineer and there's duplication, wasted effort, wasted time. And what we begun to demonstrate is that we can reduce the burden for academic staff and administration and in non-academic time on teaching time and on research time by streamlining our process, by automating our process, by ensuring that we don't all have to do everything. And that is a clear business principle is that it's a very demonstrable benefits in quality and therefore demonstrable benefits to the—to the customers. So there's a direct parallels.**

The difficulty is, if I was to walk into a room of academics and start talking about lean they all go “yeah...” and fall asleep and—and—and shut down immediately. So we have to—what we have to work very clearly on was--was this process where we got--this is an initiative if you like to be working on to get people across--certain people from different departments, from—from the support services with the academics departments in a room together to--to look, to map it, and to work on it. So we've done that. We did that [*s.l. administrative 0:08:30*] admissions and we've moved in the whole lap of academic program life cycle. So everything from enrolling to graduating is what we're looking at now and we've identified things--you know interesting things like interruption of studies, the process for interruption of studies. We had a process and we've removed probably three stages from it, you know just by automating it. So it seems small.

I: That's a direct result.

**R: Exactly. And it's--it's a quality improvement.**

I: Measurable?

**R: And measurable, absolutely. So they—and there are benefits there. There are very clear benefits in terms of staffing profiles, resourcing, academic workload, modeling. It takes a long time—it takes much longer than it would in a--in a commercial environment because you have to have the discussion but the benefits are obvious.**

I: That's [*s.l. how*] fascinated that you're applying Lean Manufacturing ...

**R: We've got lots of--and this is a later one and this is a later one which--so here for example, this is the overall- SIMP is the student information management program which I had up. So this is the--the key stages in all of that because we brought a new student management SIMP software and this is the implementation process. But this is pure business.**

I: Yes, it is, yeah.

**R: But this is—this is the combination of me heading up the registration services with the ICT people. We have financial procurement people together as a project. So yeah, it works.**

I: Are these available online?

**R: Yeah, there's—[Indiscernible] [0:10:07] linked to a website. Yeah.**

I: I would be most interested...

**R: Oh, that's one of the [*u.c. 0:10:12*] very keen on is that we don't make this—this another secret.**

I: That's not any problem. Let's talk about in general—oh, right now.

**R: I was going to make a [*Indiscernible 0:10:31*]**

I: Yeah, I really appreciate that.

**R: Okay. Carry on.**

I: Yeah. Can we talk a little bit about the--the general quality approach in this university? You mentioned lean manufacturing. Can you think of any other things? Now, you—you've said something about total quality management not being applied but I...

**R: We're applying the principles.**

I: The principles and--is giving you a—a framework to think about.

R: Yeah. One of the things that we—that—that--that's been a challenge here is that [REDACTED] is one of the best universities in the country, one of the best universities in the world. No question. And so we have fantastic—amazing academics, amazing students, amazing research, very successful all across the board so--and that's known, that's a fact.

I: it's a world-class university

R: Yes, absolutely. The challenge in that is that there is no—and again, in business sense, there is no burning platform, there's no crisis.

I: Yeah.

R: So the academic community...

I: The motive...

R: what's the motivation for change? We don't have to do this. You could argue that we don't have to do this to be [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] has been successful. Then--then what we've been—instead of talking about a total quality management approach in that sense we were leveraging those ideas to—to say [REDACTED] is this good with this complicated picture, with this over-engineered picture. Just think of what we might be able to do if we free out that much time and that much resource, we could be even better. And that supports the—the strategy that we're—we're pushing for now. [REDACTED] has been in the top rankings for a very long time.

We now working very much on the—on the fact that [REDACTED] is to be leading the sector as opposed to be in the best part to the sectors so that's—that's the step change. And particularly from the student experience, we begun to—I'm—I'm--one worse student experience I use, I like to talk about the quality of student experience because everybody has a student experience but we need to focus on the quality of it. And then the—and the total quality management system you have to be able to identify that as you said describe it and measure it and follow up on it. It's all those--the straightforward audit principles are there.

We have made a conscious choice to benchmark outside the sector and we are looking at areas of industry and business where—who are known for fantastic levels of customer service or—or—or user satisfaction. So we've—for example, we've been thinking about the quality of the—the admissions and arrival process. We've been thinking about checking in with one of the best airlines in the world where you turn up and you have your passport and then you're on the plane. Yeah? So you know we—because everything's been done before. So we're removing—one of the things I think that we need to do from a student services and an academic quality management prospective is making it invisible to the

end users. So if I as a student can just turn up with my passport [*s.l. approves*] and that's fine. Yeah? We shouldn't be making—one of the things I think we have done in universities are going back to that question of why it's a bit—what needs to change? We've added in all the steps that we need to go through and made everybody experience all of them. So we haven't applied those lean principles and that--if we can move through that I think we can make a real difference.

I: That's good to know. Are you—do you have any information about any other UK HEIs Universities, Higher Education Institutes and what their approach is to quality is it seems they're not very keen on total quality management.

**R: You know that's interesting.**

I: Yeah.

**R: It's--I think it's probably similar problem.**

I: They are facing the similar problem.

**R: I think they are facing the same problems and they have the same—they have the same sort of philosophical objections. There are similar finance—I think now there are increasing financial pressures and it depends on the university. I mean [REDACTED] has a lot more income than someone--than other institutions but we have to do the same thing so...**

I: I see.

**R: There's a relative question as well.**

I: Yeah?.

**R: And having said that there are some institutions, some of what--what we referred is the post-92 institutions which you know and who have paid much more attention to this earlier than some of the more traditional universities out of necessity. And if you look—I mean there's a--Coventry University is the really good example who recently just became 50, you know got 50 from the guardian table and it was where they—where--where did they come from? And there are about a lot of Russell Group Institutions who are a bit...**

I: As a former polytechnic they are the highest.

**R: They're doing incredible and they've done an amazing amount of work around the students on the quality systems.**

I: Because out of necessity they had to rely on ....

**R: Of course, you know about Coventry you're Warwick! Yes. Okay, fine. Absolutely. Yes, yeah. Sorry, because it didn't made the connection. Absolutely**



but yes, but they've done an amazing work, really amazing work. So—so we never really get--now I think it's the same problem for a lot of institutions. And I think it's particularly—I think it's probably more of a challenge for some of the traditional elite, top Russell Group Institutions. Part of it is there's a certain amount of complacency. I don't—it's not really complacency. It's this question of not really needing to do it or not feeling that you need to do it because we're

██████████.

I: I see what you mean.

**R: We're top ten in the world.**

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**R: So we don't have problems with that. Students want to come here.**

I: Number two tries harder but number one ... yeah?

**R: Precisely, precisely, precisely. And I think there's an element of that. So—so it's quite interesting that you can look at the Russell Group Institutions, look at the you know national student survey scores and see who's—there's a cluster of a Russell Group Institutions quite a long way down that list. We are there. We are part of that and that's not right. That's not right.**

I: Right. It shouldn't be like this.

**R: No, and—and—and so we need to think about that. I think—I think that's going to change. I think we're already seeing the signs of that. I think the removal of government funding of direct government funding will have an enormous impact on that because you have to work--in some ways you have to work harder for your money.**

I: Yeah.

**R: So that suggests...**

I: You're competing with--you're—you're—you're competing with only...

**R: Precisely. So the word competition is coming to play.**

I: For what essentially is a shrinking amount of resources.

**R: Yeah. And it's interesting when the—the fees arrived, the higher fees arrived—and yes you would have been here. It was about--I think it was three years ago when the AAB where we get—where institutions were allowed to recruit additional numbers of AAB scoring student with no penalty from HEFCE. There are lots of very good institutions, universities who at—at--at confirmation and clearing time in August behave badly. They—they didn't communicate with**

students—with applicants quickly enough and didn't release people back into the system because they were worried about the numbers and the money issue. Now, it's got better. But that was a direct result of the funding calculations.

I: Do you think since you've mentioned that now students have to pay a tuition is--is kind of--do you think this could be probably a motivation for people to start thinking about a more serious business approach to quality because now these are paying customers. They're paying customers expecting other. It's not like a free service anymore so they have higher expectations and we have to live up to that.

**R: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And I think—I mean some of those expectations have always been there and some of them more confident and vocal students would always have challenged things. That's fine and appropriate. I think now the fact that everybody pays fees, higher fees, and they're taking loans for that and that you leaving university with a considerable debt, people are more willing to be clear about what they think is good or bad.**

Now, we have a challenging work with them to—to work that out. We—it's absolutely right that they do them that we respond. That's absolutely right. The difficult—the--the interesting thing challenge for us really is—is the direct parallel with what happened in the United States that as--and it's beginning to happen here that there are signs that are coming through. As government funding was reduced to universities, central government's perceived interference and regulation increased and the same thing is happening here.

I: Okay.

**R: So we're—we're being expected to justify, report, and monitor much more on how we spend the money that we get through student fees, through the students loans companies than we ever did with the direct funding loan from HEFCE. So it's there. We have the offer agreement, which is one thing. But increasingly now then the office--you know the—the--you know the public accounts committee looking at how the students loans company works because I do kind of know how to work with the students loans company--works to recover—the--the debts and a lot are interested in why the university sectors isn't working more closely with the students loans company to ensure that the debt is collected because we are the last people to see the students before they disappear off. So do we have a responsibility? And these things are beginning to come through. So that's--so the pressure is changing.**

I: Right. This is going on right now?

**R: Absolutely, absolutely.**

I: That's really good.

**R: So it's happening.**

I: Yeah, interesting to know that. We come off to second theme of three. I want to elaborate. If—if you find—if that's okay with you? The quality initiative that we're going to talk about in detail about who got involved in the decision. Would that—would this be a good work?

**R: Perhaps, yeah.**

I: Perfect, because I'm really intrigued by it to know more about this.

**R: Okay.**

I: So can you tell me a little bit more about who was involved in the framing and the decision-making regarding this?

**R: Okay. So this—this--this is—the trigger for all of this was the fact that we have a student--student information management system database which is, needs replacing. So we need a new student management system. And we just—and there was a decision taken but before we commit to buying a new software system services because I run that, we needed to look at what we wanted to do with it. Yeah. So again that's a business principle before you go and build your factory [s.l. spell out 0:22:17] what you want to—to make and how you're going to do it. So—so the opportunity was taken to it undertaking this business process review.**

**And so we created the SIMP project, which is student information management project. And there there's a program board and that's chaired by the college secretary. Then the board—on the board there's me, there's the chief information officer, and the—the director of financial procurement. And we are the executive sponsors of the project, because the majority of the work that relates to it sits within the registration services of ICT and that sort of [s.l. thing 32:58]. And then we—on the board we have representatives from each of the faculties and we have representatives--for example, the [REDACTED] for Education, some senior management [s.l. members 0:23:19]. And that was the board that established center.**

**We now created a number of process user groups. One for missions, one for the academic program life cycle, one for student information of analytics, one for students finance, and so on, and those all reporting to--to that board. We spent about six to eight months, probably a year reviewing, developing these things, coming up with some proposals, some to-be processes, establish that. When we knew where we wanted to go, we began to engage with the suppliers of the students system to bring the two things together. We've now signed a contract for the student system and we are now moving into the implementation phase. So between this work and the student system we've done this—was called a**

discovery phase with the--the supplier to ensure that what they bring forward to us can help maintain the quality and the output that we want to the end and we're about to move into implementation.

At the same time, working very closely with the [REDACTED]. for Education, we have—I--she and I have launched an academic standards framework for review which is to--to look at our policy and the regulation around it to make sure that those support the aims and support the processes to get us to the quality place that we need to be. So we've got the whole picture now. And like I said you list all of those things too. That's fine. So that's the big project that we're on. It's taken 18 months of meeting and talking and consultation and going to teaching committees and faculty committees and senates and...

I: Do you think the long time—I think it's relatively a long time. Why do you think it that?

R: It definitely reflects the importance of it and it is absolutely strategic. It represents something—nothing happens quickly at the [REDACTED]. You know it's one of those universities that's very comfortable in its existence and has a very—this is how we do things.

I: I see.

R: So anything change needs appropriate consultation and engagement but—so there is that. But also what we've done is been very open and very candid about--first, being transparent has been entirely open. So there's—there's nothing hidden. And we really have taken seriously the notion of talking to the community and engaging with the community and—and that's been open ended but we—we started very generally and we work now into specifics and now we're focusing it. It was never about if, it's about how.

I: Right.

R: And so we--then we've worked around and we've dealt with all of the--the no-no's and the “it's terrible we can't do that” and “the world will end” and--and all of those things. And then that's come down to “okay that I understand it seems like a really good idea but in my department that” you know all that “I'm worried” is fine and then from that we created specific focus. And we've managed to—to filter out things which are completely uncontentious and we're--we're doing those and--but that's been approved by [*s.l. summit 29:34*].

But then areas of work, that need some attention because there is worry about ensuring that whatever system we put in place does clearly define a consistent baseline and does clearly define a minimum expectation. But also permits the necessary variety that has led to the—to how Imperial is--you know the strength is

academic community because what works for chemistry will not necessary work for mechanical engineering.

So we're focused more on the quality of what they do than how they necessarily do it. So we began to look at what it is we want to measure in terms of formalizing roles and expectations and—and the reporting flows on that for--for the governments monitoring. But if you want to in trying that in one particular role in your department and--and other department wants to share that between them, that's okay. We want—we're focusing on the outputs.

I: I see.

**R: And that's a shift.**

I: Yeah, it is definitely.

**R: That's a shift.**

I: Yeah. Can you think of one or more decisive criteria to move one direction rather than the other what make —namely Lean- What was—what was the criteria for that?

**R: It's interesting. It probably comes down to two things.**

I: Right.

**R: The—the--the importance of the student's voice and the ever increasing demands on a limited amounts of money.**

I: Right.

**R: Money has to—it would be wrong to say that money doesn't play a part. It does.**

I: Yeah. And Lean by reducing, elimination of waste, would—would adhere to that...?

**R: Yes, exactly. So—so the principle we subscribed to--there's—we called--it's called operational excellence. So the whole view is about words we don't use 'professionalizing the administration'. You know all of those principles. It's—it's overtly not being about downsizing. It's not being about reducing department or staffing numbers. It's about doing more within the existing--yeah, envelope is the word, isn't it? So about doing more with the existing, so why are we doing that five times when one will do it? We can reap, route the resource that we free from the into other activities. So we—hugely important principle is returning time to the academic mission. So that's returning time to teaching, to research.**

I: Right.

**R: Yeah?**

I: Right.

**R:** Equally, it's improving the day-to-day existence of the administrative and support staff and not having to chase unnecessarily round that. Yeah, do you see...

I: So it's not about downsize, it's about an efficient administrative operation.

**R:** It's about—it's about--that's about increase—it's about increasing awareness and quantifying so I mean there's a shared understanding of—of what our baseline is so that we can go beyond that.

I: That's lovely. Very good. Right. You've mentioned the time scale, right? Can we talk about the reviewing, how often is this going to be reviewed? Any plans so far?

**R:** Yeah, so we spent past 18 months doing this. We have an implementation cycle for the new student information system during the next academic year with the view to going live in 16-17 to start [*s.l. point 0:30:12*]. So all of this preparatory work needs to be done within the next year. We then begin to implement and that will take another probably—probably over two years also to implement all—to implement to end. During 2016-17, we are due for higher education review from the QAA. Now, we know that's all going to change but there will be something. Okay?

And we were due for full review in 16-17 at the point of which we were told, "Those aren't going to happen as is now." So we've volunteered to go and be part of the pilot of whatever happens because we were conscious of the need both to have—we need something to aim at and we need something to—to motivate the community to keep going but also because we want that quality check. So we want to know—I know the stage that that happens and be that the metric-based system is being proposed, whatever it is, we won't have completed our implementation but we'll have a plan and we'll be on our way.

I: I was going to ask—wouldn't—wouldn't it be too—too early, and God forbid something bad happens. You're—you're taking a chance here, aren't you?

**R:** Yeah.

I: Right. But that might be your motivation. Maybe you're--you're motivating yourself.

**R:** Yeah. Because—because we're—because when we—we—we're confident that it will be okay.

I: Yeah, I can only respect that

**R:** We—because at the moment it's-- I mean you know we haven't got the—there's nothing as if there's no burning platform. There's nothing that were take--we took part in the—in the HEFCE KIS audit. And we--we didn't do very well.

**But that a really useful motivator, and building on that. We're confident that we'll be okay.**

I: Yes.

**R: We're confident that we'll learn things from it and will help us improved. And equally if things, back to that thing, if we want to be at the front. We want to be there. Part of the motivation is as a world-class institution we want to be part of the solution. We want to be helping, we want to influence, we want to be involved in the decision-making about what happens to us in the future.**

I: Right.

**R: And that is the shift beyond "we're [REDACTED]! Don't question us" to "we're [REDACTED], look you should be like [REDACTED] too". It's—it's—it's some sort of—it's—it's a confidence statement but it's equally something. That's how we've helped—that's helped motivate some of the academic stuff because they feel—they—they react extremely positively when I say, "Well, I think that we have a responsibility as one of the best universities in the country. To be out there, we need to be more visible in the sector and—and [REDACTED] hasn't been very visible. So that's—that would be to our benefit, I hope.**

I: Yeah, hopefully. Yeah. We can move to the third and final court theme. Let's talk about the implementation. And now you mentioned that you are—the board came with this, always going to be in charge of the implementation, can you tell me a bit about the leadership and the communication.

**R: So I mentioned that there was this triangle of me, the—the chief information officer, and—and the head for financial procurement. And we've been the executive leads for this. And we—we are the people who straddle. We are the--the common denominator across all the strands so--so we are. So we are in charge with the delivery.**

I: Right, okay.

**R: And we've recently just developed another extension to the plans that combines the system implementation with the process implementation with the economic standards because we had a whole—whole of the holistic thing. We've recognized—the--the limiting factor in—I mean it's interesting you talked about risk. We felt the biggest risk to us was that we would have to slow down because we don't have the necessary skills and knowledge in the existing staff base to respond to change.**

I: Right.

**R:** So we live very carefully in that and we've trained and we've trained a number of people interneers and people from my team and various others to be change agents, to lead some of the work but that's not enough. So where we have had spent additional money and time is on creating some time-limited resource. Some extra consultants- we've also appointed someone to head up the change, head up the operational excellence program, who's coming...

I: You outsource that?

**R:** Absolutely, yeah. Who's coming from the private sector, who's—who'd be on a fixed term contract and whose job is to keep us going but really to keep us going. So—so--is that—is that—so--so we've done that externally. So—so I and my colleagues we're accountable for the delivery but working clearly with this new appointment together as a team we will make it happen. We're looking at developing extra support in learning and development in HR to support staff in getting that. The biggest risk we felt was that we would have this wonderful plans, spend millions of pounds on a new information system, do all of this, and then not know how to implement them.

I: I see what you mean.

**R:** So--so we've recognized that was our basic--biggest risk. So we now at least pushed that forward and that begins within the next month because the—so--so the real implementation phase happens during the next academic year.

I: Right. Absolutely brilliant! How do you think—how do you think this--to get me onboard when the implementation starts?

**R:** You know that's interesting question, "Who needs to be?" Ideally, everybody would be.

I: Okay.

**R:** Ideally.

I: Yeah, fair enough.

**R:** Who needs to be? It needs to be—it needs to be those key formal roles in the institution. So you need the dean in each faculty and you know the--their engagement is a negotiating wave you know that's why. You need the very senior management to be absolutely onboard. So—so the [REDACTED]. is--the [REDACTED]. is the--the institutional executive total sponsor of the entire thing- of operational excellence. So I have--so that's fine. Beyond that, I would suggest you need a set of people that combines the willing and the committed with some of the no-no's. I think it's really important to include the very vocal no-no's in the mix as part so—so if each—each work string, we have a user group



which includes people who that- you know- really pushed it through, people who are representative of certain roles and certain aspects of work of the institution, who were also actively chosen some very vocal, noisy negatives. Let's put them in the mix because one thing we're very—you know the willing will always come forward.

Another risk for us was if we didn't actively get the negatives and the no-no's into the mix. They would come if maybe one day we'll be dealing with a very long tail and we don't--we haven't got time for that. And we haven't got money for that. So you bring them in and you focus on them.

I: Right, right.

R: And we have a success! because ultimately you get to the—you know some areas are easy roads but the success that you get people to understand. They don't like it necessarily but they understand.

I: Right. That's an interesting thought. What makes you say that? Is it--let me leave it this way. Is this something you would do in every change scenario or is this specific to—to—to a—to a university that can—can improve them?

R: No, I think—I think—I think it's probably more—perhaps it's more necessary, more often in universities. But I think it's a principle that I only- firstly, it is a principle I subscribed to very much. Anyway, I do it locally within--you know within my teams.

I: Right, yeah. That's interesting.

R: I would always make sure. Because I think you know democracy is an interesting word and we believe with democratic. The problem with democracy is that people often think that democracy means getting what they want but actually democracy means more often not getting what you want. Democracy is about compromise. So if you work on the premise that you bring together all those views in the rim and the idea is to come out with something that everybody can subscribe to, you know what your optimum may be, you know what unacceptable looks like or somewhere between the two, you will get something even work with, and that's your reality.

And everybody can sign up to some form of compromise usually. That then enables you to get going and you can build from there. I don't think that you can ever—you can't just deal with a coalition of the willing. That—that has limited lifespan. It doesn't make any sense. But it's really important to make people understand that you're not going to get what you want. You will be disappointed or you will have to compromise because it maybe the best idea in the world but we might not be able to do it for money, staffing skills, all sorts of—we don't have

the building to do it. But there's something we could do along the way as long as we're clear about of what our baseline is and what's not acceptable. And that's proving to be quite successful.

I: Right. Interesting! Yeah, you've talked about the role of the senior leadership. It's brilliant when you answered my question before I ask them. I really like that.

**R: I'm very impressed.**

I: It's—it's reassuring. The question is...

**R: We're not experts and we're not perfect. I was going to say--I mean there's a lot of shared experience in this too.**

I: Yeah, and now [REDACTED] is, as you said, world-class and world-renowned- everybody know that- for excellence. What in your point of view are some critical success factors that make [REDACTED] what it is and this is a quite general question?

**R: No, and I think it's really relevant to what we're talking about some of the principles that I hopefully described to you, because I described what we need to do. Okay, we need--[REDACTED] is in a position of needing more consistency--you know from a lean perspective but also just from an equality perspective, from all of our constituent parts, all of our community. So that's equality of—of—of experience for academic staff, for administrative staff, crucially for students. And you can have equality of experience or equality of access as long as you're all subscribing to a principle of a baseline minimum expectation consistent approach to that. Yeah?**

I: Yeah.

**R: So we need to be very clear about what is an [REDACTED] degree, and what is the value of an [REDACTED] degree and what is it that any graduate regardless of subject when they come away from us looks like. So what are the graduate attributes and what are the values of the associate with that? So we need to look at systems that support that, but equally recognize what has made [REDACTED] the successful institution that it is, and that is the very, very, very strong local identity of the academic departments. Now, whatever my personal opinion about the ideal structure for a university or management model, it is important to recognize the reality and as you said recognize one of the key principles and make the institution who it is.**

[REDACTED] is successful and has been successful because of the amazing work that happens in a disciplinary sense in a local—on a local level. Students from here are now very much focused on their local identity. Their identity is very much with their—their program and their department. So we have some

interesting discussions about crossing boundaries and options across departments and interdisciplinarity and it's an emerging conversation. It is actually quite difficult because [REDACTED] is very much a focused institution. So we need to recognize that that's why there is world-leading research, and that's why students want to come and work here in PhDs and people--people come and do a PhD with professor X because I'm working with professor X. Yeah, I mean that was [Indiscernible] [0:42:37] Warwick is in a similar position. You know there—in there—no, there are. There are—there are departments of work where that's absolutely the case, where they are world-renowned in academics, which is attractive because they want to work with that individual. The challenge is that students then I think compromised too much on what they get because of “(grasps) I've got this fantastic opportunity!”. So we need to be conscious of that. We need not to exploit it but we need to respond to it. So I started talking about--you think about program approval and the [*s.l. shape 0:43:05*] for premise. We need to make them a little more consistent so including research skills in department--on this degree and on that degree you should probably get about the same for it and let the moment it can vary a bit.

I: Yeah.

R: So I started talking about baking a cake. Yeah? It's a simplified model of it, and the cakes that we make are the degrees that we produce. Yeah? We can all use the same oven and the same temperature and the same shape baking tins and produce really different cakes. But the consistency and the quality of the product is maintained and that's what we're really focusing on. So what we're really focusing on is a quality system which is permissive that there has been a history in lots of universities of regulatory frameworks and quality frameworks being viewed as restrictive. And I feel very strongly that regulatory framework should be permissive. They should—they should describe your playing field and how you play within that well you need and develop your policies which is what you want to do in your processes is how you make that happen, that's fine. But you shouldn't be restricted by your regulation station support your activity.

So we need somebody which is responsive that meets the expectation of the needs of students. But also supports critically the very real needs and aspirations of academics in departments, in—in--in research and scholarship because without those things there is no program. There are no students, there is no [REDACTED]. That's the fundamental goal. So that's now challenged so we want something which is—which is a—I don't want to say light touch but something which is much more consolidated, much more--probably more metric-based. That's something this institution understands very well. I can never confuse the academic community here with statistics. They can make me feel very stupid. Yeah? And so we need something around—so we need to be very clear about

**what the metrics are but then begin to develop that narrative. We have to protect that individuality, critical.**

I: Right, absolutely perfect, wonderful stuff. Let's—let's move on sort of couple of things I wanted to know what...

**R: Go ahead.**

I: I'm—I'm sure you're aware with the term management fad or fashion. Now some people say TQM is just a—or TQM based-models linked for example--or it's just a name of that. What--first of all, am I right to assume that you're not one of those people?

**R: No, I mean it's a fair assumption. I'm—I'm not.**

I: Okay. So what do you think about that?

**R: I think—I think we need to make a distinction between as in everything we do, the quality of the constituent part as opposed to the words that we used to describe it and I think that there is a real problem. It has been a real problem in—in higher education. People talk about best practice in this area, that area, and that approach. And actually I'm much more interested in—in the how.**

I: Right. So one of the recurring argument is that—is—it always say it promises more than it can deliver so where is the problem with the wording right? so let's talk about how. Let's talk about measurements, numbers and data. Okay...

**R: Yeah, I think—I think wording is critical.**

I: Yeah.

**R: And I think, for example, the word stakeholder. I chair a stakeholder group for the SLC, Students Loans Company.**

I: Yes.

**R: Yeah? But I would never use the word stakeholder here because the academic community would—it would just swift...**

I: Yeah, it will shut down.

**R: But they are members of the community. I often talk about the community and they're being part of the community and the academic community being the staff and the student.**

I: Did they get onboard when you talked?

**R: But like that. So it's about recognizing that there is—they're recognizing—you could argue it's likely cynical. It's not strategic because I worked with other institutions where I could say stakeholder fine. But here I'm not going to do that because for my sense of self-preservation I need to get what I need and that's not**

going to work. But equally doesn't work for the institution and let's not waste our time. So that's a lean principles. So describing is really important. I think often I talk about--I find what—and what is successful with the academic community particularly is talking about espousing the principles off or aspects off. So you can take a customer service approach but you can't do customer service. Now, that sounds like a very small distinction but in terms of reception, in terms of opening up that door, and—and opening up the possibilities of dialogue, really important.

So if you talk about elements of customer service approach and—and—and I was—you guys shopping in John Lewis, how do you feel about—why do you like John Lewis? Why do you like Virgin Atlantic? Why do you like—and then picked—why—what is it that you like about that? And it's not that they like Virgin Atlantic, it's that they like the way that person dealt with them when they were there, that how it made me feel. So it's about values. It really is about values. But the wording is also important. So I have a real—I really don't like the use. I feel there's something that we do very bad and I think this is more of an administrative management aspect of higher education than academic is we use words.

So we'll strategize and we'll operationalize and finesse and what do all the—what are these? What does that mean? What does that mean? Operationalize means we'll do. And I think there is a—there is a real. We need to be careful of fatigue. And I think the academic community in particular is really fed up with hearing about “operational ...” and nothing happening.

I: I see what you mean.

**R:** And there's a history there with these projects. And this is not—this is not the first time this project's been attempted. This is the first time it's got this far. So we have to spend some time you know convincing people that it was going to continue because you got the history to deal with and then that context not using words like strategize and operationalize was critical. Critical.

I: I see what you mean. Yeah. And now—in recent years, universities have started to employ more and more professionals. So what do you think about the professional administration group as opposed to the academic administration?

**R:** Well, I have—I have two views on that. ...

I: Okay.

**R:** Okay. I think, again, it's—there's some semantics in this, I think. I think we need to professionalize our approach. I think for too long it's been about administration. I mean it's been about administration in an old, yeah, in a slightly old-fashioned, bureaucratic, public service sense. So I think it's important that we

professionalized that and that we—that—that—that we recognize the critical role of people play, that we recognize the values and institutions of the activity they have to take. But we also recognize there's something that happens before—before and after us, there's always something else around us. We can't work in--in a world of our own. So this work has been really important for that. So breaking down some of those silos and making you think. And also focusing again on why are we here, on whose students. The students, the students, the students, it's all about the students ultimately. So that's that.

I—on the other hand, I dislike the word professional and I dislike the way it's used in universities because I think that it's often used at the expense of professionalization to mask other things is something to hide behind. So back to the language thing again. It's just use words. I think what we need to do, we need to do more work on demonstrating that we've changed and this is the sort of thing we need to do.

I: Right. You mentioned—just in last question, something initiative starts, everyone gets onboard, and then it dies out. Two or three, four times maybe, [Indiscernible] [0:51:26] be here for long, why, and they are just fed up with that, and when you come [Indiscernible] [0:51:30]. “OK here's what we're going to do”. “ah this in--this is just business speak, not going to get on board with that”. What do you suggest to deal with that?

R: You need to really demonstrate change. And--and I think you need some very thick-skinned people. Yeah, and I've got quite a thick-skin. But equally I think you need—you need to choose your moment very carefully. You need—and [Indiscernible] [0:51:57] you need all the duck need to be in a row. And you need to choose the right moment but it has to come with the right people and the right time. So in the past three years, there's been an almost—well, it's been a total change of senior leadership in this institution. New [REDACTED], [REDACTED], new [REDACTED]. for Education, new academic registrar, new college secretary, new chief information officer, new chief financial officer. So the whole senior structure is now coming with a different view. And I was absolutely employed with the change brief, with the modernization brief. Partly because I've done—I've done similar things before and that was--you know so—so you come with—so they come with an expectation.

So on—on a simple level the—the communities presented with somebody who has some experience and some knowledge of this. So they already see you as slightly different. But also then what we've had to do--and that's why it's been really good to do is the group is the three of us is the executive sponsors is to go out and show a united face. Because previously things have failed because there's been difference between the registry and ICT or between the academic

departments in ICT. So it's about maintaining that unified face. So if you have a unified view that's a good start. The--the real challenge, we're still struggling—no, we still have some challenges on how we actually is demonstrating it and—and—and taking action that—that mean something that--and also then sustaining that. That's the—being a broken record.

But also being reassuring because a lot of what I hear and lot of what we see is not unique to [REDACTED]. Yeah? And—and--and making people understand that it's okay to feel worried about that all, to lack confidence about that.

So some of the soft skills are unsupported people are really important. I think one of the reasons I think it is being most successful this time ever has been before is that we have decided very clearly that this is not an IT project. This is not a systems project. This is a people project and we're very clear that this is about asses of community working together and that we have a new set of tools used to do that but this is about—primarily about as--as a group of people of the institution in an amazing place who all want to do even more and this is an opportunity versus to look at doing that. So that's our sort of positive [*s.l. start fly 0:54:35*].

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah, fascinating!

**R:** But we have to try again and come back in a year ask me again. But you know I mean see if we're still happy about it

I: Yeah, I'm sure—I'm sure you will. Well, final thought. What do you look up? What do you have to comment about the environment and how people perceived the quality? I mean, obviously you're very qualified and knowledgeable about the quality and quality management. Is this sentence true about other seniors and staff?

**R:** It's a really interesting question.... Not all. And—and that's a really—that's a very, very interesting question. We're spending quite a lot of time supporting other colleagues. You head up other services or other departments who are excellent of what they do. But don't—they're not equipped or experienced for this and we're supporting them too. So—so it's a, it's a really, really good observation. We are--it's been really important to us to create for a—to—to--to bring those views together and to do very clear, again, change because the--the big thing with lean in—is--is about--you know it's happening here but actually it just happened over there. So to some extent that means in professional service department wise, I might have to have some of your world!. Yeah, so that's...

I: Yeah, that's a red line, yeah.

**R:** That's quite difficult, so yes. So we are—we're probably about 50-50 at the moment.

I: I see.

**R: So we still have some way to go but finger-crossed.**

I: Right, finger-crossed. Anything else you want to mention?

**R: No, I mean I--I can talk for hours. I hope—I hope that was useful to you.**

I: Thank you very much. I'm going to stop that now.

**[Audio Ends]**

**00:56:11**